



POSITION PAPER ON

The Status of Legal Frameworks Responding to Digital
Accessibility and Digital Rights of Persons with
Disability



PRAYATNA NEPAL

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Introduction

Digital Rights

The increased uses of information technology, internet and an overwhelming attraction of people to the digital world have raised the demand for digital security and the protection of digital rights of individuals in terms of freedom of expression from digital platforms, personal data protection, right to privacy, protection from digital crime, employment and trade etc.

Digital rights refer to the legal and human rights that allow individuals to access, use, create, and publish digital media, as well as the right to privacy and security in the digital world. These rights ensure that people can use technology and the internet freely and safely without unwarranted surveillance or censorship. According to Digital Rights Nepal, Digital rights are an extension of fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression, privacy, and access to information, adapted to the digital age. The digital rights mainly include online freedom of expression, privacy and data protection, access to information, digital safety and security, and more. They ensure that individuals can safely and freely navigate the internet, participate in online activities, and utilize digital technologies without fear of undue restriction or harm¹. Digital rights are increasingly important as societies rely more on modern digital technologies and face growing challenges like cybersecurity, online surveillance, disinformation and misinformation. Various laws, regulations, and international agreements, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe², work to protect these rights. The key components of digital rights are mentioned below,

- a) **Freedom of Expression:** The right to freely express ideas and opinions online without censorship or restrictions, barring illegal content like hate speech or defamation.
- b) **Privacy:** The right to control personal information and communications online, protecting individuals from unauthorized data collection and surveillance by governments, private companies, individuals, other institutions, or any other entities.
- c) **Access to Information:** The right to access digital information and online resources, including access to the internet and other digital platforms, as a source of knowledge, tool for learning, platform for education, job and employment, source of information and communication.
- d) **Data Protection:** Ensuring that personal data collected by online services and platforms is handled securely, responsibly, and with consent.

¹ Santosh Sigdel, Digital Rights and Safety Handbook, Digital Rights Nepal, 2023, <https://digitalrightsnepal.org/report-type/publication/>

² General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), <https://gdpr-info.eu/>

- e) **Digital Inclusion:** Promoting equal access to technology and the internet for everyone, including marginalized or disadvantaged communities, to prevent a "digital divide."
- f) **Copyright and Intellectual Property:** Balancing the protection of creators' rights to their digital works while ensuring fair use and access for educational or personal purposes.
- g) **Rights to protection from digital crime of violence:** legal protection and action against any forms of digital violence and crime.

Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility refers to the design and creation of digital products, services, and environments that are accessible to all people, including persons with visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disabilities, autism and persons with other types of disabilities. This includes ensuring websites, mobile apps, electronic documents, and other digital tools can be used by all individuals including those with visual, auditory, motor, and cognitive impairment. According to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), digital accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them³. The W3C has developed a comprehensive guideline to make the digital platforms and content accessible for persons with disabilities and all. This guideline is called Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The key objective of this guidelines is to make the digital world accessible to persons with disabilities. Numerous stakeholders, including disability advocacy groups, government agencies, and accessibility research organizations, collaborated to create these guidelines, which are considered the universal standard for digital accessibility⁴.

WCAG is based on four main principles, often referred to as POUR:

- **Perceivable:** Information and user interface components must be presented in ways that users with different impairment can perceive without any barriers, such as including alt text for images, captions or sign language for videos, and text alternatives for non-text content.
- **Operable:** The interface must be easy to navigate and operable by all users including persons with visual impairment. For example, providing keyboard navigation for those who use screen reader or cannot use a mouse and ensuring that pages do not have time limits that are too strict.

³University of California, Berkeley, Digital Accessibility, <https://dap.berkeley.edu/learn/what-digital-accessibility>.

⁴ WCAG, WCAG 101- Understanding the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, <https://www.wcag.com/resource/what-is-wcag/>

- **Understandable:** The information and operation of the user interface should be clear and easy to understand. This includes using plain language, predictable navigation, and readable fonts.
- **Robust:** Content must be compatible with current and future tools, including assistive technologies. For example, using proper HTML tags so screen readers can accurately interpret content.

