

Universal Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities: A Policy and Practice

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the accessibility of infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in government buildings within the City Hall Complex of the Local Government Unit (LGU) of General Santos City, Philippines. Guided by Universal Design principles and legal mandates such as Batas Pambansa Bilang. 344 (BP 344), Republic Act Number. 7277 (RA 7277), and the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); it measured the extent of compliance of LGU Buildings with the national accessibility standards. Using a descriptive survey method and an evaluative checklist, the research assessed key features such as ramps, pathways, elevators, entrances, and restrooms across 36 government buildings. Results show partial compliance, with varying levels of accessibility among facilities. The findings highlight gaps in the implementation and the need for infrastructure upgrades. This study emphasizes the importance of inclusive public infrastructure in ensuring equal access for PWDs and recommend stronger policy enforcement to support disability-inclusive development in General Santos City.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Policy-makers around the world currently engage in establishing policies to protect the rights of persons with disabilities yet it remains a mere policy in most states and territories globally.

State party-members of the United Nations participates in various conventions including Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) where parties enter into treaties and commitment to support the campaign and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. In response to their commitment, they pass and implement policies to protect their PWD countrymen.

On July 26, 1982, Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 was signed into law by Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos. The said is an act to enhance the mobility of disabled persons by requiring certain buildings, institutions, establishments and public utilities to install facilities and other devices.

On 1992, the House of Representatives and House of Senate that composes the bicameral legislative branch of the Philippine Government passed bills which is later known as Republic Act Number 7277 also known as An Act Providing for the Rehabilitation, Self-Development and Self-Reliance of Disabled Person and Their Integration Into the Mainstream of Society and for Other Purposes. The law was further expanded by RA 9442, RA 10754, and local policies establishing institutions both in the level of National and Local Governments to oversee the facilitation of campaigns and protection of the rights of PWDs throughout the Philippines.

In order to strengthen the campaign on the rights of PWDs in the Philippines, RA 10070 was signed into law to establish Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in all provinces, cities, and municipalities in which, major cities passed local ordinances to establish a PDAO in their cities to provide general services to PWDs including provision of PWD IDs, distribution of assistive devices, development of programs and activities to promote awareness on the different disabilities and needs, conducts inspections to establishments to see if the environment is accessible.

General Santos City government passed Ordinance Number 12, Series of 2018 provides for the establishment, structure and functions of a Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office in General Santos City; and Ordinance Number 47, Series of 2022 adopting the provisions of BP 344 to intensify the efforts in blending the services of the local government unit to the global standards in accessibility also known as the Universal Design (UD) in the architectural features of buildings to meet the needs of PWDs.

Studying the extent of practice of universal design principles to attain PWD accessibility in the Philippines, and in General Santos City in a local setting, is crucial to ensure the realization of human rights, promote inclusive development, comply to international and legal commitments, and realize the dream of a society where no one is left behind.

The Philippines enacted numerous significant laws such as BP 344 (Accessibility Law), RA 7277 (Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities), RA 10070 (Institutionalizing PDAO), and other local laws enacted in the local government units.

These measures are drafted, enacted and implemented to address the needs of PWDs in their areas of responsibility. Despite such, there are still a lot of infrastructures remaining to be non-compliant.

A lot of PWDs face daily challenges, which mostly involve inaccessible sidewalks, public buildings, and restrooms. These are caused by lack of ramps, signage, and auditory signals. Even the public transportation systems are not designed for wheelchair or visually impaired commuters.

The study will help to assess how well these laws and policies are implemented, provide baseline data on local compliance with international obligations the state has committed to UNCRPD, study the identified barriers to help identifying specific **areas for improvement and reform** in the City Hall Complex of General Santos City Local Government Unit.

In the area of **advocacy and policy development**, evidence-based research provides **support for local ordinances and national reforms**, justification for **budget allocation and planning**, and empirical data for the advocacies initiated by **NGOs and CSOs**. This will help shift the discourse **from charity-based approaches to rights-based and inclusive development**.

Accessibility is a precondition for full participation in education, employment, governance, and community life. The research will attempt to contribute to understanding how environmental and institutional barriers limit PWD participation. This may reinforces the goal of inclusive, equitable, and resilient societies as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals particularly SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities.

In the identification of local solutions and urban planning, conditions vary by city or municipality. The localized studies such as the objective of this study in General Santos City can guide city planners, architects, and LGUs, inform design standards and building permits and identify successful practices and bottlenecks in implementation.

There is a scarcity of updated, area-specific data on accessibility in the City of General Santos and a study can fill this gap and helps monitor progress or regress in inclusive infrastructure and service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

This Chapter presents the methodologies and treatment of data used in the conduct of the study to attain its objectives guided by the problems presented.

Research Design

The descriptive survey method of research used in the study in as much as it involves description, analysis, and interpretation of the existing conditions. The study attempted to identify the policy-factors in implementing universal design in buildings to break mobility barriers for Persons with Disabilities; guided by the checklist in accordance with the laws passed and other guidelines; and determined the accessibility of the buildings and

offices in the Local Government Unit of General Santos City through checking the actual existing buildings and facilities within the City Hall Complex.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the City Hall Complex located in Barangay Dadiangas East, General Santos City. The said area is a parcel of land in the downtown area of the city. Most of the government buildings housing the offices of the Local Government Unit of General Santos City are found within the open compound. Other than the offices of the LGU, satellite offices of other national government agencies are also found in the area including the Bureau of Fire Protection, City Police Station 1, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Land Transportation Office, National Commission of Muslim Filipinos, Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sarangani-GenSan Provincial Office, Department of Social Welfare and Development Office Regional Office XII – Sarangani-General Santos Satellite Office and the Department of Interior and Local Government.



Figure 2.1 – The Maps of the Philippines (left) and Mindanao Group of Islands (right)



Figure 2.2 – The Maps of Region XII – SOCCSKSARGEN Region (left), General Santos City (middle), and the City Hall Complex in General Santos City (right)

General Santos City is located in Region XII also known as the SOCCSKSARGEN Region which is in the southern portion of the Mindanao group of islands found in the southern portion of the Philippine archipelago. The City Hall Complex where the buildings and offices of the General Santos City Local Government Unit are found, is located at Barangay Dadiangas East in the heart of GenSan. The City Hall Complex is surrounded by Matalam Street in the north, Roxas East Avenue in the east, SK Pendatun Avenue in the west, and the City Hall Drive in the south.

The city is classified as a highly urbanized city where the tuna industries, fishing and agriculture, and tourism generates majority of its income where a percentage of PWDs are also part of the workforce in various areas such as operations, management, and more.

Data Collection

The researcher seek permission to key personalities and officials in General Santos City for the purpose of gathering the data deemed valuable in the study. The data gathered are taken from the provisions of Philippine laws and policies including references from the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (IRR of BP 344) and the Building Code of the Philippines. The researcher visited all buildings and offices within the City Hall Complex of the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit and inspected the infrastructure features that makes the offices and buildings accessible to PWDs. The said features were inspected and measured, according to the used research tool, by the Licensed Civil Engineer hired by the researcher to record the most accurate data possible in relation to the objective of the research. Other observations in relation to the accessibility of facilities upon the conduct of the study were identified and recorded to support evidences of inaccessibility-causes of the buildings included in the study.

