Workshop report

Workshop on Accessible and Inclusive ICTs for Persons with Disabilities

16th- 17th March 2018

Kathmandu, Nepal

LIRNE*asia*

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Introduction

LIRNEasia is a pro-poor, pro-market think tank established in 2004. It has been working on catalyzing policy change through research to improve people's lives in the emerging Asia Pacific by facilitating their use of hard and soft infrastructures through the use of knowledge, information and technology.

Woman Group for Disability Rights (WGDR) is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-partisan organization led by persons with disability. It uses a twin-track approach. Firstly, it advocates for the rights of persons with disability. Secondly, it provides services to empower persons with disability.

Internet Society [ISOC] Nepal is a non-profit organization registered under Organization Registration Act, 1976 in Nepal. Mission of ISOC Nepal is to promote the use of Internet in every aspect of life.

Center for Law and Technology (CLT) is a research firm dedicated to ICT and Media Technology Law situated in Nepal.

The above four organizations organized a two-day workshop on "Accessible and Inclusive ICTs for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)" on 16th and 17th March 2018. As technology becomes ubiquitous and content and services are made widely available across platforms – television, computers and phones, effort must be made to ensure that they are accessible to all persons, including those with disabilities and elderly persons who comprise 15 percent of the world population. According to the 2011 census, Nepal was home to 1.94% or 513,321 persons with disabilities. This number is likely to have increased after the 2015 earthquake.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which came into force in 2008 was signed and ratified by Nepal. In recent years, the Incheon strategy to make the rights real for persons with disabilities has been used to catalyze efforts of countries in Asia to draw up and implement road maps to achieve accessibility and inclusion in the region. The UNCRPD, SDGs and the Incheon strategy draw attention to the fact that ICT accessibility for the disabled is a key requirement for inclusion. While several countries including Nepal have recognized ICT accessibility as an integral part of accessibility in their national laws in the course of bringing them in line with the UNCRPD, the reality is that they are struggling to implement this. The lack of awareness, capacity and resources amongst policy makers, technology professionals and disabled peoples organizations (DPOs) are barriers to implementation.

This workshop was designed to identify and prioritize problems amenable to ICT centered solutions for the disabled. The event was followed by two-day pre-hackathon workshop for developers.

The objectives of the workshop was twofold,

1. To raise awareness amongst DPOs representing different disabilities on issues relating to ICT accessibility and engage with associated policy issues in Nepal, and
2. To identify specific challenges faced by the different groups that are amenable to technology-based solutions, especially those that utilize the potential of smartphones.

The objectives were achieved. The course saw the participation of numerous DPOs, representing individuals with multiple disabilities. Specific challenges faced by them that are amenable to technology-based solutions were identified.

The local organizers provided the following to enable meaningful and effective participation by all the participants.

- Accessible ramp to the event venue for participants on wheelchairs
- Sign language interpreters for the deaf participants
- Simultaneous interpretation in Nepal and English

The technology issues/solutions identified by the participants were presented at the pre-hackathon workshop on the 18th and 19th of March. Developers identified the projects and started working on developing apps and technology solutions that are described in the report titled "Pre-hackathon Workshop on Accessible and Inclusive ICTs for Persons with Disabilities".

Resource persons

- **Nirmita Narasimhan is a Senior Fellow and Policy Director at G3ict** working in the areas of policy research and advocacy related to IP reform and technology access for persons with disabilities. She is involved in drafting the Indian National Policy for Electronic Accessibility and also works closely with different departments of the Government of India to bring accessibility into their policies and programs. She has authored several reports on accessibility, which are being used by policymakers worldwide. She has also presented papers on ICT and Accessibility at international fora like the IGF. She has also participated in the World Blind Union Treaty negotiations at WIPO. Nirmita has won several awards for her work, one of which was the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, which she received from the President of India in December 2010. Her educational background includes degrees in Law, German and Music. She has prepared research reports in the capacity of ITU accessibility expert, on making mobile phones and services accessible for persons with disabilities in Nepal and Afghanistan. These reports study the existing legal and policy framework for e- accessibility in these countries and makes specific policy recommendations.