Based on these four core principles of digital accessibility there are some good practices of accessible design around the world. Such practices include as follows;

- **Alt Text for Images:** Alt text describes images for visually impaired users who rely on screen readers. This allows them to understand the content or purpose of images on a website or app.
- **Captions and Transcripts for Audio and Video:** These enable users with hearing impairments to access multimedia content by reading captions or transcripts.
- **Use of Sign Language and audio narration:** These days many video contents are produced with simultaneous sign language interpretation and audio narration. These enables an equal access to people with visual impairment and hearing impairment in various video content including documentary and movies.
- **Keyboard Navigation:** Ensuring that all functionalities are accessible via keyboard shortcuts and not reliant on a mouse. This is critical for users with motor disabilities.
- **Color Contrast:** Maintaining high color contrast between text and background helps users with low vision or color blindness to read content.
- **Scalable Text and Zoom Features:** Text resizing and zoom features allow users to adjust the size of text to meet their needs.
- **Making digital content in plain and easy language:** Making digital content in plain language or easy to read format enables all people including persons with intellectual disabilities, autism access to digital content.
- **Use of accessible font:** Some fonts are not accessible for persons with visual impairment. For example, the fonts used in computer typing used traditionally in Nepali languages such as Preeti, Himal, Kantipur etc. are not accessible for them. However, Nepali Unicode is made as accessible for persons with visual impairment.

- **Use of accessible document format:** Use of simple MS word, e-pub, HTML format enables persons with visual impairment easy access to documents uploaded in digital platforms.
- **Uses of assistive technologies:** The Screen Readers, Voice Recognition Software, alternative inputs devices such as switches, eye-tracking system, text-to-speech and speech-to-text system, adapted keyboards, DAISY system are some of the key assistive technologies that enables access of persons with disabilities to digital world.

Rights and Access to Digital Education

With the shift of educational paradigm post COVID-19, online or blended learning have become popular and it is right time to talk about making online pedagogy inclusive and accessible. There is a need to design course materials that cater to diverse learning needs of individuals. We need to adhere to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for online pedagogies. The key principles of UDL are;

- **Multiple Means of Representation:** Use videos, podcasts, transcripts, and interactive content instead of just PDFs or text-heavy slides. When videos are used for instruction, such materials must be well captioned, described and should also be incorporated with Nepali sign languages.
- **Multiple Means of Engagement:** Provide discussion forums, gamified learning, and personalized learning paths to maintain engagement.
- **Multiple Means of Action & Expression:** Allow students to submit assignments in different formats (written, audio, video, infographic).

Rights and Access to Digital Healthcare Programs

An accessible digital healthcare program for persons with disabilities in Nepal should prioritize inclusivity, affordability, and user-friendly technology. By integrating telemedicine, assistive technologies, and digital health records, such a program can bridge healthcare gaps, especially in rural areas. Key features should include screen-reader compatibility, voice commands, and simplified interfaces to accommodate diverse disabilities. Training healthcare professionals in disability-inclusive care and ensuring multilingual support can further enhance accessibility. Collaboration between the government, NGOs, and tech companies is essential to developing a sustainable and equitable system, ultimately improving health outcomes and quality of life for persons with disabilities in Nepal.

Rights and Access to Online Work Space

Digital rights and accessibility in online workspaces are crucial for ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in Nepal. Inclusive digital policies should mandate accessible websites, software, and communication tools that support screen readers, voice commands, and adaptive technologies. Employers must promote disability-friendly work environments through flexible policies, remote work options, and digital literacy training. Strengthening legal frameworks and enforcing digital accessibility standards can help prevent discrimination and enhance participation in the digital economy. Collaboration among the government, private sector, and advocacy groups is essential to creating an inclusive online workspace where persons with disabilities can thrive.

Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Digital Accessibility

AI has brought a revolution in digital accessibility for all including persons with visual impairments. The AI powered screen readers (e.g., JAWS, NVDA) and voice assistants (e.g., Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant) can read out text, describe images, and provide auditory feedback, enabling users with visual impairment to access digital content. AI tools such as Microsoft's Seeing AI or Google's Lookout can analyze and describe images, including text, objects, and scenes, making visual information accessible. AI can automatically generate alt text for images, improve website navigation, and ensure compliance with accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG). It can convert textbooks, articles, and other educational materials into audio formats, and vice versa. Similarly, it can automate the conversion of digital text into Braille, making educational materials more accessible. Various AI driven platforms can adapt learning materials according to the needs of individuals providing tailored support to people with visual impairments. The AI powered navigation Apps like Microsoft Soundscape or Google Maps with voice guidance can help them navigate indoor and outdoor spaces independently. There are also AI enabled devices like smart canes or wearable sensors that can help to detect obstacles and provide auditory or haptic feedback to improve mobility. Apart from this, there are numbers of areas such as health, education, social and participation where AI can help people.

Need of Legal Protection

The countries require an actionable legal framework including detailed guidelines and standards to protect the digital rights of people and ensure that people with all diversities including persons with disabilities have equal access to digital world. Compliance with WCAG standards is often part of these legal requirements, especially for government websites and public services. Many countries have legal frameworks in place to enforce digital accessibility. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the

United States and the Equality Act in the United Kingdom are acknowledged as good examples.

Taking the example of South Asia region, India has implemented frameworks like the Information Technology (IT) Act, which aims to regulate cybercrime, data privacy, and digital transactions. Furthermore, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017 includes provisions to ensure digital accessibility for persons with disabilities. Sri Lanka has adopted Computer Crimes Act, which targets cyber-related offenses. Additionally, the country has introduced the Personal Data Protection Act, which establishes regulations for the handling of personal data. Efforts to promote digital inclusivity include initiatives to enhance ICT accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Bangladesh has put in place the Digital Security Act to address digital crimes, cybersecurity, and the misuse of digital spaces. The government also introduced guidelines focusing on digital accessibility, which includes promoting inclusive design standards for websites and applications to cater to individuals with disabilities. Maldives has developed policies around digital rights and cybersecurity to enhance digital inclusiveness. The country has specific provisions for accessibility in digital services under the Digital Economy and Cybersecurity policies, which aim to promote digital inclusivity and protect online freedoms. Similarly, the government is in process to introduce Cyber Security Bill, Information Bill, Social Media Regulation Bill in future. Nepal's ICT Policy includes provisions on digital rights and outlines steps to improve digital literacy and access across the country. Furthermore, it has adopted policies to support the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the digital sphere through its Accessibility Guidelines, which provide standards for digital content and services. However, the research has explored some gaps within these gaps and criticized for basically for limiting the people's freedom of expression through digital world⁵.

Issues of Persons with Disabilities Regarding Digital Rights and Digital Accessibility in Nepal.

In Nepal, persons with disabilities, especially, persons with visual impairment are often prevented to open bank account independently and they are not allowed to operate online banking and mobile banking. Despite the modern information technology adequately supports them to operate online banking or mobile banking independently and safely the banks every time request for witness or assistance for their banking transactions. These types of behaviors have violated the financial rights of persons with visual impairment. In a group discussion conducted by Prayatna Nepal, the women with visual impairments shared that keeping witness in every transaction is challenging for them and also the violation of right privacy since the witness may take access to their

⁵ EngageMedia.Report: ICT Policies and Implications on Digital Rights: South and Southeast Asian Context, <https://engagemedia.org/2023/gif-report-ict-policies-digital-rights/>

private financial data⁶. However, some banks such as Machapuchhre Bank have done wonderful work to increase the access of persons with visual impairments in mobile and digital banking but these practices are rarely replicated by other banks.

