

Development of Guidelines to Improve the Transport Infrastructure to Address the Mobility of Blind and Visually Impaired People of Sri Lanka

R.A.M.C.Ranasinghe¹ and W.K.Mampearachchi²

Sight loss can affect a person's independence more than any disability. Unsurprisingly many people who lose their sight never go out unaccompanied after facing difficulties they encounter by going to various places by themselves. These difficulties are very often magnified in the absence of facilities for them in the society. By introducing facilities on road infrastructure and public transport can substantially transform the livelihoods of blind and visually impaired people and their families. Lack of accessibility and mobility will discourage this sector of society in finding employment, gain access to education and health services and also will limit their social and recreational activities. Therefore these people should be able to travel independently within their locality or in urban and suburban areas at least for their urgent needs using public transport. Therefore study of the need of blind and visually impaired people is an urgent requirement.

Initially local and international guidelines, publications and literature were reviewed. It was noticed that international guidelines cannot be directly applied to local environment, since the road infrastructure and transport systems are different from those in developed countries. There were situations where guidelines given in one country is different from the other. Those details and positive and negative outcomes of previous studies were taken for the case study. Based on the outcome of the case study, An opinion survey was done for sample of blind and visually impaired people to identify their issues and get their feedback and suggestions and clarify issues noticed during the case study. On the outcomes of opinion survey solution options were developed for questionnaire in order to identify their preferred option. Finally a mobility expert trainer was interviewed.

Outcome of the study revealed how barrier free environment can be created on road infrastructure, bus transport and by tactile tactile paving. It is very important to maintain the consistency everywhere. Therefore three guidelines; (1) road infrastructure, (2) bus transport and (3) tactile paving were developed as a part of this study to suite local road environment. The guideline for road infrastructure provides guidance for planning, dealing with obstructions on footwalk, kerb ramps safety measures, provision of resting facilities, information signs, colour contrasts etc. The guideline for bus transport provides information for bus stops, bus shelter, boarding area, seat reservations, payment methods, information signs, discipline of

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driver and conductor etc. This guides places where tactile paving is necessary, warning and directional tiles, selection of colour contrast, background paving, paving at road crossings, bus stops etc. Guidelines developed under this project will create a barrier free environment and help blind and visually impaired people to be more independent.

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Authors Details:

1. Chartered Civil Engineer, Engineer (Road Safety), Colombo Municipal Council, Sri Lanka. Tel: +094777313251, mano1234abc@yahoo.com
2. Senior Lecturer, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. Tel: +94112650567 (ext.2024), wasanthak@civil.mrt.ac.lk