Data Analysis

The information generated from the actual inspections done in the buildings of the City Hall Drive of General Santos City where facilities required by the 1987 Philippine Constitution and Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (BP 344) which further supported by laws, IRRs and, memorandum and circulars in various agencies of the national government of the Philippines. The records are tallied and the findings are determined by the scores failed in the set interpretations of the accumulated scores.

Statistical Tools

To treat the gathered data from the conducted inspections, the study used weighted mean, frequency count and percentage as statistical tools.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This Chapter will discuss the related literature and studies, policies and systems related to the promotion and integration of Universal Design to attain universal accessibility.

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are individuals who experience long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2006). Disabilities may be visible or invisible, congenital or acquired, and can vary in degree and impact. PWDs are not a homogenous group; their experiences are shaped by a variety of factors including culture, gender, and access to support services. Recognizing and removing societal and environmental barriers is key to ensuring their inclusion and dignity in all areas of life, including education, employment, and public participation.

The Global Landscape of Disability

Globally, more than 1.3 billion people—approximately 16% of the world's population—live with some form of disability (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Among these, many face systemic challenges such as discrimination, limited access to healthcare and education, and lack of inclusive infrastructure. In both developing and developed countries, PWDs often experience social exclusion and economic marginalization. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have emphasized the need for inclusive development to ensure that “no one is left behind,” including people with disabilities (United Nations, 2015). Progress has been made, especially with the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), yet significant disparities persist, especially in low-income regions.

PWDs in the Philippines

In the Philippines, around 1.4 million individuals are identified as PWDs, although this figure is likely underreported due to social stigma and limited data collection systems (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2020). The country has enacted several laws aimed at protecting the rights of PWDs, such as Republic Act No. 7277 (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons), Batas Pambansa Blg. 344 (Accessibility Law), and its commitment to the CRPD. Despite this legal framework, challenges remain in implementation, particularly in rural areas where accessibility and awareness are limited. Advocacy groups continue to push for the realization of inclusive education, accessible infrastructure, and equal employment opportunities for all Filipinos with disabilities (Department of Social Welfare and Development [DSWD], 2023).

Social Inclusion

The Report on World Social Situation (2018) examined the relation of social protection in terms of contributions to social inclusion by responding to three main questions that include, “Who enjoys social protection coverage and who does not?”, “What are the barriers to effective coverage?”, and “How can social protection programmes be designed and implemented to be sensitive to the needs of disadvantaged groups?”. The seven identified often disadvantaged or vulnerable groups include international migrants, ethnic and racial minorities, indigenous people children, youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities.

The Participation of the right holders in the development of social protection systems and policy making is vital for in shows a sense of trust and ownership. Participation shows the projects the power that influences authorities to develop the policy features as well as the efficiency on the delivery of services (Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).

The International Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) required states parties the following: 1) “To ensure access to a social security scheme that provides a minimum estimated level of benefits to all individuals and families that will enable them to acquire at least essential health care, basic shelter and housing, water and sanitation, foodstuffs, and the most basic forms of education. If the State party cannot provide this minimum level for all risks and contingencies within its maximum available resources, the committee recommends that the State party, after a wide process of consultation, select a core group of social risks and contingencies.”, 2) “To ensure the right of access to social security systems or schemes on a non-discriminatory basis, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups.”, 3) “To respect existing social security schemes and protect them from unreasonable interference.”, 4) “To adopt and implement a national social security strategy and plan of action.”, 5) “To take targeted steps to implement social security schemes, particularly those that protect disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups.”, and 6) “To monitor the extend of the realization of the right to social security prescribed by CESCR General Comment 19, paragraph 59.” Which is amendable with the principle of the universality of protection.

Universal Protection

The principle of progressive realization gives emphasis on the central aspect of the obligation of State-parties to recognizing and protecting the economic, social and cultural rights under various international agreements and treaties. Despite of the firm thrust to State-parties, it has reconsidered the capability and availability of funds by the governments, but the objective of providing social security schemes at the maximum level remains. (ICESCR, paragraph 13, 1a). Paragraph 3 of the ILO Number 102 allowed State-parties to initially accept at least three out of nine branches of social security and gradually implement the remaining branches as a form of manifestation of the progressive realization principle.

On the other hand, ICESCR Recommendation Number 202, paragraph 12 cleared that the extent essential levels of social protection shall be provided from the resources of the national government, but if scarcity in resources exist, the government must exert efforts to the international community for additional supports through aids and other programs possible.

The idea that describes physical structures should be accessible and barrier-free to everyone with diverse needs was given birth by an architect, Michael Bednar (Bednar 1977) by using the term, Universal Design (UD). In the United States of America, the idea focused in breaking barriers in architectural features in buildings for persons with disabilities begun on August 12, 1968 when US President Lyndon Johnson signed the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and served as the early steps to campaign for awareness on the accessibility to buildings and later on strengthen by the Americans with Disabilities Act signed by US President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990.

American National Standards Institute (ANSI) was the first accessible design standard recognized in the United States that prescribed the design for accessible and usable facilities in both private and public buildings (ANSI A117.1, 1961). Universal Design (UD) started as a concept in architecture aiming to disable barriers in infrastructures to persons with disabilities (Dallas & Sprong, 2015; McGuire, 2014; and Zeff, 2012).

Universal Design in legal and political term emphasizes non-discrimination, equality and equal opportunities, and value of participation. However, the theoretical content of universal design concept has poorly developed (Imrie, 2012; Lid, 2012). Professor Rob Imrie believes that UD may challenge the “disabling attitudes and values of the society” (201,874) and noted that it is integral in rehabilitation to create a universally designed place (Imrie, 2012).

Referring to the definition of Universal Design by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), it says “universal design means the design of products, environment, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adoption or specialized design. UD does not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where there is needed” (CRPD 2008, Article 2). The definition further means that both political and academic context, the concept of ‘disability’ is contested (Kristiansen, Vehnas, and Shakespeare 2009; Tomas 2004).

In the perspective of social model, disability is present as a form of oppression in the environment of a person (Campbell and Oliver 1996; Thomas, 2004; Shakespeare, 2006; Scully, 2008).

Barrier-free Accessibility

Goldsmith (2007) believes that the life outside the paradigm of a normal body is treated differently. It is from a concepts that physical disabilities was determined as social acceptability for a long time by considering body features as “normal”, if not, deformed or disabled and leads to the categorization of the degree of disability.

Further, Macharia et.al, (2020) agreed that a person’s disability affects the physical health and the ability to participate in the activities of the community. Such may be in various form including physical, sensory, emotional, mental, cognitive, and developmental or a mix, which may have been acquired upon birth or may have developed later in life through manifestation or diagnosed.

The United Nations World Report on Disabilities in 2011 acknowledged that the sector of the PWDs is the largest marginalized group whom the World Health Organization called “poorest of the poor” (WHO, 2011).

Holmes (1996), Micheline and Mason quoted that a human body is flexible and therefore alterable while the society on the other hand is fixed and therefore unchangeable. This leads to the idea that PWDs should adopt to their environment and settle on the place where they feel fit them in. Holmes however believes that the reluctance of societies to employ measures to modify themselves, rather than the impairment of one person that causes a disability or disabilities.