Persons with disabilities face numerous challenges in accessing digital content and platforms, often due to design and content accessibility issues. Screen readers are the main assistive technology for person with visual impairment to get access to computer and digital content, but the lack of Screen Reader Compatibility of websites and web applications hinders their access or create lots of challenges in navigating websites or reaching out the digital content. The recently conducted research by Prayatna Nepal has explored that many websites and apps are not optimized for screen readers, which read text aloud for visually impaired users. Issues like missing alt text for images, uploading documents in inaccessible format, using inaccessible fonts of Nepali language, improper heading structures, and unlabeled buttons make navigation challenging. Inadequate color contrast can make it hard for individuals with low vision to distinguish text and images, reducing usability. This is a common issue in websites that ignore guidelines on color contrast requirements for accessible design. Many platforms fail to meet global accessibility standards, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). This inconsistency leaves users with visual impairment behind on the website they access. The Kathmandu Post reported that in visual media like videos and movies, visually impaired users often rely on audio descriptions to understand visual elements. In Nepal, audio descriptions are not commonly available, even though they are essential for allowing blind users to follow along. While closed captions benefit the deaf community, the absence of audio descriptions limits access for visually impaired individuals. Content often assumes a visual audience and neglects to include descriptions that detail important non-verbal actions. There is often limited awareness among digital content creators about accessibility requirements. As a result, inclusive practices are not prioritized, leaving persons with disabilities dependent on advocacy groups to push for accessibility improvements⁷. Prayatna Nepal Further explored that Government websites and essential public service platforms in Nepal are often inaccessible. Forms and documents may not be formatted for screen readers, and interactive features may require visual input, such as CAPTCHAs, without audio alternatives. Specialized accessibility software and devices, like braille displays and screen readers, can be costly. Financial limitations can prevent persons with disabilities from obtaining the necessary tools for digital accessibility.

⁶ Personal stories shared by women with visual impairment in a group discussion organized by Prayatna Nepal on August 27, 2024

⁷ Aarati Ray. Barred From Screen: How Nepal's Films are Failing Blind and Deaf Viewers, The Kathmandu Post, 10 August 2024, <https://kathmandupost.com/art-culture/2024/08/10/barred-from-screen-how-nepal-s-films-are-failing-blind-deaf-viewers>

In 2022, Prayatna Nepal carried out a comprehensive accessibility audit of 20 widely used public websites and 10 mobile applications, focusing on digital accessibility. The audit report revealed that nearly all the websites and apps have accessibility related issues for individuals with visual, hearing, and other disabilities. Common issues identified include missing alternative text, lack of closed captions and sign language in videos, inaccessible document formats, improper use of landmarks, inconsistent heading structures, insufficient color contrast, inaccessible tables, limited keyboard access, and no option to skip repetitive content.⁸ However, the positive actions of some organizations have increased hope among people with visual impairment. For example, the National Human Rights Commission has reviewed its digital complaint registration mechanism and made it accessible for people with diverse impairments.

Review of Related Legal Frameworks from the Perspective of Persons with Disabilities.

Provisions related to Digital Rights

Nepal's constitution upholds the right to freedom of expression for all. Article 19 specifically protects against censorship, ensuring that no publication, broadcast, or dissemination of any news, editorial, feature, or other materials—whether print, audio, visual, or electronic—shall be restricted. Article 27 further guarantees the right to information, ensuring every citizen the right to request and receive information on matters of personal or public interest. Additionally, Article 28 safeguards the right to privacy, protecting an individual's privacy regarding residence, property, documents, data, correspondence, and personal character, except as permitted by law. However, despite these provisions, the constitution does not mention any specific provision to ensure accessibility related features in information, communication, or digital rights for persons with disabilities. It lacks specific directives for the government to ensure that information and communication systems, platforms, and media are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Nepal is a state party of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Article 21 of the CRPD affirms the right to freedom of expression for persons with disabilities, requiring states to ensure that they can freely express and share opinions and information on an equal basis with others and through any communication means they prefer. This article obligates governments to make public information accessible to persons with disabilities, utilizing formats such as sign language, closed captioning, large print, visual presentations, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, screen readers, and other accessible communication methods. It also urges private entities that provide public services, including online services, to offer

⁸Prioritizing Digital Accessibility for Inclusive Development: Position Paper on Digital Accessibility in Nepal, An Assessment of Access to Public Domain for Persons with Disabilities, Prayatna Nepal, 2022, Pdf. P-16-19.

information and services in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, such as accessible websites and web applications. Furthermore, the article encourages mass media and online information providers to ensure their services are accessible for individuals with disabilities.