- **Rohan Samarajiva is the founding Chair of LIRNEasia,** an ICT policy and regulation think tank active across emerging Asia and the Pacific. He was CEO from 2004 to 2012. His most recent co-authored book (2013) is entitled "Information Lives of the Poor," and was published in English, French, Spanish and Burmese. Samarajiva was Team Leader at the Sri Lanka Ministry for Economic Reform, Science and Technology (2002-04) responsible for infrastructure reforms, including participation in the design of the USD 83 million e Sri Lanka Initiative. He was Director General of Telecommunications in Sri Lanka (1998-99), a founder director of the ICT Agency of Sri Lanka (2003-05), Honorary Professor at the University of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka (2003-04), Visiting Professor of Economics of Infrastructures at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands (2000-03) and Associate Professor of Communication and Public Policy at the Ohio State University in the US (1987-2000). Samarajiva was Policy Advisor to the Ministry of Post and Telecom in Bangladesh (2006-09).

- **Htaike Htaike Aung is the Executive Director at Myanmar ICT for Development Organization (MIDO)**. MIDO is one of the few ICT-focused non-governmental organizations in Myanmar/Burma. MIDO focuses on ICTs for development, Internet freedom and Internet policy advocacy. Htaike has been involved in Myanmar's Internet propagation events since the introduction of the Internet to the public in Myanmar. She is also a digital security trainer for human rights defenders in Myanmar, and is currently a DeBoer fellow. Her engagement with MIDO stems from her involvement with the Myanmar Blogger Society which was co-founded by her in April 2007. She is the Project Leader on the "Towards an Inclusive Information Society in Myanmar" work. The project is meant to increase the adoption and use of ICTs in the country. Htaike has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in English Language and Literature/Letters from Yangon University.

- **Dinesh Kaushal is working with Publicis.Sapient as a Manager Technology where he is leading NVDA development for India**. NVDA is an open source screen reader that lets persons with blindness to read and write independently. Dinesh has also lead more than 100 projects for making various enterprise applications accessible for persons with disabilities. Dinesh along with Nirmita Narasimhan has led the Mobile Accessibility Practices group which formulated best practices for developers of accessible mobile apps. They are now part of Government of India guidelines for mobile accessibility.

- **Birendra Raj Sharma Pokharel is a visually impaired rights activist** in Nepal. He contributed to the Establishment of the Asia Pacific framework of "make the Rights Real". He participated in the Creating New Futures for All research symposium at the Sidney University, School of Law in December 2012. He has been engaged as Local Expert of Abilis Foundation, Finland since 2011 and facilitates the Abilis Grant making mechanism. He was recognized for pushing the ratification of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). He was an expert in the drafting committee to amend the disabled protection and welfare act to make it consistent with the CRPD. He conducted the "DRPI Disability Rights Country Holistic Monitoring in Nepal" applying tools and method of York University, Canada comprising the twin-track approach of human rights monitoring. He is to participate in the capacity building training for legal defense and access to justice at the grassroots level in Nepal.

- **Ananda Raj Khanal is a Director at Nepal Telecommunications Authority**. Before joining NTA in April 2006, he was with the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering at Kathmandu University in Nepal in the capacity of Assistant Professor and Department In-Charge. He continues to be a visiting faculty at different universities in Nepal and teaches subjects related to Telecommunications and ICTs. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electronics and Communication and a Master of Engineering degree in Optical Communication. He is a gold medalist in Bachelors of Law (LLB). Mr Khanal has taken a number of training courses related to policy, regulation and management of Telecommunications/ICTs conducted by different international institutes of repute including ITU, ACMA, PURC, APT, TEMIC, USTTI and others. He has also participated in a number of seminars, workshops, meetings, and symposia dealing with Telecommunications/ICTs/Broadband. He is very active in the ITU plenipotentiary conferences, WRCs, WTDCs and ITU-D study groups, GSRs, WSIS and APT and SATRC activities.

- **Romkant Panday is the Vice-President, Federation of Computer Association Nepal** and General Secretary, Internet Society Nepal Chapter. He is working on ICT in Education and ITES for the past

18 years. He is also a consultant for the World Bank and ADB and works on municipal governance systems, e-procurement and IFMIS systems in Nepal.

