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TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN

Disha Divyang Suraksha (DDS): A Landmark Initiative in Inclusive Policing:

Introduction

In a transformative move towards inclusive and accessible governance, the Visakhapatnam City Police, under the leadership of Dr. A. Ravi Shankar, IPS, Commissioner of Police, launched the *Disha Divyang Suraksha (DDS)* initiative on **1st December 2023**. This pioneering initiative—first-of-its-kind in Andhra Pradesh—aims to integrate **Visually Impaired (VI)** and **Hearing Impaired (HI)** individuals into the criminal justice system, ensuring their right to report grievances, seek protection, and access justice is respected and upheld.

DDS addresses the historical exclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs) from police and legal systems due to communicational and procedural barriers. The initiative offers a scalable, compassionate, and tech-enabled framework to bridge these gaps and empower disabled citizens.

Vision and Objectives

DDS is guided by the principle of *equal access to justice for all*, irrespective of physical or sensory impairments. The initiative aims to:

- Establish a dedicated grievance redressal mechanism for VI and HI persons.
- Integrate assistive technologies for seamless police-PwD communication.
- Facilitate proactive case handling with support from trained personnel and interpreters.
- Promote dignity, confidence, and trust among PwDs in the police system.

By focusing on **empathy, sensitivity, and adaptation**, DDS ensures that accessibility goes beyond physical infrastructure.

Operational Framework

DDS operates through a **dual-helpline model**, enabling 24/7 access to trained support teams:

- **7337324466** – For **Visually Impaired** (voice-based support)
- **7337434422** – For **Hearing Impaired** (video-based support with sign language interpreters)

The helplines are manned in three shifts per day:

- 3 constables per shift for VI helpline
- 1 sign language interpreter per shift for HI helpline

The framework includes:

- 24x7 complaint logging, tracking, and resolution
- Weekly review meetings by senior officers
- Follow-up calls and real-time case status updates

This ensures no complaint is ignored and every case is handled with professionalism and compassion.

Technological & Human Support Infrastructure

DDS combines **assistive technology** with **trained human resources** to ensure inclusive communication:

- Sign Language Interpreters for video calls
- Braille support and audio guides
- Speech-to-text applications and transcription tools
- Video relay services for HI individuals
- Legal aid and personal support at police stations
- Sensitization and training of police personnel in disability-inclusive practices

This hybrid support system helps break down barriers, enabling persons with disabilities to confidently engage with law enforcement.

Complaint Handling Process

DDS has a streamlined complaint handling process:

1. Complaint received via call/video/Braille
2. Interpreter/audio assistant transcribes the complaint
3. FIR is issued (if applicable)
4. Complaint is registered and tracked
5. Regular follow-up and feedback shared with the complainant

This SOP promotes **accountability**, **transparency**, and **timely redressal**, reducing procedural friction for PwDs.

Impact and Reach

Since inception, DDS has handled **166 complaints**, showing its effectiveness and reach:

- 124 from Visakhapatnam district
- 24 from other districts in Andhra Pradesh
- 18 from other states: Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh

Of these:

- 109 complaints were fully resolved
- 6 FIRs were registered
 - 2 based on Braille complaints (VI)
 - 4 via video calls (HI)

Types of Complaints Handled:

Nature of Complaint	No. of Cases
Financial Fraud / Cheating	15
Harassment	13
Civil Disputes	9
Domestic Violence	5
Physical Assault	5
Police Counseling	7
Missing Persons	2

DDS also received many calls for legal advice, mental support, and procedural clarification—demonstrating trust and credibility within the Divyang community.

Success Stories

- **Ms. Waliya Khan**, Ph. No. 7307080595 a deaf student from Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh was confined forcibly at home by her parents. DDS coordinated with UP Police, ensuring her school enrolment to resume her studies. This cross-state success reflects DDS's potential for national impact.
- **Smt. S. Malleswari**, Ph. No. 8790279646 a visually impaired teacher from Pendurthy, reported physical and mental harassment by her husband. The SHO, Pendurthy PS, provided counselling, leading to reconciliation and peaceful living.
- **Smt. Jakkalaa Cheruvu Lakshmii Prasanna**, Ph. No. 8309807058, a hearing-impaired woman from Cuddapah, complained about abuse by her in-laws. Police counseling restored harmony in the family.
- **Ms. G. Mamatha**, Ph. No. 9032318453 a hearing-impaired woman from Nalgonda, Telangana was being forced into marriage. The Rachakonda police intervened and halted the proposal after counselling her brother.
- **Mr. Rajesh**, Ph. No. 8185923253 from Nandyal, Andhra Pradesh was denied salary for two months. Police intervention ensured he was paid, and his family's needs were addressed.
- **Mr. Suresh**, Ph. No. 916059148 from Lankelapalem, reported cyber abuse. The police ensured he received appropriate digital safety advice and peace of mind.
- **Ms. P. Kavyanjali**, Ph. No. 9963591871 a hearing-impaired girl from Palnadu, faced abuse from her father. After interpreter-led counselling, her father agreed to behave responsibly.

These examples reflect DDS's **tangible impact** and ability to foster systemic change.

Broader Significance

India has over **65 million PwDs**, including **9.5 lakh in Andhra Pradesh** alone. Despite constitutional guarantees, law enforcement has traditionally lacked inclusive mechanisms. DDS breaks this trend by:

- Giving voice to marginalized communities
- Promoting trust-based policing
- Demonstrating institutional compassion
- Bridging systemic inequities

DDS serves as a **replicable model** for inclusive policing across India.

Future Plans

Building on its success, DDS aims to:

- Expand helplines to all districts in Andhra Pradesh
- Recruit additional sign language interpreters and accessibility coordinators
- Integrate AI-powered speech/image recognition tools
- Collaborate with NGOs and disability rights groups
- Conduct annual impact audits and performance reviews

Such scaling will transform DDS from a city-level initiative into a **state-wide or national framework** for disability-inclusive justice.

Conclusion

The **Disha Divyang Suraksha (DDS)** initiative is a **landmark effort** in making policing truly inclusive. It redefines the role of law enforcement as not just protectors, but enablers of dignity, justice, and equality. Through DDS, the Visakhapatnam City Police have shown how innovation, empathy, and leadership can create meaningful change in the lives of India's most vulnerable citizens.

DDS is not just a project—it is a **movement** toward a more just, humane, and inclusive society. The above redressal system is the right of both Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired individuals and should be followed by all states of India.



(Dr. A. Ravi Shankar, IPS)