For persons with disabilities, privacy rights are especially crucial in the handling and sharing of personal information related to health, impairments, and rehabilitation. Upholding privacy and ensuring free consent in managing sensitive health information is essential. Unfortunately, photos, personal details, and health conditions of persons with disabilities are often shared in a way that evokes pity, sorrow, or fear—frequently without their consent. To safeguard their privacy rights, Article 22 of the CRPD stipulates that person with disabilities, irrespective of their place of residence or living arrangements, are protected against arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home, correspondence, or other communication, as well as unlawful attacks on their honor and reputation. Individuals with disabilities have the right to legal protection against such intrusions or attacks, and states are required to ensure the confidentiality of personal, health, and rehabilitation information for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

In Nepal, the government has enacted the Electronic Transaction Act 2006, designed to ensure the reliability and security of transactions conducted via electronic data exchange or other digital communication methods. This Act aims to validate, regulate, and protect the authenticity, accuracy, integrity, and reliability of systems for creating, processing, storing, transmitting, and managing electronic records, while also preventing unauthorized use or illegal modification of these records. It includes provisions for computer data protection, safeguarding electronic data from unauthorized access, controlling illegal content, protecting against computer fraud, and ensuring data privacy. However, the Act does not address issues related to freedom of expression, control over personal information and online communications, protection against unauthorized data collection and surveillance, or the right to access digital information and resources. It lacks specific provisions for ensuring access to the internet and digital platforms for persons with disabilities, as well as requirements for secure, responsible handling of personal data collected by online services. The Act also does not promote digital inclusion or equal access to technology and the internet for all, including persons with disabilities.

In 2018 (2075 BS), the government enacted a privacy law with multiple provisions aimed at protecting and respecting individuals' privacy, which apply equally to persons with disabilities. The Act categorizes privacy into nine main areas: body and family, residence, property, written documents, personal data, letters and correspondence, personal character, electronic media, and personal data collection and surveillance. While the provisions within each category are intended to protect persons with

disabilities, privacy violations still occur in practice, particularly in rehabilitation centers and shelters. Here, personal information about persons with disabilities is sometimes shared without consent, presented to elicit pity or sympathy, and used to attract funding or donor support. Studies in Nepal have highlighted that, in certain resource class hostels, male and female children with intellectual disabilities are placed in the same rooms. Additionally, legal restrictions prevent visually impaired persons from using mobile banking independently, requiring them to have a witness for banking transactions—contravening section 10.3 of the Privacy Act. Visually impaired individuals also lack access to printed materials, which forces them to rely on others to access sensitive information, such as bank statements, medical reports, academic certificates, and property documents, further compromising their right to privacy. Despite these issues, the Act lacks specific provisions to address privacy concerns unique to persons with disabilities, and section 23.6(a) includes discriminatory elements affecting persons with psychosocial disabilities.

The Consumer Protection Act of 2075 aims to safeguard consumer rights, outlining nine distinct rights for consumers, including the right to detailed information about products and their ingredients. However, in practice, product information is often inaccessible to individuals with visual impairments, and the Act lacks specific provisions to address this gap. Additionally, it does not address the need for accessible product design, physical accessibility of markets, or accessible product-related information to ensure that persons with visual and other disabilities have equal access.

While the Act Relating to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2074) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) guarantee that persons with disabilities have the right to receive public or requested information in accessible formats—such as Braille, audio, sign language, and easy-to-read formats—Nepal's Right to Information Act and related regulations lack provisions to fulfill this requirement.

Section 20 of the National Civil Code 2017 guarantees every citizen the right to freedom of expression, the right to preserve and promote the language and scripts of their community, and the right to safeguard their documents and personal information. However, despite these legal provisions, persons with disabilities continue to face significant challenges in advancing the use of Braille and sign language. Sign language, which serves as the primary mode of communication and education for the deaf community, has not received adequate attention or investment from the government for its development and promotion. Currently, Nepalese sign language comprises only about 7,000 words, which is insufficient for effective communication and education, thereby restricting full access to both.