- **Susmeera Aryal is a member of the National Federation of Disabled in Nepal**. She is a Psychologist by training and has worked with persons with mental disabilities since 2010.

- **Jalasa Sapkota is an executive member of the Blind Youth Association**, Nepal. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in English at Tribhuvan University.

Participants

39 participants from 29 DPOs participated in the workshop. This helped identify issues faced by the different types of disabled and possible ICT solutions that can help them live their life independently.

	NAME	ORGANIZATION	TYPE OF DISABILITY		
				Mar-16	Mar-17
1	Suresh Kafley	SAMA - Nepal	Physical	✓	
2	Gajendra Budhathoki	Karobar Daily	Physical	✓	
3	Dr. Naresh Rimal		Physical	✓	
4	Debu Parajuli	Disability Human Rights Promotion Society	Physical	✓	✓
5	Devi Acharya	Creative Little People's Association	Physical	✓	✓
6	Dhundiraj Chalise	Nepal Wheelchair Club	Physical	✓	✓
7	Goma Devi Poudel	NBAD	Physical	✓	✓
8	Kamala Budhathoki	Nepal disabled woman association	Physical	✓	
9	Laxmi Kafley	Sunguva	Psychosocial	✓	✓
10	Loonibaha Chitrakar	Patan Community Based Rehabilitation (Patan CBR) Organization	Multiple	✓	✓
11	Shova Bista	NPWDS	Undisclosed	✓	✓
12	Jiyana Thapa	Independent living center for persons with disabilities	Undisclosed	✓	✓
13	Sarashwoti Poudel	National Association of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Nepal	Hearing	✓	✓
14	Srijan Mulepati	BBA	Hearing	✓	✓
15	Laxmi Adhikari	Blind Women Association Nepal	Visual	✓	✓
16	Pratikshya Bhattarai	Blind Women Association Nepal	Visual	✓	✓
17	Amara Aryal	Women group of disability rights	Psychosocial	✓	✓
18	Surya Bahadur Budhathoki	Bhaktapur Bhaira Association	Hearing	✓	✓
19	Bijay Gywali		Undisclosed	✓	✓

20	Prashanta Shrestha	Women group of disability rights	Psychosocial	✓	✓
21	Pragya Maharjan	National Association of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing	Hearing	✓	✓
22	Sobita Poudel	National Federation of the Disabled- Nepal	Visual	✓	✓
23	Sajan Shrestha	Voice for Equal Rights	Physical	✓	✓
24	Suman Palikhey	Community Based Rehabilitation Bhaktapur	Physical	✓	✓
25	Sharmila Bishwokarma	Nepal Disabled Human Rights Center (DHRC-Nepal)	Physical	✓	✓
26	Sita Subedi	National Federation of the Disabled- Nepal	Visual	✓	✓
27	Shreejana K.C	Mother's Society of Intellectual Disability	Psychosocial	✓	✓
28	Sundari Mishra	Creative Little People's Association	Physical	✓	✓
29	Suresh Raj Bhandari	Bhaktapur Association of Blind	Visual	✓	✓
30	Umesh Mahato	Nepal Hemophilia Society	Physical	✓	✓
31	Shakthi Shestra		Undisclosed	✓	
32	Kuber Upreti	Special School for Disabled and Rehabilitation Center	Psychosocial	✓	✓
33	Nirmal Thapa		Undisclosed	✓	
34	Mukunda Dahal		Undisclosed	✓	✓
35	Haresh Chaudary	SAMA - Nepal	Physical	✓	✓
36	Prabati Shrestha	Blind Youth Association	Visual	✓	✓
37	Bharat Khadka	Nepal Hemophilia Society	Physical	✓	✓
38	Anita Gothey	Ntional mental health self healp organization	Psychosocial	✓	✓
39	Hari Sapkota	Save The Life Nepal	Undisclosed	✓	✓

