

ARCHITECTURE A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

REFORMING URBAN SURROUNDINGS: A BARRIER FREE RESPONSIVE ENVIRONMENT ENABLING LIMITED ABILITY: CASES FROM KARACHI, PAKISTAN.

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Abstract:

The built environment is a complex outcome of the society's geo-political and socio-economic development. An important consideration is the status of existing facilitation systems for population with disabilities in a developing country. International researches indicate that about one-tenth of the global population can be categorized in this human slab. Multiple predicaments such as climate change induced disasters, violence, conflict, terror strikes, urban and regional hazards are constantly adding more people in this category.

A review and basic observation of the built environment in Pakistan, including larger cities such as Karachi reveal that the existing profile of various buildings types are grossly unsuitable to accommodate the users with frail and limited abilities. Common facilitation elements such as ramps, support balustrades, guiding rails, exclusive toilets, appropriate aisles and corridors, ventilation and daylight assistance mechanisms and other necessary ingredients are scantily found in these buildings. This shortcoming exists in many of the designed buildings and spaces for healthcare, education, social welfare, commercial centers, housing schemes etc; the practice of accepting construction with a ' deficit built environment ' remains insensitive to people with disabilities and a major disrepute to architects, engineers, all professional saviors of the building industry and environment .

This paper explores the current status of response preparedness and intervention in the domain of Karachi's surroundings. Drawing from the existing literature, the paper adopts a case based approach to identify the various dimensions of built environment to establish their suitability for accommodating the specific requirements for population with limited abilities. Case studies of hospital and educational facilities have been taken from Karachi. The pivotal role of local architects and urban planners has been appraised across this scenario. The paper concludes with advices derived from research analysis.