Disability in Medical Perspective

Shakespeare and Watson (1997) expressed that, in the perspective of medical model, the ancient definition of disability is the loss of a function or capacity caused by illness, accident, injury, or other similar circumstances. Resulting to the struggle in gaining independence, equality, and social inclusion. As redefined, disability is a combination of bio-psycho-social forces, oppression, and personal tragedy.

Disability in the Lens of Social Model

According to the Social Model, disability is everything that imposes limitations or restrictions upon disabled people in an oppressive environment (Bromley et al, 2007). Recent studies on social model developed the multidimensional outlook on PWD-related researches that further supported the elements of human rights such as the rights to education, health care, social protection, and social participation.

Evci, (2009) said that accessibility to public places should always be considered in urban planning where the architecture of buildings are assessed to make it friendly to wheelchair users. (on Marakesh)

Disabling Environment

For decades, various policies and regulations were crafted and promulgated by countries around the world to respond to the need in building an able environment to cater the needs of the PWDs. Clarke, Ailshire, Nieuwenhuisen, and de Kleijin-de Vrankrijker (2011) believed that in order to reach the goal of building the PWD-friendly environment, there is a need for facilities to modify or be replaced. Architects and planners considering the standards of Universal Design (UD) always consider the features needed by the PWDs in their projects.

Physical Access and Accessibility

The disability rights movements around the world strongly promotes the idea that a PWD-friendly and accessible environment is achieved by adopting architectural features, through such, the right of PWDs to equally accessible environment is responded. Physical access or accessibility is the ability to move without any form of limitation and restriction either horizontally or vertically, inside and outside the premises of a facility. (Carr, Francis, Rixlin, and Stone, 1992; Netts, 2004).

Physical Feature and Infrastructural Accessibility

Despite the continuous development in the international human rights framework that has changed lives of people in some developing and most developed countries, PWDs do not enjoy the same benefits in developing countries in Africa and Asia. The fact remains that accessibility to education is still far to be achieved for and by PWDs in most developing countries in general worldwide. Hamzal and Dada (2005) agrees that the current situation is not good and unfortunate because it is said that “the greatest investment that any nation can embark for the development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources”. This would show how much a government puts more interest and importance in the well-being of its citizens.

Sultani, Sham, Awang and --- Yaman, (2012) expressed the importance of accessibility in both internal and external dealings of PWDs in particular in an environment where Clarke et.al, (2011) supported the idea and said that the built environment may make or break accessibility to PWDs. Miles (2009) also added that PWDs are differently treated when compared to the so called “normal” or “non-disabled” people.

Accessibility Policies for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Worldwide

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) represent over one billion people globally, many of whom face significant barriers in accessing education, transportation, employment, and public services (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Accessibility policies are vital to ensuring that PWDs can participate fully in society, in line with international commitments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which emphasizes non-discrimination, full inclusion, and accessibility (United Nations, 2006). While many countries have adopted laws to uphold these principles, implementation varies significantly due to differences in political will, infrastructure, socio-economic context, and cultural attitudes toward disability. This comparative analysis explores how selected countries—the United States, European nations, Nigeria, Japan, South Korea, China, Singapore, and Indonesia—develop and enforce accessibility policies for PWDs, highlighting both successes and ongoing challenges.

The United States has one of the most comprehensive frameworks for disability rights, primarily anchored in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. This landmark legislation prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to government programs. It mandates reasonable accommodations and accessible infrastructure in both public and private sectors (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). The ADA served as a global model, promoting the concept of universal design and inclusion.

Across Europe, the European Union promotes disability inclusion through the European Disability Strategy 2021–2030, which focuses on enabling PWDs to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others. The strategy supports member states in implementing accessibility measures in transport, digital spaces, built environments, and employment (European Commission, 2021). The EU also enforces the European Accessibility Act (2019), which ensures common accessibility requirements for key products and services across the internal market.

Nigeria has made strides in disability rights through the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act signed into law in 2019. The law mandates accessibility in public buildings, transportation, and education while establishing the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) to oversee compliance (National Assembly of Nigeria, 2019). However, challenges remain in enforcement and awareness, especially in rural communities with limited infrastructure and resources (CBM International, 2022).

Japan's approach is shaped by its Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities and its ratification of the UN CRPD. The Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (2016) mandates reasonable accommodation and prohibits discrimination in public services and employment (Government of Japan, 2016). Accessibility is well-integrated in transport systems and urban planning, with barrier-free design incorporated into public infrastructure, especially in preparation for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

South Korea has adopted the Act on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (2007), which mandates the elimination of discrimination in all aspects of public life, including education, employment, and information access. Korea's Framework Act on Welfare of Persons with Disabilities further promotes independent living and universal design (Korea Legislation Research Institute, 2020). Enforcement mechanisms are in place, but critics argue that more needs to be done to shift from welfare-based to rights-based inclusion models.

China's disability policies are led by the Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons (2008 revision), which covers education, employment, rehabilitation, and social security for PWDs. Accessibility is promoted through national standards, such as Barrier-Free Environment Construction Codes, though enforcement varies widely across provinces (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2021). While progress has been made, especially in urban areas, systemic and social barriers still limit full inclusion.

Singapore implements its accessibility policies through its Enabling Masterplans (currently in the third phase, 2017–2021), which provide a roadmap for inclusive education, employment, transport, and built environment for PWDs. The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) mandates accessibility in buildings under the Code on Accessibility in the Built Environment (BCA, 2019). Although not a CRPD signatory until 2013, Singapore has since demonstrated strong government commitment to inclusion through inter-agency collaboration and funding support.

Indonesia passed Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which replaced the older law and aligned more closely with the CRPD. The law guarantees rights to education, health, employment, and political participation for PWDs. However, implementation is uneven, particularly in rural and decentralized regions. Barriers persist due to limited funding, infrastructure, and social awareness, although recent local initiatives have shown promising progress (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Malaysia acknowledged and accepted the social concept of disability, this leads to the recognition of the Malaysian Government to the quality of the life among its citizens, abled or with disability. As Malaysia strived to achieve a "Developed" status on 2020, the government planned to improve the "quality of life and well-being" of its citizens, as well as to establish a barrier-free environment among all its people. The effort includes the

enactment of policies to address the major needs of Malaysian PWDs in terms of inclusion in the society and provision of basic services such as, Welfare Policy of 1990, National Social Policy of 2003, National Policy for PWD of 2007, National Plan of Action for PWD 2007-2012, and Malaysian PWD Act of 2008 (Act 658). To address the right to accessibility among PWDs in Malaysia, the International Islamic University in Malaysia incorporated the ideas and principle of Universal Design in the university's academic curriculum on architecture, Ayres I., Braithwaite J., (Shakespeare and Officer, 2011).

The Philippines passed more laws and policies pertaining to the rights of PWDs and the enforcement of such is shared by both National Government and Local Government Units governing the provinces, cities, and Municipalities throughout the country. As early as 1982, the Philippines enacted Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments and Public Utilities to Install Facilities and Other Devices) also known as the Accessibility Law, followed by the enactment of Magna Carta for Disabled Persons or Republic Act 7277 (RA 7277) in 1992 that becomes the foundation of the later policies to address the needs of the PWDs including RA 9442 (Expanding the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons and other Purposes) on 2007, RA 10070 (Creation of Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office in the Provinces, Cities and Municipalities) in 2010, RA 10524 (An Act Expanding the Positions Reserved for PWDs) in 2013, and RA 10754 (An Act Expanding the Rights and Privileges of PWD) in 2016.