Figure 1: Gender

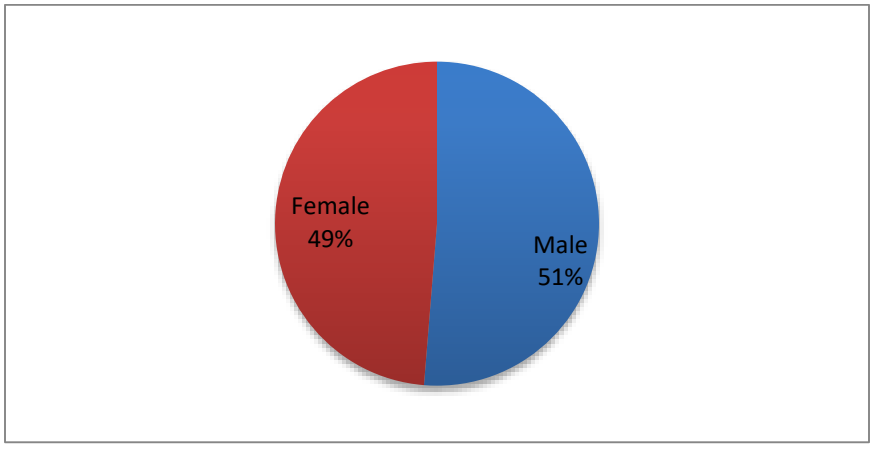


Figure 2: Type of disability

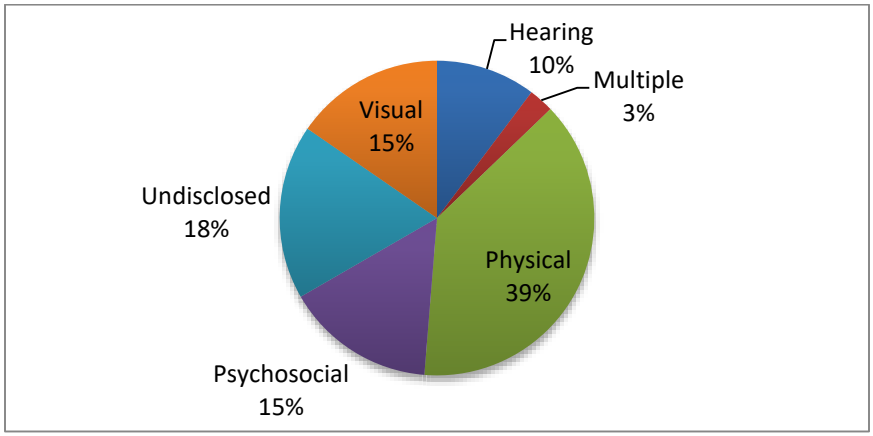
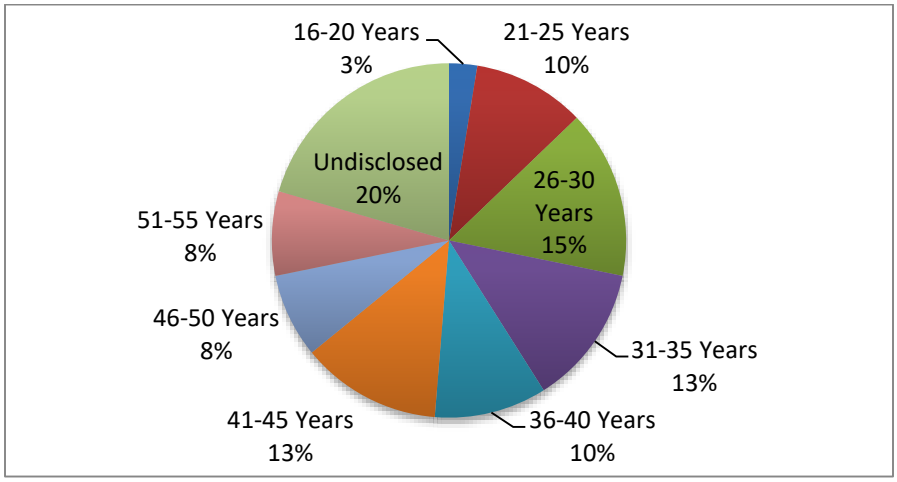


Figure 3: Age



Workshop Format

A combination of teaching formats was used to enhance collaboration and open discussion. Lectures and team work were utilized as teaching tools. The Schedule and a brief summary of the 2-day workshop is given below.

