

Making public transport user-friendly for people with disabilities

Persons with disabilities encounter difficulties while using public transport. At times, buses do not stop for PWDs or they are not allowed to get into the bus. Bus conductors do not want to have a wheelchair on the bus since it takes extra space. Moreover, PWDs are entitled to discounts on the bus fare, but do not receive these discounts as the transport service provider must bear the cost. On many occasions PWDs do not get the seats reserved for them. People with visual disability have the additional difficulty of identifying money when paying for transport.

Summary of Recommendations

Immediately: Provide training for public bus drivers and conductors. This has already been successfully conducted in Kritipur municipality by the police department. Training includes information on how service providers can effectively cater to the specific needs of those with different types of disabilities (e.g., announcing upcoming stops clearly to aid those with visual disability and LED/ visual announcements for those with hearing disability etc.). The training clarifies the benefits to society from PWDs who are able to live more independently.

Short term: Conduct spot checks by police officers to monitor whether PWDs' rights are protected on public transport.

Long term: Introduce a pre-paid digital identity card for PWDs and provide card readers for each bus. The card can be used for alerting drivers and conductors of the bearer's needs, making payments and centrally recording discounts awarded in order that they may be reimbursed to the service providers. The card can be used for other non-transport related services (e.g., healthcare) as well.



The Research

- LIRNEasia conducted a nationally representative survey among 15-65-years-old PWDs in Nepal to understand ICT access and use. Four hundred PWDs from 400 households in 100 wards in all 7 provinces were interviewed between August and October 2018. The questionnaire was designed based on the Washington Group on Disabilities Questions. The results are nationally representative with 95% confidence interval and ± 9.8 margin of error.
- LIRNEasia conducted qualitative research in Provinces No. 1, 2, 3 and 5 in urban and rural locations. The research was designed to understand how ICTs can help ensure independent living for PWDs in Nepal. Grounded theory was applied to identify key themes emerging in interviews of 174 PWDs and nine key informants.



Key Findings

- 1.6% of the population aged 15-65 reported as a PWD
- Only 43% have the current disability identity card.
- Restricted mobility was a key issue that affected other aspects of PWDs lives:

"My father used to carry me to school. We had to leave half or an hour earlier to reach in time if we are to go on our own foot." -- Physical disability, Female, Palpa

- Not following established support mechanisms within transportation systems was an issue:

“The buses do not stop thinking we will not pay and many times I have had to pay more than general passengers.” -- *Physical disability, Male, Biratnagar*

“There is a separate seat for people with physical disability but till now, we haven’t got to sit on that whenever we take public buses. I went to Kanchanpur from Itahari standing.”
-- *Physical disability, Female, Udaygadhi*

“Though it is mentioned that we get 50% off tickets, we don’t get any.”
-- *Physical disability, Male, Biratnagar*

“When we ask for discounts, they tend to get angry towards us stating that we get a seat and the discount too. As a result of this frustration, they do not drop us at our destination. Because of this, we have to bow down to them.”
-- *Visual disability, Male, Palpa*

“Since bus driver and conductor do not understand our language, they don’t stop the bus in our stop.” -- *Hearing disability, Female, Biratnagar*

 **More Information:** <http://bit.ly/NPtech4PWD>

For information, please contact:

Babu Ram Aryal *Chairman* Centre for Law & Technology
baburam@cltnepal.com | +977 985 1048 401

Rohan Samarajiva, PhD, *Chair*, LIRNEasia
rohan@lirneasia.net | +94 777 352 361