Affirmative Actions for PWDs

Affirmative action for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) is a policy and legal strategy aimed at eliminating barriers to equal participation and ensuring full inclusion in society. As disability continues to be both a human rights and development issue, affirmative action measures are essential tools for rectifying systemic discrimination and historic exclusion in education, employment, and public services. While significant strides have been made globally, implementation challenges persist, especially in developing nations. This article explores the concept, necessity, international frameworks, national policies, and challenges related to affirmative action for PWDs.

According to Degener, (2016), affirmative action refers to specific steps taken to increase the representation and inclusion of marginalized groups through preferential access to opportunities and resources. For PWDs, affirmative action includes legislative quotas in employment, reserved educational seats, prioritized social services, and accessibility mandates. Unlike general equality policies, affirmative action is targeted and often time-bound, intending to level the playing field.

PWDs often face multiple layers of disadvantage due to physical, institutional, social, and attitudinal barriers (Degener, 2016). Affirmative action addresses this by implementing proactive policies that can facilitate participation, representation, and empowerment of PWDs in all spheres of life.

Employment Domain of Affirmative Action

Employment remains a critical area for affirmative action. Many PWDs remain unemployed or underemployed due to stereotypes and lack of accommodation. Policies such as employment quotas (e.g., 1% to 4% reserved jobs for PWDs) are prevalent in several countries.

In the Philippines, BP 344 primarily focused on physical access to buildings, it supports employment by requiring **accessible workplaces** for PWDs, ensuring they can safely and comfortably access employment areas; RA 7277 states that, Section 5 Equal opportunity for employment: No PWD shall be denied access to opportunities for suitable employment, Section 6 Sheltered employment: The State shall provide for a work environment that accommodates the needs of PWDs, Section 7 Apprenticeship: Employers are encouraged to hire PWDs as apprentices or learners when feasible, Section 8 Incentives: Employers who hire PWDs can claim additional tax deductions equivalent to 25% of the total amount paid as salaries/wages to PWD employees; RA 9442 added further provided penalties for discrimination against PWDs in employment, education, transportation, and health services and strengthen the enforcement of the Magna Carta for PWDs; and the latest RA 10524 added amendments to RA 7277 and provided Section 5 mandating at least 1% of all positions in



government agencies, offices, or corporations shall be reserved for PWDs while private corporations with more than 100 employees are encouraged to reserve at least 1% of jobs for PWDs and firmly reiterates the right of PWDs to work and reasonable accommodation in employment.

In addition, the International Labour Organization (2020), quota systems can be effective when supported by strong enforcement, training programs, and employer incentives.

Education Domain of Affirmative Action

Inclusive education and scholarship quotas are crucial affirmative action strategies. Access to quality education is foundational for economic participation. In many countries, educational institutions reserve slots, provide tuition waivers, or assistive technologies to PWDs.

For example, in the Philippines, DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009 mandates inclusive education programs, while tertiary institutions offer dedicated scholarships for students with disabilities.

Accessibility and Participation Domain of Affirmative Action

Beyond employment and education, affirmative action extends to ensuring physical, digital, and systemic accessibility. Government initiatives may include funding accessible infrastructure, supporting disability-inclusive disaster response, and ensuring PWD representation in governance structures.

Accessibility audits and inclusive design frameworks, such as Universal Design, are increasingly being adopted in government policies (Evcil, 2009).

Challenges in Implementation

Despite legal provisions, many affirmative action programs suffer from poor implementation. Key barriers include: lack of awareness and stigma where Employers and educators may be unaware of disability rights or harbor negative stereotypes; inadequate monitoring and enforcement where policies lack mechanisms for enforcement or accountability; insufficient funding where budget constraints often hinder program execution, especially in low-income countries; and fragmented systems data where poor disability data limits evidence-based policy making.

Affirmative action policies must be monitored for effectiveness, updated regularly, and complemented by advocacy and awareness campaigns.

Affirmative action is an essential strategy for realizing the rights of Persons with Disabilities and promoting genuine inclusion in society. However, for these measures to succeed, they must be backed by political will, sufficient funding, stakeholder collaboration, and ongoing societal transformation. Inclusive policies must move beyond symbolic recognition to tangible, measurable change that empowers PWDs across all sectors. Governments, civil society, and international institutions must continue to advocate for and enforce affirmative action, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework illustrates the interrelated components necessary to achieve the inclusion of PWDs it includes Universal Accessibility for persons with disabilities, Policy and Practice and PWD-Friendly Infrastructures.

Universal Accessibility is the outcome of universal designing of infrastructures. The designs may be implemented because of the existing laws and policies, a concept or idea of individuals or institutions aiming to include the convenience and accessibility of their services to PWDs.

These policies must be translated into inclusive practices including building code enforcement, urban planning regulations, training of personnel, and regular accessibility audits. Practice bridges the gap between law and

lived experience, ensuring that what is mandated legally is implemented practically (European Commission, 2021; DSWD, 2023).

PWD-Friendly Infrastructure such as ramps, tactile paths, elevators, accessible toilets, and signage—is the visible and physical manifestation of these policies and practices. These elements make spaces navigable and safe for individuals with diverse abilities (Evcil, 2009; Dallas & Sprong, 2015).

All of these components contribute to the achievement of universal inclusion, a broader goal that ensures environments, products, and services are available and usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation. Universal inclusion supports independent living, equality, and inclusion for all, including the aging population and those with temporary and lifetime impairments (Mace, 1998; WHO, 2022).

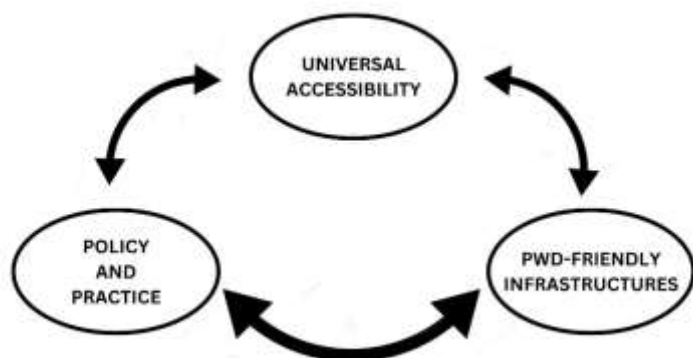


Figure 1 – The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Significance of the Study

The study in Universal Accessibility to Persons with Disabilities: A Policy and Practice holds a significant value in social, academic and policy context by examining the extent of compliance of the buildings in the City Hall Complex of General Santos City Local Government Unit to the commitment of the Philippines to UNCRPD, IRR of BP 344, Building Code of the Philippines, and local laws and policies in General Santos City. The research aims to meaningfully contribute to the national and local efforts in promoting inclusive development and the rights of PWDs.

For the Local Government Unit of General Santos City. The findings of the study will provide evidence-based insights that may be used as reference of the planners, engineers and policy-makers in the city in identifying the gaps in the in the policies, implementation and gaps in infrastructures. The insights that can be drawn from the result can support a more effective and efficient compliance with accessibility laws including BP 344, RA 7277, RA 9442, other circulars and policies from national government agencies, and local ordinances and policies in the LGUs. This is to give priority to accessibility improvements in infrastructure and future urban development.