Day 1: March 16, 2018	
08:30 - 09:00	Registration
09:00 - 09:30	S1. Opening remarks - Rohan Samarajiva, PhD (LIRNE*asia*) - Susmeera Aryal
09:30 - 10:15	S2. Nepal's national and international commitments - Birendra Pokharel, PhD (National Federation of the Disabled- Nepal)
10:15 - 10:30	Coffee break

10:30 - 12:00	S3. ICT accessibility: What, why and how? - Nirmita Narasimhan (The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs)
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch
13:00 - 14:00	S4. Demo - Birendra Pokharel, PhD (Action on Disability Rights and Development) & Jalasa Sapkota (Blind Youth Association)
14:00 - 15:30	S5. Overview of person with disabilities (PWD) in Nepal and government initiatives and opportunities for DPO - Anand Raj Khanal (Nepal Telecommunication Authority)
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 17:00	Group work (preparation to identify the issued faced by disabled in access and use of ICTs in Nepal, and actions that can be taken by Nepal government and the Apps that could be developed) (5 groups)
Day 2: March 17, 2018	
09:00 - 10:00	S6. Pragmatic first steps in ensuring accessible ICTs - Rohan Samarajiva, PhD (LIRNE*asia*)
10:00 - 10:30	Coffee break
10:30 – 11:30	S7. Applying design thinking for developing inclusive products and services - Dinesh Kaushal (Publicis)
11:30 - 12:00	S8. Experience from Myanmar - Htaike Htaike Aung (Myanmar ICT Development Organization)
12:00 - 13:00	Group work, summing up issues
14:00 - 15:30	A1. Presentation of the identified issues (7 minutes per group) - Dinesh Kaushal (Publicis) - Nirmita Narasimhan - Romkant Panday
19:30 onwards	Certificate distribution and Gala dinner

Day 1

The course commenced with a joint introductory session by Rohan Samarajiva (Director of the project and Chair of LIRNE*asia*) and Susmeera Aryal (Women Group of Disability Rights) on the objectives of the course, methods of teaching, an introduction of faculty and effective communication techniques.

The next session was by Birendra Raj Pokharel on national and International commitments of Nepal towards rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). He explained the background of disability rights movement in Nepal, and provided a situational overview of PWDs, legislation addressing PWDs, disability-specific legislation, key highlights of Act of Rights of PWDs, constitutional provisions for PWDs, government support for DPOs, monitoring mechanism for disability rights and measures to be taken to promote accessible ICTs in Nepal.

Nirmita Narasimhan conducted a session on ICT accessibility. The session described ICT accessibility, and how the disabled may achieve accessibility, the Global Policy Framework (UNCRPD), technologies that enable accessibility and the way ahead.

The fourth session was a demo session by Birendra Raj Pokharel and Jalasa Sapkota. They showed how vision impaired could use mobiles, computers and access social media.

Anand Raj Khanal (Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA)) conducted a session on Nepal government initiatives and opportunities for DPOs and requested the participants to actively participate in group sessions and provide the government with information on the issues faced by the disabled and possible solutions/ action plans to overcome them. He encouraged participants to provide NTA with proposals so that he can implement and fund these initiatives.

Final session of the day was group work.

Assignments

The assignment was to make team presentations on their understanding on what is ICT and what are the issues they face on day-to-day basis and how ICTs can help them to live their life independently by overcoming these obstacles. The participants were assigned to conduct seven minutes presentation followed by a question and answer session.

The teams were assigned the following assignment:

1. What do you understand by ICTs?
2. To what extend do you know about the services that government has provided on using ICTs in Nepal?
3. What are the difficulties faced by PWDs while using ICTs?

Day 2

Samarajiva commenced sessions of the second day by a session on pragmatic first steps in ensuring accessible ICTs. The actions taken by operators, regulators and the government to provide access to disabled using ICTs in other countries were explained with examples. He said that in the old days, users had to rely on operators and regulators for everything and now users can do things on their own, with the help of well-designed apps that can exploit the potential of the smartphone.

The next session was by Dinesh Kaushal on applying design thinking to develop inclusive products and services. He conducted a group session on identifying disabilities and brainstormed ideas on the solutions that could be developed for different kind of disabilities.

