GUIDE TO INTERACTING WITH AND SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

A Resource Guide for Public Transport Operators (Matatu Owners, SACCOs & Staff)







AUTHORSHIP AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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For more information



Flone Initiative is a Pan-African woman-led non-profit organization working towards the realization of safe, accessible, inclusive, and sustainable public transportation for all in Africa, with a particular focus on women professionals in public transport and vulnerable groups

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About Flone Initiative

Flone Initiative is a women-led Pan-African organization working towards creating safe, sustainable and accessible public transportation spaces for women and vulnerable groups in Africa by influencing behavioural change, generating knowledge and movement-building. In conjunction with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kenya, Flone Initiative conducted a study on accessibility and mobility challenges of persons with disabilities on board Kenya's public transport vehicles. A separate report made recommendations for inclusive transportation.

1.2 Why this guide and for whom?

Many people worldwide often cannot use public transportation because of the inaccessible design of vehicles and associated spaces which make it uncomfortable and unsafe. These passengers include persons with disabilities and older persons, who are vulnerable in this sector.

This guide provides best practices recommended for public transport operators (matatu owners, SACCOs and staff) while serving passengers with disabilities. Such passengers include people who have mobility, vision or hearing impairments, or hidden disabilities such as cognitive or intellectual impairments. This resource guide aims to raise awareness about the transport needs of persons with disabilities, motivate and train drivers, conductors, and other transport



staff that regularly interact with passengers. It also proposes actions to be taken by SACCOs and transport companies to provide safe and accessible service to all their passengers and improve service for persons with disabilities and older persons. This will ease accessibility to public transportation for everyone.

1.3 Organization of this guide

The first section of this guide provides an introduction to disability to understand the most common terms used when referring to people with disabilities and the issues faced in public transportation and the community. It also identifies some of the misconceptions about disability and presents the facts. Additionally, it provides the appropriate and friendly language to use when interacting with persons with disabilities.

The second section provides the specific support that can be provided when interacting with and engaging persons with different disabilities. This can also ease the anxiety and inconvenience of matatu operators in their service.



2.0 UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY IN TRANSPORT CONTEXT



Persons with limited mobility, such as older persons and people using wheelchairs or crutches or canes.



Persons with visual impairments (blind/low vision or partially sighted)



Persons who have an intellectual or cognitive disabilities



Persons with hearing impairments (deaf or hard of hearing)



People with hidden disabilities such as epilepsy, autism and dyslexia



Persons who are deaf-blind



Persons with albinism



Persons with communication impairments



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Persons with chronic illnesses



2.1 What is a Disability?

Disability is the interaction between Persons with impairments which may include physical, intellectual, or sensory impairments and the environment, "which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD, 2006).

Disability includes any physical, sensory, mental, psychological, or other impairment, condition, or illness that has, or is perceived by significant sectors of the community to have, a substantial or long-term effect on an individual's ability to carry out ordinary day-to-day activities (Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

2.2 What is an Impairment?

Impairment is an absence of or significant difference in a person's body structure, function, or mental functioning. For example, problems in the brain's structure can result in difficulty with mental functions, or problems with the structure of the eyes or ears can result in difficulty with the functions of vision or hearing. Impairment can be structural or functional. Structural impairments are significant problems with an internal or external body component, such as when a complete loss of a body component or when a limb has been amputated. Functional impairments include the complete or partial loss of function of a body part, such as joints that no longer move easily (World Health Organization, 2001).



2.3 A person with a disability in the context of public transport



It is important to note that disability results from the interaction between a person's impairment and environmental barriers. Therefore, when we address the barriers in transport, the challenges experienced by persons with disabilities may not exist.



2.4 Common types of impairments (disabilities)a) Physical impairments



People with physical impairments (disabilities) tend to have difficulties participating in daily activities, including walking, standing, sitting, moving hands and arms, and controlling muscles. They may use canes, walkers, or wheelchairs. Many Kenyan public services are not accessible because they are high, congested and have no provision to keep the wheelchairs. When travelling, such people may require dignified support from the transport operators to access the vehicles, carry their mobility aids, and make stops to access toilets.