For Policy-Makers and Disability Advocates. This research serves as a reference for national policymakers and advocacy groups in understanding the current state of accessibility in cities like General Santos. It highlights areas where enforcement mechanisms may be weak or inconsistent, thereby informing more responsive and inclusive policy interventions.

The Academic and Research Communities. The study contributes to the limited body of literature on PWD accessibility in the Philippine context, especially outside Metro Manila. It offers a localized, empirical case that may serve as a foundation for future comparative studies, policy analyses, and interdisciplinary research on disability rights, urban planning, and social inclusion.

For the PWDs and their Families. Ultimately, this study aims to amplify the voices and lived experiences of PWDs by identifying physical and systemic barriers to access. Its findings can help raise awareness of the

importance of Universal Design and accessible environments, thereby promoting greater participation of PWDs in public, economic, and civic life.

For the Society at Large. Accessibility benefits not only PWDs but also senior citizens, pregnant women, and others with temporary mobility limitations. Thus, improving infrastructure access contributes to a more equitable and humane society where all individuals, regardless of ability, can navigate public spaces with dignity and independence.

Scope and Delimitation

The study was conducted in the City Hall Complex, Barangay Dadiangas East, General Santos City. All 37 buildings occupied and maintained by government offices and agencies are involved.

Statement of the Problem

In this study, the researcher aims to determine the following:

1. What are the profiles of all government buildings within the City Hall Complex of General Santos City Local Government Unit in terms of accessibility to persons with disabilities wearing wheelchair?
2. How many government buildings are accessible to people wearing wheelchair in the City Hall Complex of General Santos City Local Government Unit?
3. How many multi-level buildings are accessible for individuals wearing wheelchair in the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit? and
4. Based on the data generated, is the City Hall Drive of General Santos City accessible to individuals with disabilities?

RESULT

This Chapter presents the data gathered during the conduct of the data gathering and inspection, analysis of the entries and determination of interpretation according to the results recorded.

Profiles of the Buildings

The research recorded the profiles of the building which include the number of office occupants, number of floors/levels, highest accessible level, number of PWDs employed and working in the subject building, area occupied in square meters, materials used to construct, year of occupancy of the office and or construction of the building, age of the building in years, building accessibility to the road for people wearing wheelchair, and the possibility of modifications and improvements of the building to be considered PWD-friendly.

From the total target of thirty-seven (37) buildings, only thirty-six (36) are inspected for the study due to security protocols practiced by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas – General Santos City. Twenty-eight (28) buildings are occupied by a single office or agency; four (4) are shared by two (2) offices; one (1) building is shared by three to five (3-5) buildings; and three (3) buildings are shared by eleven offices and up (11-up).

There are twenty (20) single-level buildings and sixteen (16) multi-level buildings. Among the multi-level buildings, twelve (12) have second levels, three (3) have third levels, and one (1) has fourth level. Thirty-three (33) buildings are accessible only in the ground level, two (2) are accessible up to the second level, and one (1) building is accessible to individuals wearing wheelchair up to fourth level.

**Table 1 – The Profiles of All Buildings within the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit. (Part I)****BUILDING PROFILES IN THE CITY HALL DRIVE OF LGU GENERAL SANTOS CITY**

PROFILE	INDICATOR	FREQUENCY
1. Number of offices occupying a building.		
	1 Office	28
	2 Office	4
	3-5 Offices	1
	6-10 Offices	0
	11 and more Offices	3
2. Number of floors/levels in a building.		
	Single-Level	20
	2 Levels	12
	3 Levels	3
	4 Levels	1
3. Highest building level accessible to people wearing wheelchair.		
	Ground level only	33
	Up to second level	2
	Up to third level	0
	Up to fourth level	1
4. Number of PWDs working.		28
5. Land/Lot area occupied by the building.		
	0-200 square meters	7
	201-400 square meters	6
	401-600 square meters	9
	601-800 square meters	8
	801 square meters and larger	7
6. Building construction materials.		
	Light Materials	0
	Concrete Materials	37



Combination of Materials	0
7. Year of building/site occupancy.	
2021-2025	11
2910-2020	6
2009 and older	19
8. Age of the building	
0-5 year-old	11
6-15 year-old	6
16 year-old and older	19
9. Building accessibility/connectivity to the road	
Connected	11
Not connected	25
May be connect	36
10. Building safety for modification.	
Can be modified	33
Cannot be modified	3

The data gathering counted twenty-eight (28) Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) working within the city hall drive from five (5) offices. Some of the visited offices confirmed that the agency does not employ or assign PWDs in their duties due to security and safety risks.

When it comes to land occupation of a building or compound, seven (7) buildings occupy zero to two hundred square meters of land (0-200sqm), six (6) occupies two hundred one to four hundred square meters (201-400sqm), nine (9) occupies four hundred one to six hundred square meters (401-600sqm), eight (8) occupies six hundred one to eight hundred square meters (601-800sqm), and seven (7) occupies eight hundred one square meters and wider (801sqm and wider).

All thirty-six (36) buildings checked for the purpose of the research are constructed using concrete materials.

In 2020-2025, eleven (11) buildings were recently erected and occupied for the past five (5) years, six (6) from 2010-2019, and nineteen (19) were within the compound in 2009 and earlier. The data coincided with eleven (11) zero to five (0-5) year-old buildings, six (6) six to ten (6-10) year-old buildings, and nineteen (19) fifteen year-old and older (19 and older) buildings.

In terms of connectivity to the road, eleven (11) buildings are connected to the road while twenty-five (25) are not and inaccessible by wheelchair to reach. On the other hand, all buildings can be modified for improvement and be accessible from the road.

There are thirty-three (33) buildings that are safe for modifications while there are three (3) buildings that cannot undergo further modifications or improvements to be more accessible to people wearing wheelchair.

Wheelchair-Friendly Ramps

Table 2 – Buildings with Wheelchair-Friendly Ramps in the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit. (Part II-A)

WHEELCHAIR-FRIENDLY RAMPS		
LEGEND:		
4.50 – 5.00 Very High Compliance		
3.50 – 4.49 High Compliance		
2.50 – 3.49 Moderate Compliance		
1.50 – 2.49 Low Compliance		
1.00 – 1.49 Very Low Compliance		
INDICATORS	MEAN	INDICATOR
Does the ramp have a minimum width of 1.20m?	3.67	High Compliance
Does the ramp have a gradient not steeper than 1:12?	3.64	High Compliance
Does the ramp have a double “J” type handrail at the center? (For ramps with 3m width or more.)	3.67	High Compliance
Does the ramp have a minimum length of 1.5m landing? (For ramps with 6m length or more.)	3.67	High Compliance
Does the ramp have a level area not less than 1.80m on top and bottom?	3.67	High Compliance
Does the ramp have handrails in both sides at 700mm and 900mm from the ramp?	3.67	High Compliance
Does the ramp have 300mm long extension of handrails in both top and bottom?	3.64	High Compliance
Does the ramp have curb on both sides with a minimum height of 100mm?	3.67	High Compliance
Does the ramp have a railing across the full width of its lower end, not less than 180m from the foot of the ramp? (For ramps with a rise greater than 170mm and leads down towards an area where vehicular traffic is possible.)	3.64	High Compliance
Does the ramp have slip resistant materials and shall have a coefficient of friction of 0.6 on level surface and 0.8 on sloping surfaces?	3.67	High Compliance
OVERALL MEAN	3.66	High Compliance

