

Broadband India Forum BIF) lauds the notification issued by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)

New Delhi, 17th May 2023: Broadband India Forum (BIF) commends the notification issued by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), which amends the RPwD rules to formally include the 'Indian Standard on accessibility for ICT products and services' IS-17802. This notification, issued by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, significantly reduces the inequality faced by people with disabilities when accessing information communication and technology (ICT) products and services. The introduction of this move aims to create a more technologically inclusive society, which is crucial as the nation progresses towards Digital India. The technological divide exacerbates existing societal gaps, and this move effectively bridges the deficiencies faced by persons with disabilities when accessing ICT services.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY AND THEIR ACCESS TO ICT

According to the 2011 Census, there are 21 million (2.1 crore) individuals with reported disabilities in India. Out of this total, 1.5 crore are men and 1.18 crore are women, accounting for 56% and 44%, respectively. Over the years, the usage of electronic gadgets and government/private services has contributed to societal disparities, necessitating the implementation of change.

Employing persons with disabilities benefits society as they make valuable contributions to corporations, thereby boosting the economy. By establishing standards for inclusivity, there will be better utilization of goods and services, ultimately enhancing the nation's productivity. With India's objective of creating a well-connected digital map across the country, it is imperative to make ICT available to all. The notification amends the RPwD rules to formally include the 'Indian Standard on accessibility for ICT products and services' IS-17802, ensuring compliance across all ICT platforms. The past three years of the pandemic have made us realize that future socio-economic development and growth are only possible by harnessing ICT technologies optimally. Digital inclusivity is no longer a choice but a fundamental necessity.

BROADBAND INDIA FORUM (BIF) AND DIGITAL INCLUSIVITY-

Mr. TV Ramachandran, President of BIF, stated, "I wholeheartedly commend DEPwD for their forward-thinking and empowering notification, which acknowledges the fundamental right of people with disabilities to access and utilize ICT products and services without any hindrance. This significant step will not only benefit the disabled community but also foster a more digitally inclusive and equitable society. At the core of Broadband India Forum's principles lies the unwavering advocacy for "broadband for all."

Achieving this vision necessitates the introduction and effective implementation of standards that foster a truly inclusive society, where no one is left behind. It is crucial to ensure that technology, a remarkable boon, does not become a bane due to insufficient efforts in making it an accessible tool for development, thereby ensuring inclusivity for all.

About Broadband India Forum

Broadband India Forum (BIF) functions as an independent policy forum and knowledge-based think-tank that works for the development and enhancement of the entire broadband ecosystem in a holistic, technology- neutral and service-neutral manner. BIF has established

itself as a thought leader and a credible and effective voice, to help propel the nation to achieve the country's ambitious vision of creating a Digital India. To achieve this, BIF works to promote the rapid development of policies, so as to facilitate affordable and high-speed ubiquitous broadband throughout the country.