The major causes of physical disabilities are inheritance, injury, illness, accident, or side effects of a medical condition. Conditions that lead to physical disabilities may include cerebral palsy, stroke, spina bifida, arthritis, spinal cord injury and muscular dystrophy (see the definitions in the glossary).



b) Visual impairments



For visual impairment, one can either have total loss of vision or have some partial vision. Those with partial vision may include those with low vision, like persons with albinism. They experience challenges when travelling because they may not see road signs and information displayed on vehicles, not locate stages and landmarks, or see the obstacles or hazards - those who are blind use white canes or may have a guide. Most of the transport facilities in Kenya are not accessible by blind or partially sighted persons and they may have difficulty in unfamiliar settings. Transport operators need to make information accessible to persons with visual impairments. People with hearing impairments can either be deaf or





c) Hearing impairments



have residual hearing. Those with residual hearing struggle listening to common sounds, but those who are hard of hearing can use hearing aids to improve their hearing ability - people who are deaf use sign language to communicate. Very few matatu staff are trained in basic sign language, thus creating a communication barrier between passengers who are deaf and the staff.

As a result, many of them are taken past their destination due to this communication barrier. Passengers with hearing impairment often complain that matatu staff think they pretend not to hear to avoid paying the fares. They also risk being victims of traffic accidents because they cannot hear vehicle movements and hooting.



d) Deaf-blindness



Deaf-blindness means having both hearing and visual impairment. Either deafness or blindness can be more pronounced, meaning that they cannot hear and cannot see simultaneously. Those who are deaf and have partial sight can benefit from sign language, while those who are blind and are hard of hearing can benefit from amplified voice. However, those who are completely deaf and completed blind are usually supported by aids when travelling because they rely on tactile communication, without which accessing public transport would be more complex because the matatu staff lack skills for handling such people.



e) Communication impairments



A communication disability is caused by speech or language impairment. A person with a speech impairment may have difficulty with articulation, pronunciation, fluidity, and voice release. A person with language impairment may have difficulty choosing words, combining words to form sentences, or understanding the meaning of a word. While accessing public transport, some passengers with speech impairments may be unable to speak and instead communicate by pointing to a destination, for example, or by writing. Many staff may think that these people are not responsive and wasting their time. Most people with speech or language impairments do not have hearing loss or an intellectual disability. The operators need to be patient with them or seek alternative ways of communication, such as by writing.



f) Intellectual or cognitive impairments



Persons with intellectual impairments may have difficulties communicating, solving problems, reasoning, making decisions, concentrating and retaining information. While using public transport, persons with intellectual disabilities may forget their destinations and therefore can easily be alighted past their destinations, causing a safety issue. They may not recognize currency and thus can be victims of losing money and rude feedback.

g) Episodic Impairments

Episodic impairments (disabilities) appear occasionally. Examples include seizures or epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, mental health illness, brain injury, autism, or other developmental disabilities. They may not be obvious and can easily be misunderstood because their behaviours or ways of communicating may appear "unusual." For example, the actions of people with epilepsy can be mistaken for







drunkenness; therefore, one should be careful about how one interprets such behaviors. When episodic attacks happen in a matatu, they can be abrupt and cause panic. People with episodic disabilities may not always have a person to support them. Therefore, the matatu staff ought to know how to support them if the signs manifest, for example, on first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation skills in emergency cases. Symptoms and needs vary from day to day, from individual to individual, and assistance may be needed to prevent or manage triggers or symptoms, such as those relating to post-traumatic stress disorder.

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The actions of people with epilepsy can be mistaken for drunkenness; therefore, one should be careful about how one interprets such behaviors.



2.5 Myths about disability

Often, people make wrong assumptions about people with disabilities. More often, these are not factual. Therefore, matatu operators need to understand the facts about disability.

asonity.		
	✓ FACT	
U Disability is caused by evil spirits and curses	Many factors can cause disability. For example, it can be genetic (inherited from parents), accidents, and diseases, among other causes.	
	Disability can occur to anyone at any time. We are all going to be disabled with aging.	
All disabilities can be seen	Some disabilities can be spotted easily, while others cannot. One should be keen to understand the characteristics of different disabilities. If unsure, do not assume but ask the person to know more about their disabilities.	





X MYTH FACT			
Disability conditions are not contagious. If this were true, all the person's family members with a disability would have the disability as well.			
This is false - people with disabilities are just like all other human beings.			
This is false - people with albinism do not possess special powers.			
Some people who use wheelchairs may be sick, but not all of them. Know the reason why they are using a wheelchair before judging.			