Htaike Htaike Aung shared her experience of working with DPOs in Myanmar and the actions taken in her country such as developing text to speech engine, tech camps for PWDs, actions that companies take as a part of their cooperate social responsibility to develop accessible technologies for PWDs.

The final session of the workshop comprised presentations by the groups based on the assignments. The groups presented their findings and opinions before a panel. The panel consisted of Dinesh Kaushal, Nirmita Narasimhan, Rohan Samarajiva and Romkant Panday.

For presentations and photos follow the link: http://lirneasia.net/capacity-building/ford-broadband-policy-course/workshop-accessible-inclusive-icts-persons-disabilities/

Media coverage

- Kantipur Reporter: https://www.kantipurdaily.com/Business/2018/03/19/152142934699454967.html
- The Kathmandu Post: http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-03-19/disabled-persons-call-for-inclusive-info-technology.html
- News24: http://www.news24nepal.tv/2018/03/17/278114
- News campaign: http://www.newsabhiyan.com/news-details.php?nid=122350
- Hamrakura.com: http://www.newsabhiyan.com/news-details.php?nid=122350
- LIVING with ICT: https://www.livingwithict.com/news-details/334/2018-03-17
- Clickmandu: https://www.clickmandu.com/2018/03/45342.html
- Mobileskhabar: https://mobileskhabar.com/2018/03/18/15057/
- Enepalese.com: http://enepalese.com/2018/03/171769.html
- Durbinnepal.com: http://www.durbinnepal.com/archives/9687
- Khabarkhurak.com: http://www.khabarkhurak.com/2018/03/2379.html
- Nepalhalkhabar.com: http://www.nepalhalkhabar.com/2018/03/17/28012
- Mahila Swasthya: http://www.mahilaswasthya.com/news/1543

Photos of the event

Dinesh Kaushal conducting the session on design thinking

Course participants

During a group work session

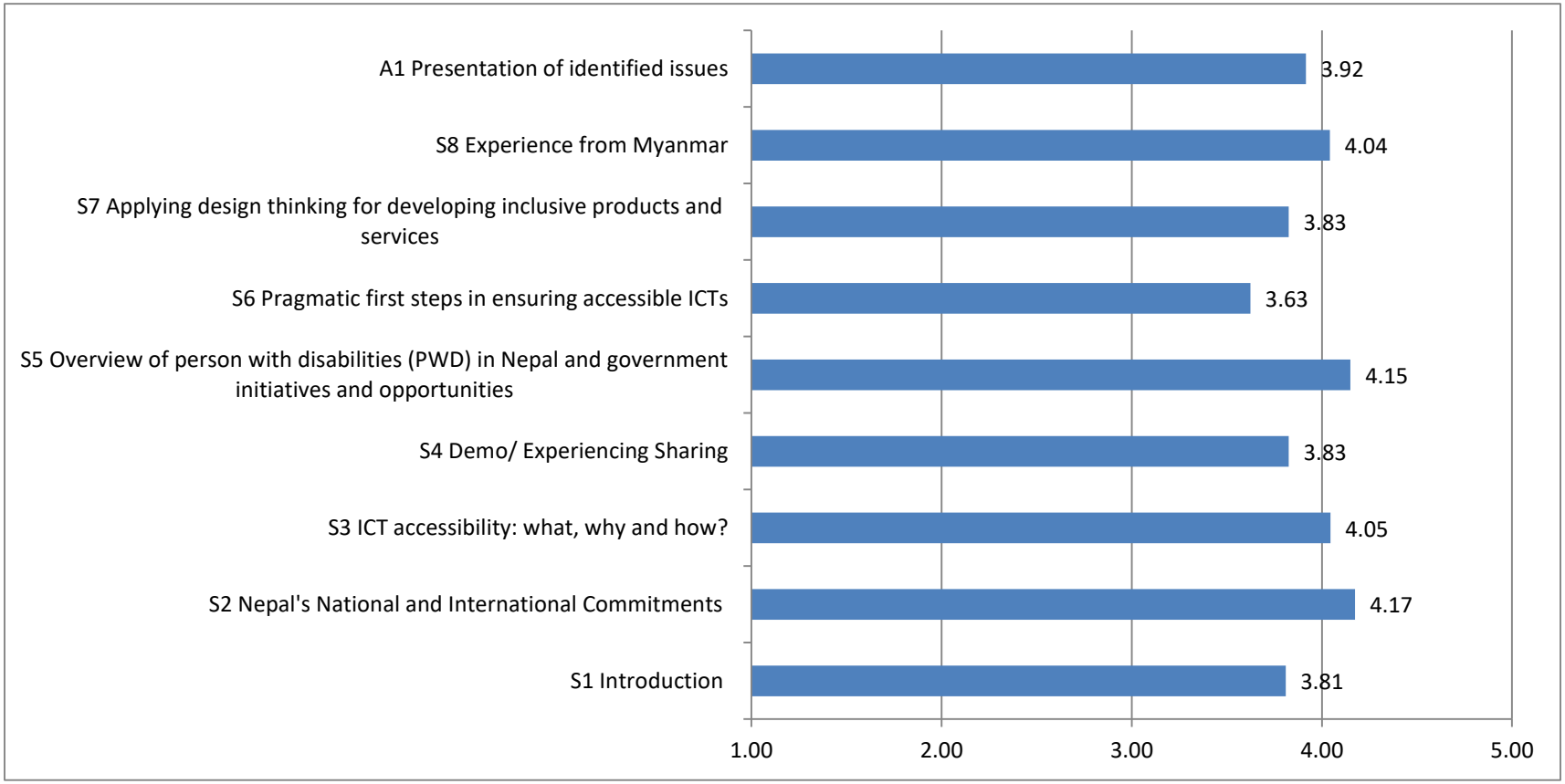
A hearing impaired participant attentively listening to a sign language interpreter

