UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION FUND

PILOT PROJECT SCHEME FOR ACCESS TO ICTs & ICT ENABLED SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 7, 2011

Department of Telecommunications,
Ministry of Communications & IT,
Government of India
OUTLINE

- Importance of Accessible ICTs
- Role of USOF
- The Scheme
SIGNIFICANCE

- One of the largest disabled populations in the world
- 21.9 Million as per Census 2001
- Census 2011 likely to reveal a larger number owing to better data collection methodologies
- The World Bank pegs actual number between 40 and 80 million
- 49% Literate, 34% employed, 42.46% women
- 75% in Rural India
Needs Assessment-Inclusion

Barriers to Communication:
Owing to lack of availability, affordability and/or inadequate awareness, a large section of PwDs is deprived of accessible communications.

Barriers to Self-Reliance:
Disabled people often face difficulties in leading life of independence and dignity

Barriers to Empowerment:
Disabled people are often not equipped with necessary wherewithal to realize their true potential, to contribute to and participate in mainstream society

Barriers to Inclusion:
Eventually this translates into isolation & marginalization
BACKGROUND

How can ICTs address these issues?
POTENTIAL: ICTs can...

However for ICTs to play these roles for PwDs, the ICT services must be available, affordable and truly “accessible”.

How?

- Enable effective communications
- Provide access to various services and information
- Facilitate employment
- Contribute to socio-economic and political inclusion
Role of ICTs with ATs

ICTs in conjunction with Assistive Technologies have the potential to bring a positive change in the lives of persons with various disabilities.

- Hearing
- Visual
- Speech
- Mobility
- Learning
- Aged & illiterate
How?

Applications to Enhance Accessibility

Text to Speech ATs & Speech to Text ATs

- Benefit PwDs and illiterate/ semiliterate
- Enables PwDs to communicate, and to access news, information and e-services and to perform ICT enabled jobs

Ergonomic Design

- Benefit PwDs and aged to communicate

Screen Magnifiers

- For visually impaired
- Improve the utility of Mobile Phones/Computers/ATM/Other Equipments having display features
How?

UNCRPD

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Became an international law on May 5, 2008
- Ratified by India on October 1, 2008.
- ‘To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems...’ (Article 9)
Pilot Project Scheme for Access to ICTs and ICT enabled Services for PwDs in Rural India

Role of Universal Service Obligation Fund
In India, Universal Service Obligation is the obligation to provide access to telegraph (telecommunications) services to the people in rural and remote areas at reasonable and affordable prices.
In keeping with its mandate of Universal Service and in recognition of the vital role that ICTs can play in facilitating the daily lives of PwDs, enhancing their well being and productivity, and enabling their active participation in society, USOF has decided to launch a scheme of Pilot Projects for enabling access to ICT facilities with ATs for PwDs in rural India.
USOF’s Initiative

Objectives

- Meaningful access to telecommunications facilities
- Access to information, services, employment opportunities
- Demonstration of the significance and positive impact of ICT access through ATs on the lives of PwDs
- Encouragement to Service Providers and other stakeholders to take up such initiatives on a larger scale to address the needs of PwDs.
USOF’s Initiative

Scheme Focus

 Benefit: Persons with various forms of disability

Facilitate: provision of telecommunications with appropriate ATs

Encourage: development and availability of relevant bundled content

Incorporate: training of both facilitators and PwDs in use of ICTs with ATs
**USOF’s Initiative**

## Project Categories

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| **ICT Centres**                 | • For PwDs in educational/rehabilitation/vocational training institutions in rural areas  
                                 | • Equipped with appropriate Assistive Technologies/Content              |
| **Special Handsets and Content**| • For PwDs in rural areas  
                                 | • With/without access to bundled content                                |
| **Public Access**               | • To telecommunications facilities equipping with ATs in villages/in and around rural institutions for PwDs |

- Other project types may also be considered.
USOF’s Initiative

Stakeholders

- Universal Service Obligation Fund
- Telecom Service Providers
- Educational/Vocational/Rehabilitation Institutions
- Equipment Manufacturers
- Application and Content Developers
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Concerned Ministries and Departments of Government of India
- Persons with Disabilities

JA(F) Universal Service Obligation Fund
USOF’s Initiative

Challenges

- Awareness Level
- Identification of Target Population
- Assessment of Needs
- Availability and Affordability of ICTs with ATs
- Content Development and Distribution
- Bundling of Content with Special Handsets
- Access Points: Identification, Maintenance
- Capacity Building
- Coordination among different Stakeholders

JA(F) Universal Service Obligation Fund
**USOF’s Initiative**

## Anticipated Roles of Stakeholders

### Telecom Service Providers
- Special tariff plans
- Coordinate with Other Stakeholders for Project Proposal
- Implementation

### PwD Institutions
- Communicate needs of PwDs
- Arrangements for incorporating ICTs with ATs
- Train Facilitators & PwDs
- Develop Data Bank in accessible format

### Equipment Manufacturers
- Provide AT enabled equipments such as Mobile Handsets/ Computers /etc at discounted prices.

### Application and Content Developers
- Coordinate with NGOs/ institutions to identify content needs.
- Develop Content in accessible formats

### Non-Government Organizations
- Identify and Convey needs of PwDs
- Facilitate Project Implementation
- Conduct Training and Handholding of Facilitators, PwDs, Operators of Access Points etc

### Concerned Ministries and Departments of GoI
- To offer necessary assistance and support to USOF and other project participants to ensure realization of objectives of this scheme

### USOF
- Provide subsidy for selected projects launched under the scheme
- Evaluate and compile scheme results for further scaling up of projects.

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Anticipated Outcomes from the Pilots

Social, Political and Economic Empowerment of PwDs in Rural India

- Enrichment of lives with access to information, skills and employment opportunities
- Enhancement of self-reliance of PwDs and their integration with society

Demonstration of utility and benefits of AT enabled ICTs

- Demand Side: To PwDs and their families, and to institutions/organizations
- Supply Side: To service providers, equipment manufacturers and content providers etc

Impetus to the development of

- Assistive Technologies
- Relevant content in accessible formats in regional languages.

Scaling up of such initiatives to the national level under

- Commercial and CSR agendas of service providers/telecom manufacturers/content providers

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Programme Timelines

**Sept ’11**
- First Stakeholder Meeting
- Call for Proposals

**Oct-Nov ’11**
- Evaluation of Project Proposals by USOF

**Dec ’11-Jan ’12**
- Signing of MoUs with Project Applicants
- **Launch of Scheme**
- Implementation

**Dec ’12-Jan ’13**
- Completion of Pilot Projects and Evaluation by USOF

**Feb-Mar ’13**
- Scheme Report
- Sharing of experiences
- Review for scaling up of Pilots
USOF’s Initiative
(Revised) Programme Timelines
(Based on Actual Date of Scheme Approval by Competent Authority)

Sept ’11
First Stakeholder Meeting

January-March ’12
Call for Proposals (Floating of formal EoI)
Evaluation of Proposals

April’12
Signing of MoUs/Agreements with Project Applicants
Launch of Scheme
Implementation

April –May 2013
Completion of Pilot Projects and Evaluation by USOF

June-July’13
Scheme Report
Sharing of experiences
Review for scaling up of Pilots

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THANK YOU!

ALL INPUTs & UPDATEs WILL BE PLACED ON USOF WEBSITE AT

http://www.usof.gov.in/usof-cms/disabled.htm

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