X MYTH FACT				
People who cannot see also cannot hear.	The majority of people who cannot see can hear very well. However, some are deaf-blind, meaning they cannot hear and cannot see.			
A person who has lost one sense, such as sight or hearing, the other senses automatically compensate and become sharper.	The body's senses do not automatically become sharper, but the individual can learn to become more aware of the information being received through other senses.			
People with disabilities always need help.	Many persons with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help. If you would like to help someone with a disability, ask if they need it before you act.			
Accessible toilets are just for wheelchair users.	There are many reasons someone who does not use a wheelchair might need to use the accessible toilet - for example, a person who lacks balance or is elderly.			





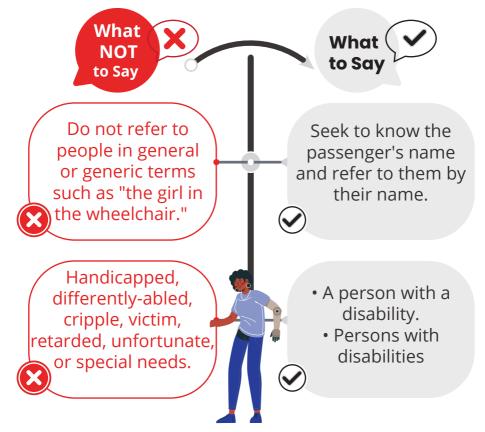
X MYTH FACT				
Accessible toilets are just for wheelchair users.	There are many reasons someone who does not use a wheelchair might need to use the accessible toilet - for example, a person who lacks balance or is elderly.			
All people who use a wheelchair cannot walk.	Not all people need to use their wheelchair at all times, so there is no need to be shocked or accuse someone of 'faking' when they stand up.			
People with a disability are not reliable employees.	People with a disability can work just like anyone else and be even more productive, provided there is a reasonable accommodation. They are much less likely to take sick leave or time off and often stay with a company longer.			
It is expensive to make adjustments and reasonable accommodations to accommodate passengers and employees with disabilities.	Many modifications and accommodations can be made at low or no cost. When a transport company accommodates their services, they become more attractive to all passengers, thus making more profit.			

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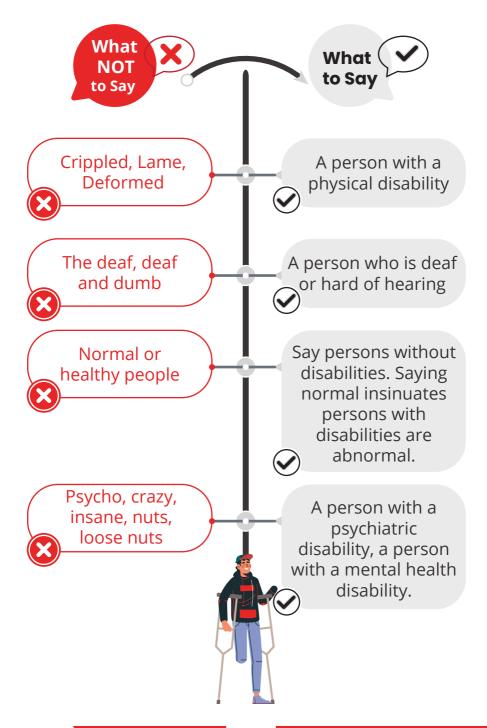
2.6 Appropriate and inappropriate terms to use

In many instances, transport operators are not aware of the language to use when interacting with persons with disabilities. This can cause people to feel excluded and limit their participation in the general society. Often, we identify people with their disabilities. This should be corrected to the person-first-language, which emphasizes the person before the disability. The person-first language is intended to avoid conscious or subconscious marginalization or dehumanization. It is part of etiquette that can also be applied to all people, including the elderly.