Chair of LIRNEasia, Rohan Samarajiva conducting the session on pragmatic first steps in ensuring accessible ICTs

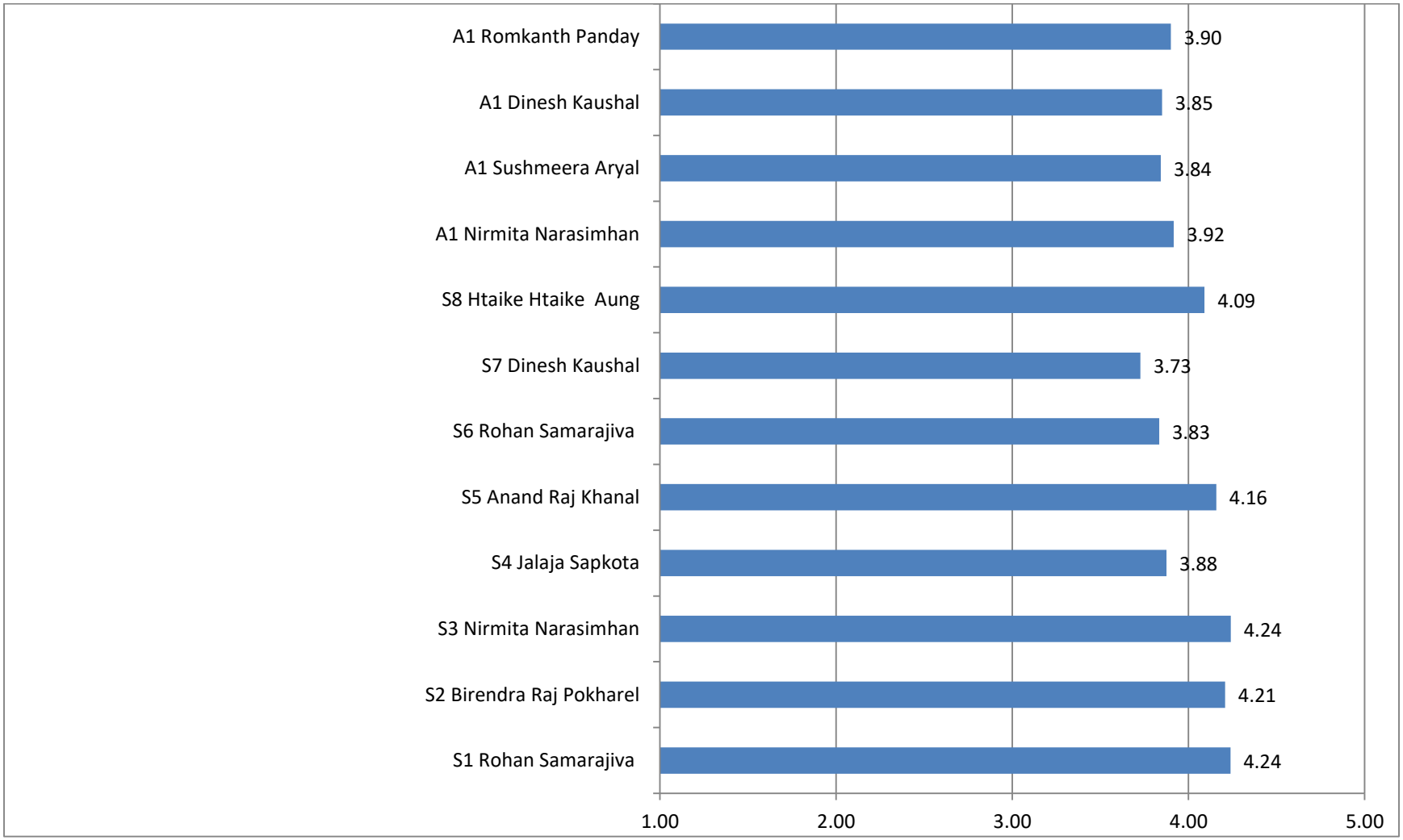
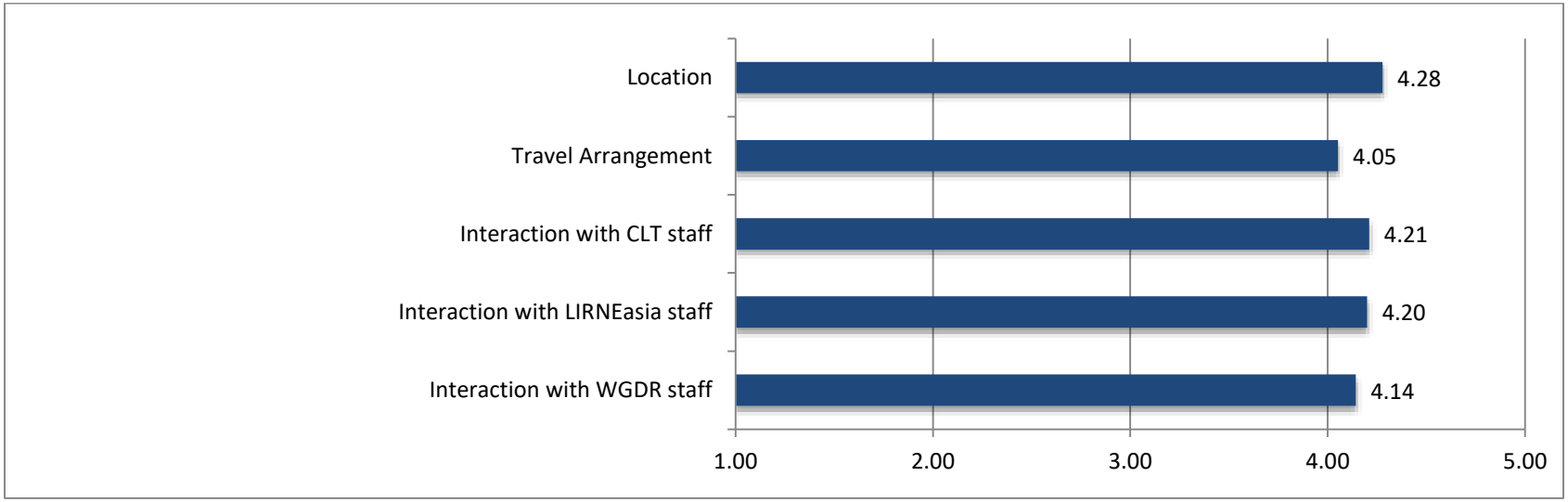
Evaluations

The course evaluations can be seen from the figures below. The rating were on a five point scale ranging from 1-abysmal to 5-excellent. All the topics, speakers and logistical arrangements were rated as being satisfactory.

Session Ratings



Speaker Rating



Logistical Ratings