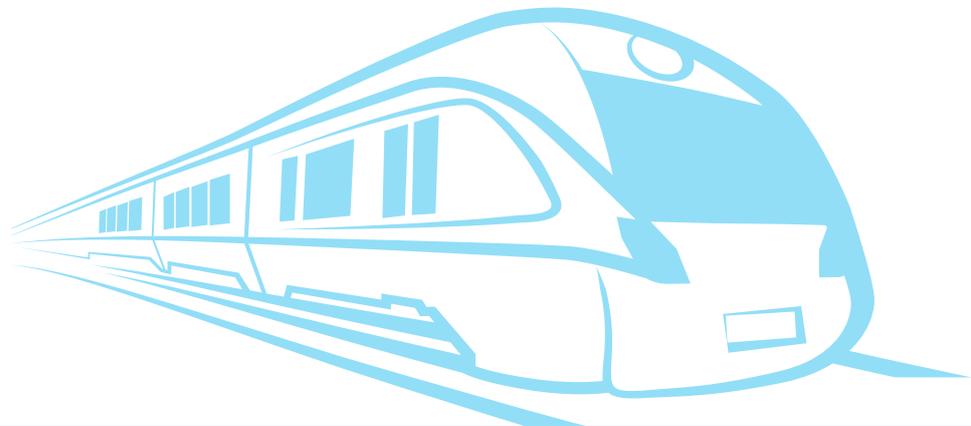




Policy Brief on Ensuring Access to Metro Rail for Persons with Disabilities



Background



Access to public transportation system for a person with disability in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka, is a great challenge. It is one of the most critical human rights and of serious concern for the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Bangladesh. The government has recently started a metro rail project in Dhaka city and NHRC believed that it needs to be talked about regarding accessibility issue of persons with disabilities in metro rail. A policy brief identifying accessibility issues of persons with disabilities for the metro rail project of Bangladesh was developed by NHRC in collaboration with BRAC, UNDP, YPSA, World Vision and PNSP in this regard, which also required discussion and dissemination.

Though section 32 of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disability Act, 2013, directs that 5% of the seats in any public transport should be reserved for persons with disability, but the reality shows otherwise in Bangladesh. In most cases, bus, train or river stations do not have necessary infrastructure and systems for a person with disability to have access. The vehicle designs are such that most of the persons with disabilities especially with wheel chair cannot get into the vehicle. But the scenario requires major overhaul and considering the magnitude of the metro rail project, it could be the best starting point to start the discussion in ensuring accessibility of persons with disabilities in such public transport systems.

On the other hand, disability inclusion has been a priority for Bangladesh – both Government and different civil society organization are working on it from different dimensions. BRAC has been working towards creating opportunities and empowering people for the last four decades. Disability inclusion is a strategic priority for BRAC and we believe ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities will increase their mobility and thereby empower them. Meanwhile, December 3rd is being observed globally every year as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD). The theme for 2018 IDPD was- “Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” We understand that accessibility to public transportation and infrastructure are two of the most important things to ensure inclusiveness for persons with disabilities as these will ultimately mobilise persons with disabilities and empower them for the greater good, which is exactly the theme for this year’s IDPD.

Considering all these together, BRAC supported NHRC’s initiative to arrange a stakeholder consultation on December 2, 2018 at the BRAC Centre to help government to take policy measures in terms of ensuring accessibility.

While presenting a paper at the event, NKDM Association acting team leader Takayuki Fujitomi said they have included some facilities in the metro rail system to benefit the people with disabilities. These facilities include – lower height of ticket collection booth, wider space for automated fare collection system, lifts, slopes for washrooms, audiovisual information, signs, reversed spaces inside coaches, same level of doors of trains and platform and minimum gap between trains and platforms.

Recommendations



For Metro Rail

- Strict implementation of law and order in addition to putting up CCTVs and taking finger prints, picture of offenders to maintain safety and smooth travel for PWDs.
- Designated staffs should be capable of addressing individualistic disabilities and also should be competent enough to provide PWD friendly services. This might need special capacity building. Nazma Ara Begum Popy, General Secretary, Bangladesh Visually Impaired People's Society (BVIPS) has offered training free of cost for this.
- Create a separate ticket counter section for PWDs to avoid criticism and hassle. Additionally, tickets for PWDs should be sold at lower cost or half the original price.
- Establish a monitoring mechanism system to ensure that the service being provided are examined regularly.
- PWDs should be given the platform to lead, be a part of the change making process and be the ones who gain most at the end of it all. They should be involved in the decision making process.
- Special announcement should be done in a continuous basis to address intellectual disability. This type of disability is invisible and people might not be sensitive enough while travelling. Continuous announcement will ensure the sensitivity among other people.
- Announcements should be made, headlines should be provided on screen or videos should be shown to state any change in the scheduled travel/route/time plan.
- Metro-rail project proposal and architectural design may be put in a binder and made available for transparency.
- Use bright colors/brails for footpath, restrooms, platforms to provide easier direction for PWD's mobility
- Lifts, bathroom, metro-rail seats should be user-friendly for all PWDs
- Before opening for general people, the services need to be examined by persons with disabilities.

Some overall recommendations

- Women who are PWDs are prone to be sexually abused. Strict and continuous monitoring measures should be taken to ensure prevention of such heinous acts.
- NHRC should ensure that the metro rail related staffs are sensitive and trained in sign language and are able to communicate aptly with PWDs. Police should also be trained in sign language.
- Once all resources and services being provided have been established, it should be checked by PWDs to ensure that it is functioning and serves the purpose it claims to achieve. NHRC needs to monitor this continuously.
- Government entities like RAJUK needs to be strict about passing disability audit before any architectural structure is built.
- Engage the local community to ensure good quality management and regulation.