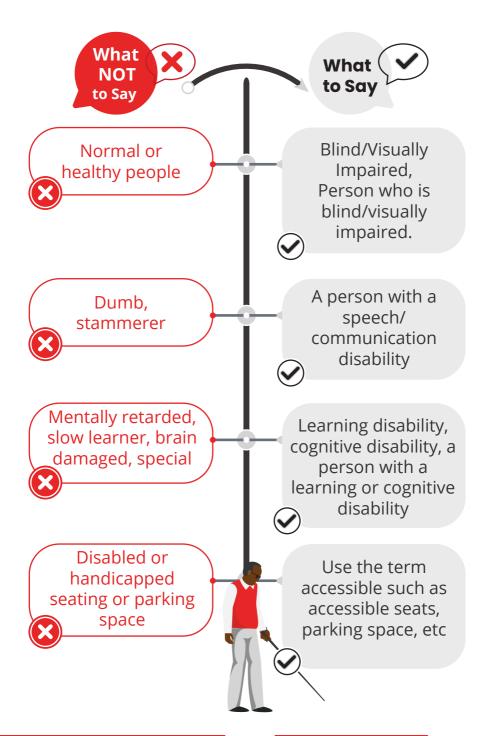




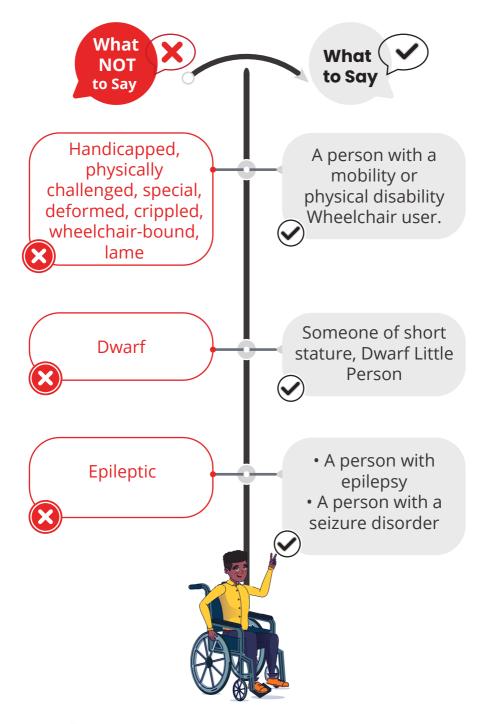














3.0 INTERACTING AND SUPPORTING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



3.1 Tips for transport operators

First, we highlight the best ways that one can generally support and interact with persons with any disability. Later, we will look at how we can support people with specific disabilities.

- Identify yourself by sound and or show them your badge
- Speak directly to the person, not their interpreter or anyone accompanying them
- Call someone by their first names, if you know them, only when extending the same familiarity to all others. Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder
- In case you wish to help, ask them how to help and what to do





- Never make assumptions about what is needed or how to provide the assistance
- Ask for further clarification in case you did not understand what they said
- Provide assistance that will meet their needs
- Provide information about the location of accessible facilities such as priority seats and toilets
- Ask questions about the person's disability only when this is necessary to understand and meet their disabilityrelated needs
- Support them to ensure that they picked all their luggage or possessions before leaving the vehicle or terminus
- Recognize that technologies may not work for everyone and that personal assistance may be required
- Do not touch or operate any mobility device or equipment without the owner's prior consent or instructions
- When introduced to a person with a disability, offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting but you can check if they are comfortable
- In case of sexual assault of a passenger, call GBV toll-free hotline 1195 for healthcare assistance or Police helpline 999/112 for reporting.



3.2 Supporting persons with mobility impairments

- Put yourself at eye level with a person using a wheelchair. If possible, sit next to the person when having a conversation
- Do not speak loudly and slowly to an individual in a wheelchair unless you know that doing so is necessary to communicate



- Do not touch a person's wheelchair or crutches without their permission
- Do not assume that a person using a wheelchair wants to be pushed, instead ask first
- When pushing someone in a wheelchair, confirm with them where they want to go and maintain an appropriate speed
- Ensure there are no obstructions during your interaction
- Remove any obstructions that may block the path of travel
- Offer assistance if the person appears to be having difficulty opening doors
- If a person uses a cane, crutches, or a walker, offer to assist with their baggage or other personal items
- Offer a chair if the person will be standing for a long period





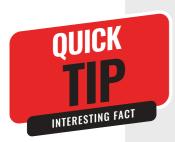
3.3 Supporting persons with visual impairments



- Speak normally and directly to the person and identify yourself as a representative of the transportation service provider
- For those deaf-blind, you may communicate with them through tactile for example finger writing on the palm
- Ask them politely if they may identify themselves
- In noisy environments, you may observe or ask if they understood and if not, repeat yourself ask them
- Be clear and precise when giving directions; give the person verbal information, for example, the number of stairs up or down
- When conversing in a group, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person to whom you are speaking to



- Never offer wheelchair assistance to persons who are blind or partially sighted unless they also have a mobility impairment, as it is not a substitute for guiding assistance
- Do not grab the person's arm or cane, assuming they need assistance. Ask first if they need assistance
- If you are offering a seat, suggest to them and if they agree, gently place their hand on the back or arm of the chair to assist them in locating the seat
- When supporting them, tell them when you are leaving
- Provide verbal information and updates on what and when they can expect to happen
- Tell the person the denominations when you count the money they have given you or that you are returning to them
- For a transport that requires someone to fill a form, ask if the person needs assistance completing forms while ensuring the confidentiality of such information



When conversing in a group, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person to whom you are speaking to.





