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**FROM THE DESK OF THE PUBLISHER & MANAGING EDITOR**

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For the first time in human history, countries around the globe will have more than 50% of their population residing in urban areas. As we prioritize on equitable distribution of benefits that a city life promises, it should be our endeavor to make efforts to include the vulnerable groups - the urban poor, women, children, youth, senior citizens and persons with disabilities into this discourse of city making and urban development. The rapid pace of urbanization is and has been for the longest time a global secular trend in urban centers. Such a trend presents itself with a bouquet of opportunities as well as challenges that urban local bodies need to be wary of.

Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Only by achieving the rights and needs of people with disabilities can the poverty faced by people in urban areas be eliminated. The global average of people with some form of disability is around 15%. Disability limits access to education and employment, and leads to economic and social exclusion. Poor people with disabilities are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and disability, each being both a cause and a consequence of the other. A large proportion of disability is preventable. Achieving the international development targets for economic, social and human development will undoubtedly reduce the levels of disability in many poor countries. However, general improvements in living conditions will not be enough. Specific steps are still required, not only for prevention, but also to ensure that people with disabilities are able to participate fully in the development process, obtain a fair share of the benefits, and claim their rights as full and equal members of society.

Urban environments, infrastructures, health care and Rehabilitation facilities and services can impede or enable the population, perpetuating exclusion or fostering participation and inclusion of all members of society. Persons with disabilities face widespread lack of accessibility to built environments, from roads and housing, to public buildings and spaces, and from basic urban services such as healthcare, education, transportation, to emergency responses and resilience programmes. As per National Census 2011, India has around 3 crore persons 'disabled', which amounts to 2.21% of the total population. In India, it is estimated that nearly 25% of the population need universal accessibility in order to live independently and with dignity. More than the numbers it is important to ensure that our society is built for everyone, including the most vulnerable and often the most marginalized. Hence, universal access and inclusive approach should be adopted as 'THE' path to achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

More recently, Government of India has been taking positive steps to mainstream the dialogue on the inclusion of the vulnerable groups, especially persons with disabilities. Barriers to information and communications, including relevant technologies and cultural attitudes such as negative stereotyping and stigma also contribute to the exclusion and marginalization of persons with disabilities in urban environments. However, as cities attract more and more people to fulfill their dreams with the promise of a better quality of life, it is pertinent to ensure that cities are also cognizant to the needs and aspirations of the marginalized groups.

This volume of **International e-Journal on Disabilities studies, Special Education and Rehabilitation** focuses on Disability inclusive urban development, role of society, Human rights, Inclusive education and Early childhood intervention to ensure that our cities and communities are Accessible, Safe and Inclusive. The e-journal serves as a ready reference for Disability Groups, Special Educators, Urban Practitioners, Rehabilitation professionals, city agencies and other stakeholders to take lessons from global good practices and adapt some of these to improve the everyday lives of persons with Disabilities living in urban areas.

I congratulate the authors for their inputs in successfully bringing together These innovative research articles and hope that these inspire positive and impactful changes in cities and communities and cultivate a unique identity for the city and foster a sense of belonging in its residents.

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