In Part II – A of the research tool, shown below, composed the following questions: 1) “Does the ramp have a minimum width of 1.20m?” 2) “Does the ramp have a gradient not steeper than 1:12?”; 3) “Does the ramp have a double “J” type handrail at the center? (For ramps with 3m width or more.)”; 4) “Does the ramp have a minimum length of 1.5m landing? (For ramps with 6m length or more.)”; 5) “Does the ramp have a level area not less than 1.80m on top and bottom?”; 6) “Does the ramp have handrails in both sides at 700mm and 900mm from the ramp?”; 7) “Does the ramp have 300mm long extension of handrails in both top and bottom?”; 8) “Does

the ramp have curb on both sides with a minimum height of 100mm?"; 9) "Does the ramp have a railing across the full width of its lower end, not less than 180mm from the foot of the ramp? (For ramps with a rise greater than 170mm and leads down towards an area where vehicular traffic is possible.)" and 10) "Does the ramp have slip resistant materials and shall have a coefficient of friction of 0.6 on level surface and 0.8 on sloping surfaces?". The indicators the total mean is equal to 3.66 which means that there is a high compliance of General Santos City Local Government Unit in the installation of ramps according to the standards of universal design principles.

The first physical feature checked in each building is the availability of PWD-accessible ramps. These features are often found in front or side of the buildings. Some have single, while others have multiple ramps depending on the size of the building.

There are 10 (10) not compliant buildings including Local Civil Registrar, Employee's Cooperative Canteen, Oval Gymnasium, General Services Office – Maintenance Division, City Assessor's Office, Special Drug Education Center and Aftercare Office, Early Childhood Office, Department of Social Welfare and Development Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office, Public Safety Office, and Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office Training Center (1); Philippine Red Cross – Sarangani-GenSan Office is poor compliant (2); General Santos City Police Office – Police Station 1 and Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office are moderate compliant (3). While the Youth Affairs and Development Office (4.8), City Environment and Natural Resources Office (4.9), and twenty-one (21) buildings including Bureau of Fire Protection, Traffic Enforcement Unit, City Agriculturist's Office, City Veterinarian's Office, General Santos City Government Employees' Association, City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, PWD-Friendly Comfort Room, Kasfala Hall, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, PWD Center, Public City Library, Registry of Deeds, Social Development Office, Model Senior Citizen Center, Office of Senior Citizen Affairs, Post Office, Sangguniang Panlungsod, Land Transportation Office, Liga ng mga Barangay, Investment Building, and the City Hall (5) are highly compliant.

The City Hall Drive of General Santos City Government is compliant with PWD-friendly ramps for people wearing wheelchair.

Availability of Elevator/Lift

Part II – B, presented in TABLE 3, was guided by the following standards: 1) "Does an elevator or lift installed in the absence of PWD ramps?"; 2) "Does the elevator have a minimum clear dimension of 1400mm in depth and 1200mm in width?"; 3) "Does the elevator possesses a clear opening of not less than 900mm?"; 4) "Does the elevator have handrails fixed in both sides of the rear portion with the height of 900mm from the first floor?" and 5) "Does the elevator control panel possesses a minimum diameter of 20mm and a maximum depression depth of 1mm?". The overall mean that is equal to 2.34 that is equal to low compliance of General Santos City Local Government Unit to install elevators/lifts in multi-level buildings currently occupied by the local government offices.

Elevators and or lifts are necessary alternative in the absence of ramps accessible to wheelchair in multi-level buildings. There are sixteen (16) identified multi-level buildings included in the study.

The data shows that there are eight (8) buildings identified not compliant including Traffic Enforcement Unit, General Santos City Police Office – Police Station 1, City Agriculturist's Office, General Santos City Government Employees' Association, Kasfala Hall, Public City Library, Social Development Office, and Post Office (1); the Bureau of Fire Protection, Youth Affairs and Development Office, and City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (3) are compliant; Public Safety Office (4) is moderate compliant; and the Investment Building (4.2), and Sangguniang Panlungsod and City Hall (5) are highly compliant in installing elevators/lifts. The City Hall Drive of General Santos City Government is generally not compliant with elevators/lifts to make multi-level buildings accessible for people wearing wheelchair.

Table 3 – Buildings with Elevator/Lift in the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit. (Part II-B)

ELEVATORS/LIFTS		
LEGEND:		
4.50 – 5.00 Very High Compliance		
3.50 – 4.49 High Compliance		
2.50 – 3.49 Moderate Compliance		
1.50 – 2.49 Low Compliance		
1.00 – 1.49 Very Low Compliance		
INDICATORS	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
Does an elevator or lift installed in the absence of PWD ramps?	2.04	Low Compliance
Does the elevator have a minimum clear dimension of 1400mm in depth and 1200mm in width?	2.33	Low Compliance
Does the elevator possesses a clear opening of not less than 900mm?	2.33	Low Compliance
Does the elevator have handrails fixed in both sides of the rear portion with the height of 900mm from the first floor?	2.33	Low Compliance
Does the elevator control panel possesses a minimum diameter of 20mm and a maximum depression depth of 1mm?	2.33	Low Compliance
OVERALL MEAN	2.34	Low Compliance

PWD-Friendly Doors and Entrances

Part II – C, in TABLE 4, responded to: 1) “Does the entry and departure point accessible to the interior lobby of the building?” 2) “Does the entry and exit point provided vestibules with a level are with at least 1.80m depth and 1.50m width?” and 3) “Does the entry and exit point have a door with at least 800mm-width?”. The total mean of 4.70 is equal to very high compliance of General Santos City Local Government Unit to PWD-friendly and accessible building entrances.

The doors and entrances of buildings may serve as drop-off or pick-up points to PWDs accessing building facilities. It also leads to the interior areas of the building.

Results show that there are nine (9) moderate compliant buildings including City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office, Employees’ Cooperative Canteen, Oval Gymnasium, General Services Office – Maintenance Division, City Assessors Office, Special Drug Education Center and Aftercare Office, Early Childhood Office, Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office and Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office Training Center (4). On the other hand, twenty-five (25) are identified high compliant to PWD-accessible doors and entrances where General Santos City Government Employees’ Association (4.33); City Environment and Natural Resources Office, Land Transportation Office and Liga ng mga Barangay (4.67); and Bureau of Fire Protection, Traffic Enforcement Unit, General Santos City Police Office – Police Station 1, Local Civil Registrar, Youth Affairs and Development Office, City Agriculturist’s Office, City Veterinarian’s Office, Philippine Red Cross – Sarangani-GenSan Office, PWD-Friendly Comfort Room, Kasfala Hall, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, PWD

Center, Public City Library, Registry of Deeds, Social Development Office, Office Senior Citizen Affairs, Department of Social Welfare and Development Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office, Public Safety Office, Post Office, Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office Training Center, Sangguniang Panlungsod, Investment Building and City Hall (5).

