

Making transport in the Philippines accessible for people with disabilities

This case exemplifies how disability inclusion can be mainstreamed in the public transport sector. The public transport accessibility initiative has been initiated by CBM in the Philippines and implemented by an Alliance of different stakeholders including people with disabilities and fostered the inclusion of disability in public transport policies in the Philippines.

Area: Asia

Sector: Transport / Urban development

Phase of PCM illustrated: Formulation

Degree of relevance: Degree 3 – Disability highly relevant projects

Implementing organisation: International NGO (project initiator), in partnership with government agencies, organisations of persons with disability, local NGOs

The country context

The Transport Accessibility Initiative was undertaken in light of the fact that a growing number of persons with disabilities cannot participate in the affairs of the community due to inaccessible transportation facilities. Statistics from the National Census Office reveal that there are 942,232 persons with disabilities all over the country as per census report in the year 2000. Only 2 percent of children with disabilities have access to elementary education. The Department of Education reported that one of the major reasons for that is the absence of accessible transportation. In addition, already existing difficulties in finding employment for people with disabilities are further aggravated by transportation barriers.

Despite the legal framework on the inclusion of people with disabilities¹, implementation and compliance by the transportation sector is very poor. Drivers and vehicle operators are not aware of the existence of these laws and negative attitudes of drivers towards people with disabilities remain a major problem which needs to be addressed. Past efforts for encouraging a meaningful dialogue between public transport actors and the disability sector have failed.

Promoting Accessible Public Transport

In that context, CBM Philippines started the public transport accessibility initiative as part of other programmes promoting disability mainstreaming in different policy areas in the country. An alliance has been formed, with the acronym PASAKAY (which means to give a ride to, in the local language), composed of representatives of the public transport sector, persons with

¹ Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (National Law), Accessibility Law in 1983: purpose of enhancing the mobility of persons with disabilities by requiring public utilities to install facilities to make transportation accessible
Enactment of Republic Act 7277 known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons: provides in Section 25 thereof for a barrier-free environment by making BP 344 a supplementary law to its implementation

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disabilities, representatives from the National Council on Disability Affairs, the Department of Transportation and Communication-DOTC (both government agencies), representatives of CBM-supported projects, the CBM Regional Office and the Public Transport Affairs Office under the Office of the President. A manifesto was presented to the President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on July 17, 2008 on the occasion of the annual National Disability, Prevention and Rehabilitation Week, and President's Office recently announced to endorse this to the DOTC for follow up. As a follow through of this initiative, the First National Conference on Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disability is scheduled in March 2008 wherein a Declaration of Commitment will be presented to the President, and a national plan of action on accessibility is expected to be crafted. This national conference will formalize earlier commitments made on policy review, vehicle design standards, compliance with laws, multi-sectoral partnerships, advocacy, and training in support of promoting accessibility of the public transport system.

The Alliance sees its role in mainstreaming to create and secure spaces for active consultation of people with disabilities and their organisations, in policy formulation and reviews related to persons with disabilities such as accessibility of public transport. The approach taken is to directly engage with key government agencies in order to encourage them to implement policies and institutional provisions as part of regular service provisions as well as to include persons with disabilities in all future consultations and crafting of policies and programmes. Its guiding principles being Access-Equity-Participation, the Alliance has also put emphasis on collaborating with people with disabilities, organizations of persons with disability and NGOs working in the disability sector, government agencies both at national and local level.

Offshoots of the accessibility initiative include the exploration of collaboration with the Japanese development cooperation agency (JICA) in its project in the Philippines on non-handicapping environment in cooperation with the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), the collaboration with entities addressing accessibility of the built environment, and participation in the Sub-Committee on Accessibility and Transportation in the NCDA.

Lessons learned and how this is an example for disability inclusion

- CBM Philippines facilitated the creation of an avenue of consultation and collaboration between the disability community and government departments in charge of accessibility and transport, and the public transport sector. Thus, accessibility has been addressed from a systemic perspective as part of government programmes. Institutionalised provisions have been set up in a sustainable way and not as a stand alone, one-off initiative.
- The initiative has been consequently designed and implemented with the participation of people with disabilities and Organisations of Persons with Disability which increased their space for influencing policy making and raised awareness among the involved stakeholders
- The initiative created opportunities for the disability sector, supported by NGO partners, to take part in key aspects of development programs of government relating

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to a focal area such as accessibility for persons with disability, which includes policy review, enforcement of policies, program implementation, research and development on vehicle standards, among others, through multi-sectoral partnerships at national and local levels which provided platforms for advocacy for their rights, concerns and issues on accessibility.

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