The Criminal Code 2074 includes provisions that may support the participation of individuals with visual impairments in legal proceedings, complaint registration, and

reporting. Notably, the Act permits individuals to file complaints regarding criminal offenses through electronic means, a positive step for visually impaired individuals. However, challenges remain due to the inaccessibility of digital complaint registration systems. According to section 109, if a witness has a disability and cannot appear in court physically, they are permitted to provide testimony via video conference by court order. Similarly, section 184 allows that if a crime victim has a disability and cannot attend court in person, an investigation officer may take their statement through audio-visual means. However, the Act has not mentioned any details of accessibility requirements to be ensured while taking the statement.

Prayatna Nepal's Position on Digital Rights and Digital Accessibility

Based on an analysis of key legal provisions, Prayatna Nepal affirms the following positions regarding digital accessibility and the rights of persons with disabilities:

1. Digital Accessibility and Legal Gaps

Digital technology has expanded access to information for persons with disabilities, yet accessibility challenges persist. The compatibility of websites and applications with screen readers, along with universally accessible digital content, remains a concern. While frameworks such as the CRPD and federal disability rights laws highlight the need for inclusive digital environments, formal government action in Nepal has been limited. In contrast, countries like India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives have advanced digital accessibility through legal measures aligned with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

2. Digital Accessibility Standards

Features such as Alt Text for images, captions and transcripts for audio and video, sign language interpretation, keyboard navigation, appropriate color contrast, scalable text, zoom functionality, and assistive technology support contribute to an inclusive digital space. While efforts to define and implement such standards are evident in neighboring countries, structured mechanisms for digital accessibility in Nepal are yet to emerge.

3. AI and Digital Competency

The integration of AI-driven accessibility tools has the potential to enhance information access, communication, and service availability for persons with disabilities, reflecting broader advancements in digital accessibility.

4. Financial Accessibility and Digital Banking

Persons with disabilities in Nepal encounter barriers in mobile banking, ATMs, internet banking, and account operations, often due to security-related concerns. These

challenges impact financial independence and privacy, as third-party assistance is frequently required for transactions.

5. Right to Information and Freedom of Expression

The right to information and freedom of expression, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal, remains difficult to exercise for persons with disabilities due to the inaccessibility of digital media platforms.

6. Privacy and Data Protection

While Nepal's right to privacy law offers broad protections, specific concerns remain for persons with disabilities. Information shared by rehabilitation centers, charitable organizations, fundraising agencies, and media outlets often lacks informed consent, leading to portrayals that may reinforce stigma or undermine personal dignity. Certain aspects of privacy regulations also raise concerns regarding the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

7. Legal Accessibility in Justice Systems

The inclusion of electronic complaint filing, video conferencing, and audio-visual testimony in Nepal's Criminal Code reflects efforts toward greater accessibility in the justice system. However, the absence of clearly defined accessibility standards continues to limit participation for persons with disabilities.

8. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017

The Act represents a critical legal framework for disability rights, and discussions on enhancing its scope to include digital accessibility provisions and oversight mechanisms remain relevant. The establishment of a dedicated national body for digital accessibility standards and rights enforcement has been an area of focus in legal and policy debates.

9. Digital Accessibility in Public and Private Sectors

The application of WCAG in government websites, online services, and e-governance platforms, along with accessible digital services in the private sector, plays a significant role in fostering inclusive digital environments.

10. Accessible Online Learning

The availability of alternative formats such as text-to-speech, captioning, and sign language interpretation supports inclusive education. Training for educators in digital accessibility aligns with broader efforts to ensure equitable learning experiences.

11. Digital interface and Software

There is a need to make software and digital interfaces accessible for persons with disabilities to ensure equal access to technology by all. Most commonly used personal or business software could be the starting point. For an instance, making purchase or cash reader software accessible for people with disabilities requires integrating inclusive design principles to support users with visual, motor, hearing, and cognitive impairments.

12. Inclusive Digital Policy and Safety

Legal frameworks addressing accessibility across public and private digital services contribute to an inclusive digital ecosystem. Discussions on online safety highlight the role of technology companies and governments in mitigating online harassment and cyber threats. The involvement of persons with disabilities in digital policy development and accessibility guidelines enhances representation and equity.