Table 4 – Buildings with PWD-Friendly Doors and Entrances in the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit. (Part II-C)

DOORS AND ENTRANCES		
LEGEND:		
4.50 – 5.00 Very High Compliance		
3.50 – 4.49 High Compliance		
2.50 – 3.49 Moderate Compliance		
1.50 – 2.49 Low Compliance		
1.00 – 1.49 Very Low Compliance		
INDICATORS	MEAN	INDICATOR
Does the entry and departure point accessible to the interior lobby of the building?	4.69	Very High Compliance
Does the entry and exit point provided vestibules with a level are with at least 1.80m depth and 1.50m width?	4.67	Very High Compliance
Does the entry and exit point have a door with at least 800mm-width?	4.75	Very High Compliance
OVERALL MEAN	4.70	Very High Compliance

PWD-Accessible Washrooms and Toilets

Part II – D provided the responses for: 1) “Does the washroom/toilet have a cubicle dimension of at least 1.70m x 1.80m?”; 2) “Does the washroom/toilet have a door with at least 800mm width and opens outward, or slides sideward?”; 3) “Does the washroom/toilet have a movable grab bar with 80mm mounting height?”; 4) “Does the washroom/toilet have a fixed grab bar with 800mm mounting height opposite to the movable grab bar?”; 5) “Does the washroom/toilet have a lavatory with 800mm mounting height and 650mm vertical leg room space?”; 6) “Does the washroom/toilet have a center water closet with 400mm to the finished face of the adjacent wall?” and 7) “locks with 800mm height?”. The results show that General Santos City Local Government Units is with high compliance with the overall mean of 3.89 in the provision of PWD-accessible washrooms and toilets.

The distribution of data on the compliance in relation to the provision of PWD-accessible washrooms and toilets presents that there are four (4) not compliant buildings such as Youth Affairs and Development Office, Employees’ Cooperative Canteen, Department of Social Welfare and Development Region XII– Sar-Gen Satellite Office and Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office (1); General Santos City Government Employees’ Association (2) is poor compliant; Public Safety Office and Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office Training Center (2.71) are compliant; and the twelve (12) moderate compliant are the Local Civil Registry, City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office, Philippine Red Cross – Sarangani-GenSan Office, Oval Gymnasium, General Services Office – Maintenance Division, City Assessors Office, Social Development Office, Special Drug Education Center and Aftercare



Office, Early Childhood Office, Post Office, Sangguniang Panlungsod and Land Transportation Office (4). While General Santos City Police Office – Police Station 1 (4.14); Kasfala Hall (4.29); City Environment and Natural Resources Office and Public City Library (4.43); City Agriculturist's Office, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, Registry of Deeds, Model Senior Citizen Center and Investment Building (4.71); Bureau of Fire Protection (4.86); and Traffic Enforcement Unit, City Veterinarian's Office, PWD-Friendly Comfort Room, PWD Center, Office of Senior Citizen Affairs, Liga ng mga Barangay and City Hall are highly compliant.

Table 5 – Buildings with PWD-Friendly Washrooms and Toilets in the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit. (Part II-D)

PWD WASHROOM AND TOILETS			
LEGEND:			
4.50 – 5.00 Very High Compliance			
3.50 – 4.49 High Compliance			
2.50 – 3.49 Moderate Compliance			
1.50 – 2.49 Low Compliance			
1.00 – 1.49 Very Low Compliance			
INDICATORS		MEAN	INDICATOR
Does the washroom/toilet have a cubicle dimension of at least 1.70m x 1.80m?		3.89	High Compliance
Does the washroom/toilet have a door with at least 800mm width and opens outward, or slides sideward?		4.00	High Compliance
Does the washroom/toilet have a movable grab bar with 80mm mounting height?		3.75	High Compliance
Does the washroom/toilet have a fixed grab bar with 800mm mounting height opposite to the movable grab bar?		3.75	High Compliance
Does the washroom/toilet have a lavatory with 800mm mounting height and 650mm vertical leg room space?		3.94	High Compliance
Does the washroom/toilet have a center water closet with 400mm to the finished face of the adjacent wall?		4.03	High Compliance
Does the washroom/toilet have door knobs and door locks with 800mm height?		3.89	High Compliance
OVERALL MEAN		3.89	High Compliance

Building Compliance to PWD-Accessibility

The data presents that Employees' Cooperative Canteen and Department of Social Welfare and Development Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office (2) show poor compliant. General Santos City Police Office – Police Station 1 (2.79); Department of Science and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office

Training Center (2.90); and Oval Gymnasium, General Services Office – Maintenance Division, City Assessors Office, Special Drug Education Center and Aftercare Office, Early Childhood Office and Department of Science

and Technology Region XII – Sar-Gen Satellite Office (3) show compliant. General Santos City Government Employees’ Association (3.08); Public Safety Office (3.18); Local Civil Registry (3.33); Youth Affairs and Development Office (3.45); Philippine Red Cross – Sarangani-GenSan Office (3.67); Social Development Office and Post Office (3.75); Kasfala Hall (3.82); Public City Library (3.86); City Agriculturist’s Office (3.93); Traffic Enforcement Unit and City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (4) show moderate compliant. Lastly, Bureau of Fire Protection (4.46); Land Transportation Office (4.56); City Environment and Natural Resources Office (4.67); Investment Building (4.73); Sangguniang Panlungsod (4.75); Liga ng mga Barangay (4.89); National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, Registry of Deeds and Model Senior Citizen Center (4.90); and City Veterinarian’s Office, PWD-Friendly Comfort Room, PWD Center, Office Senior Citizen Affairs and City Hall (5) show high compliant. Based on the summary of interpretations, the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit is high compliant.

Table 6 – The Total Average and Interpretation of the Data Gathered from the Buildings inside the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit.

SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE OF THE BUILDING			
LEGEND:			
4.50 – 5.00 Very High Compliance			
3.50 – 4.49 High Compliance			
2.50 – 3.49 Moderate Compliance			
1.50 – 2.49 Low Compliance			
1.00 – 1.49 Very Low Compliance			
NO.	BUILDING	OVERALL	INTERPRETATION
1	Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP)	4.46	High Compliance
2	Traffic Enforcement Unit (TEU)	4.00	High Compliance
3	GSCPO - Police Station 1 (PP1)	2.79	Moderate Compliance
4	Local Civil Registry (LCR)	3.33	Moderate Compliance
5	Youth Affairs and Development Office (YADO)	3.45	Moderate Compliance
6	City Agriculturist's Office (CityAgri)	3.93	High Compliance
7	City Environment and Natural Resources (CENRO)	4.67	Very High Compliance
8	City Veterinarian's Office (CityVet)	5.00	Very High Compliance
9	General Santos City Employees Association (GSCGEA)	3.08	Moderate Compliance
10	City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (CDRRMO)	4.00	High Compliance
11	Philippine Red Cross (Red Cross)	3.67	High Compliance
12	Employee's Cooperative Canteen	2.00	Low Compliance
13	PWD Friendly Comfort Room (PWD CR)	5.00	Very High Compliance



14	Oval Gymnasium	3.00	Moderate Compliance
15	Kasfala Hall	3.82	High Compliance
16	National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF)	4.91	Very High Compliance
17	General Services Office (GSO Maintenance)	3.00	Moderate Compliance
18	PWD Center (PDAO)	5.00	Very High Compliance
19	Public City Library	3.86	High Compliance
20	Registry of Deeds (ROD)	4.91	Very High Compliance
21	City Assessor's Office	3.00	Moderate Compliance
22	Social Development Office (CSWDO)	3.75	High Compliance
23	Special Drug Education Center and Aftercare Office (SDEC)	3.00	Moderate Compliance
24	Early Childhood Office	3.00	Moderate Compliance
25	Model Senior Citizen Center	4.91	Very High Compliance
26	Office of the Senior Citizen Affairs (OSCA)	5.00	Very High Compliance
27	DSWD XII Sar-Gen Satellite Office	2.00	Low Compliance
28	Public Safety Office (PSO)	3.18	Moderate Compliance
29	Post Office	3.75	High Compliance
30	DOST XII Sar-Gen Satellite Office	3.00	Moderate Compliance
31	DOST XII Sar-Gen Satellite Office Training Center	2.91	Moderate Compliance
32	Sangguniang Panlungsod (SP)	4.75	Very High Compliance
33	Land Transportation Office (LTO)	4.56	Very High Compliance
34	Liga ng Mga Barangay	4.89	Very High Compliance
35	Investment Building	4.73	Very High Compliance
36	City Hall	5.00	Very High Compliance
OVERALL MEAN		3.65	High Compliance

DISCUSSION

Summary

This Chapter discusses the key findings, the conclusions and the recommendations derived from the results of the study conducted.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the conducted research in the City Hall Drive of the Local Government Unit of General Santos City are as follows:

There are forty-one (41) buildings erected in the City Hall Drive of the Local Government Unit of General Santos City where thirty-seven (37) buildings are currently occupied, one (1) multi-level structure unused, and three (3) multi-level buildings are currently under construction. Among the occupied buildings, there are twenty (20) single-level and sixteen (16) multi-level structures with twelve (12) reaches up to second level, three (3) up to third level, and one (1) up to fourth level. The buildings within the City Hall Drive, General Santos City are mixed of old, retrofitted and repurposed and new buildings where some of which are shared by multiple offices;

There are eleven (11) accessible buildings in terms of connectivity to the main road, while there are twenty-three (23) buildings in need of improvements to be more accessible to people wearing wheelchair to navigate by themselves from the street to the entrance of the building;

There are (3) multi-level buildings that are accessible for individual wearing wheelchair in the City Hall Drive of General Santos City Local Government Unit; one two-level building, one three-level building but only accessible up to the second level, and one four-level building;

The data generated from the conducted study shows that the City Hall Drive of General Santos City is still in need of facility improvements and developments to individuals with disabilities; and

The researcher found out natural and human cause of challenges and obstruction to the accessibility of the buildings within the City Hall Drive that includes; age of the building, growing huge roots of trees, grounds holding water and mud and growing plants are the identified natural cause; while water leaks from air conditioning units, buckets catching water leaks, tables and chairs, flower pots, garbage, parked vehicles, humps and gaps between the ramp and the road, adjacent unpaved way from the road leading to the ramp or the entrance of the building, location of the ramp which is often adjacent from the entrance of a compound and the installation of ramps just to comply with the requirements of the authorities are the observed human caused obstructions.

CONCLUSION

Social protection plays a critical role in promoting equity, inclusion, and resilience for vulnerable groups, including Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). For PWDs, social protection goes beyond financial assistance—it encompasses equitable access to health care, education, employment, and physical infrastructure. In the Philippines, various laws and programs aim to support PWDs; however, the link between social protection and infrastructural accessibility remains underdeveloped and unevenly implemented.

Social protection refers to public policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to manage economic and social risks (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017).

In the Philippines, social protection for PWDs includes: cash transfers and discounts (RA 9442); health care benefits through PhilHealth; employment support and skills training (RA 10524); and access to education through inclusive learning programs. These measures are intended to promote the inclusion and welfare of PWDs, but without supportive infrastructure, many entitlements remain inaccessible in practice.

Infrastructural accessibility refers to the physical design and adaptation of public spaces, facilities, and transportation to ensure usability by all, particularly PWDs. Accessibility is a key enabler of social protection; without barrier-free buildings, ramps, signage, and accessible toilets, PWDs cannot fully access health clinics, schools, government programs, or employment offices.

The Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (Accessibility Law) mandates accessibility in all public and private buildings, requiring ramps, handrails, accessible toilets, and appropriate signage. This was further reinforced by City Ordinance No. 47, s. 2022 in General Santos City, localizing the implementation of BP 344.

Despite these laws, infrastructure in many parts of General Santos City remains noncompliant or poorly maintained. Government buildings and public transport systems often lack functioning elevators, tactile indicators, or wheelchair-accessible entrances, effectively excluding PWDs from services that they are entitled with.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified by the Philippines in 2008, recognizes both social protection (Article 28) and accessibility (Article 9) as fundamental rights. These are not separate domains but interdependent: “Social Protection without Accessibility is a Theoretical Inclusion”, in other words, rights that exist on paper but not in practice; and “Accessibility without Social Protection” may offer physical access but fails to provide systemic support or resources.

Hence, the integration of infrastructure into social protection systems is necessary to uphold the dignity, autonomy, and agency of PWDs.

There is a huge problem in implementation deficits: Many LGUs, including General Santos City, lack trained personnel or funding to enforce BP 344 compliance across all public infrastructure; second is urban-rural Division where rural areas often lag in accessibility, further marginalizing PWDs who already face poverty and mobility barriers; third, data limitations because accurate data on the number, needs, and locations of PWDs is lacking, leading to misaligned infrastructure investments; finally is the low participation of PWDs who are seldom consulted in the design of infrastructure or social protection programs, which results in poorly targeted services.

To conclude, in the Philippine context, achieving full inclusion of Persons with Disabilities requires more than financial support or anti-discrimination laws—it necessitates enabling environments built on accessible infrastructure. A robust social protection system cannot function without accessible schools, health centers, and government buildings. Ensuring infrastructural accessibility is thus not just an engineering concern but a social justice imperative.

RECOMMENDATION

To bridge the gap between social protection and infrastructural accessibility, the General Santos City Local Government Unit may adopt an integrated and participatory approach including: to mandate universal design principles in all public infrastructure projects; conduct regular audits of government buildings and services using tools aligned with BP 344 and the UNCRPD; develop a cross-sector coordination such as aligning DSWD social programs with DPWH and LGU infrastructure plans to ensure that physical access supports program access; and allocation of dedicated resources for accessible infrastructure as part of national social protection budgets.

For the Government Agencies and Building Administrators

Regularly conduct an access audit among all government infrastructures of the local government unit. Give priority in reinforcing old buildings to be compliant to the mandates of the existing guidelines and policies and allocate funds for accessibility improvements among all buildings annually.

Establish a committee to focus on the accessibility of infrastructures to PWDs in General Santos City and upon planning to construct new buildings in the future, include the accessibility from the road to the ramps in the design of the building and always consider the accessibility of the PWD-Friendly features in the overall design.

For Policy Makers/Legislators

Revisit, strengthen and reinforce policies promoting universal accessibility in the Philippines. There is an urge develop local ordinances and policies that goes beyond the minimum requirements or standards that promotes universal design.

To encourage participation, provide competitive incentive programs to motivate both private, public and other institutions or offices and buildings to implement exemplary inclusive infrastructure and schemes to address the needs of PWDs.

For the PWDs and Advocates

Conduct campaigns on disability rights and accessibility, and engage and collaborate whenever there are participatory and planning and planning processes, and provide feedback in establishing accessible infrastructure plans and designs. Network to individuals, agencies, and organizations with aligned goals and objectives.

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