13. Accessibility in Social Media, Healthcare, and Finance

Social media platforms integrating accessibility features such as voice navigation and screen reader compatibility facilitate greater digital participation. In digital healthcare, accessibility considerations impact access to medical consultations, records, and emergency services. Financial accessibility, including inclusive online banking and digital payment systems, remains an important aspect of digital inclusivity.

14. Employment, Research, and Awareness

Disability-inclusive hiring practices, particularly in digital and remote workspaces, play a role in promoting workforce diversity. Inclusive hiring practices and the availability of accessible workplace tools contribute to a more equitable digital workforce. Discussions on accessibility investment often emphasize the importance of financial incentives and subsidies for assistive technology. Local research and development in assistive technology, nationwide awareness initiatives on digital rights, and training for policymakers, developers, and service providers reflect ongoing efforts toward digital inclusivity.

15. Accountability and Enforcement

Monitoring mechanisms and grievance redressal systems continue to be key considerations in ensuring compliance with digital accessibility policies. The establishment of independent oversight structures remains a focal point in discussions on strengthening accountability within the digital accessibility landscape.

Recommendations

- The Nepal Government, particularly the Ministry of Information and Communication and the Information and Communication Authority, must

establish and enforce clear WCAG-based digital accessibility guidelines for all public websites, applications, media platforms, and digital content.

- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017, should be strengthened by incorporating specific digital accessibility provisions and establishing a national body to oversee compliance and rights enforcement.
- The criminal code should include accessibility-specific provisions, ensuring alternative communication formats such as sign language, Braille, audio-visual tools, SMS, and digital communication for filing complaints, giving court statements, and reporting crimes.
- The Rights to Privacy Act should be revised to remove discriminatory provisions against persons with psychosocial disabilities and establish protocols to protect the privacy of persons with disabilities from unauthorized data sharing, exploitation, or stigmatizing portrayals.
- All discriminatory restrictions preventing different categories of persons with disabilities including persons with visual impairments from independently operating bank accounts, mobile banking, internet banking, and ATMs must be removed to ensure financial inclusion.
- Banks and financial institutions must implement fully accessible online banking, digital payment systems, and ATM interfaces.
- The Nagarik App should recognize disability ID cards equally, ensuring inclusive access to e-governance services.
- All legally registered media platforms must comply with WCAG standards to make online news portals accessible to persons with disabilities. The Press Council Nepal, National Information Commission, and the Department of Information should take concrete steps to ensure compliance.
- Social media companies must integrate voice navigation, screen reader compatibility, captioning, and alternative text to ensure accessibility.
- Tech companies and governments must take strong action against online harassment, cyber threats, and digital exclusion, ensuring safer digital spaces for persons with disabilities.
- The Ministry of Education and Universities should improve digital pedagogy inclusivity by integrating digital accessibility standards into IT curricula, teaching methodologies, and course materials.
- The Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, in coordination with the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen (MoWCSC), should facilitate the availability of assistive devices such as Braille sensors and Braille displays.
- Text-to-Speech (TTS) technology should be enhanced to support Nepali language accessibility.
- The tech industry must adopt inclusive hiring practices, provide reasonable accommodations, and ensure digital workplace tools are accessible.

- The government should offer tax incentives for assistive technology investments, implement subsidies for assistive devices, and promote local research and development in assistive technology.
- Persons with disabilities must be actively involved in digital policy formulation, product development, and accessibility guidelines to ensure inclusive solutions.
- Nationwide awareness campaigns on digital rights, digital literacy, and digital safety should be conducted, with a focus on women with disabilities and rural communities.
- Government officials, developers, and service providers should be trained on digital inclusivity.
- An independent monitoring mechanism should be established to oversee digital accessibility policies, with grievance redressal mechanisms for violations.
- The government should ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to improve access to published works for persons with disabilities.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs should include disability-related information in the National ID Card for improved recognition and service access.
- Recognition and incentive programs should be introduced to reward excellence in digital accessibility innovations and inclusive digital platforms.