3.4 Supporting persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Before speaking, get the attention of the person by tapping their shoulder gently or waving your hand if the person is at a distance
- Ask them how they prefer their communication, for example, writing on paper or phone
- In case one has an interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter
- Ensure there is eye contact always
- Speak clearly, naturally, and slowly to benefit those lip reading and hard of hearing
- When speaking, stay near a light source and do not eat
- Avoid visual distractions like very bright light
- In case you feel your message is not clear, rephrase or write
- Use facial expressions and gestures appropriately to complement the communication
- Do not assume that the person is wearing a hearing aid
- Discuss personal issues or communicate privately

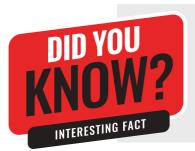


3.5 Supporting persons who are deaf-blind

- Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation; for example, tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm
- Do not assume what the person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have a residual vision and/or hearing, while others have neither



- Communicate directly to the / Note person, not to those accompanying them
- You may communicate by writing on their palm using your fingers (tactile communication)
- Ask whether the information you have provided is clear
- Offer assistance if the person appears to be having difficulty locating a specific service area, washrooms, or food services facilities



You may communicate to the deaf-blind by writing on their palm using your fingers.





3.6 Supporting persons with communication disabilities

- Give the person time to speak without interrupting them. Do not complete sentences for them
- Watch and listen as the person may use body language, speech, or a communication device
- If the person is having difficulty expressing their needs, summarize what you have understood and ask for



- needs, summarize what you have understood and ask for confirmation of your understanding
- Do not hesitate to ask the person to repeat themselves if you have not fully understood them
- Where possible, communicate with the person away from noisy areas, including those where others are speaking
- Avoid speaking loudly because it does not help
- You may write if you find it difficult to understand the person, but first, ask the person if this is acceptable
- Ask questions that require only short answers or a nod of the head. Try to offer a choice of answers to your question to obtain a "yes" or "no."
- Use alternative communication such as stage names and fare tag



3.7 Supporting persons with intellectual disabilities

- Listen carefully when the person speaks
- Speak slowly in easy to understand English
- Give travel information in clear and short sentences with no more than six words.
 If possible, use graphic information



- Use simple language when speaking to them and visuals or colour cues
- Break instructions to make them easy to understand
- Keep checking if they understood what you said and if not, repeat
- Ask the person if they would like key information in writing
- Ensure you are communicating in a place with fewer distractions
- Assist them in filling out forms and wait for their permission
- If they can fill themselves, provide extra time
- Provide explanation or clarification more than once
- Take time to understand them and ask for clarification from them





3.8 Supporting persons who have an episodic disabilities

 Do not assume the nature and severity based on past experience



- Make an observation and individual judgment of the person's needs because different people have different episodic disabilities and varying severity
- If the person is in a position to communicate, ask the person what assistance they need and only ask questions about their condition if it is necessary to make sure you provide the right assistance
- You may check documentation in case they are not conscious
- Allow extra time for the person to process what you are saying and to respond
- Be patient with them in case they are not fast in responding to your communication
- Provide for staff trained on first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation to assist those who may experience episodes
- In case a condition becomes worse, call for medical attention for example an ambulance.



3.9 General tips for interacting with persons with disabilities

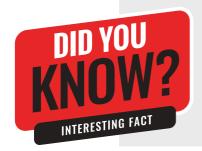


- Understand that passengers with disabilities and older persons depend on you to get where they are going!
- Be helpful, respectful, and friendly
- Help lone passengers with disabilities or older persons to board or alight where necessary
- Always pick up passengers with disabilities and older persons
- Make sure the passenger with disabilities or older persons is properly seated with the safety belt fastened
- Stop as close to the stage or terminal as you can
- Do not move the vehicle until passengers with disabilities are seated if boarding or have alighted if they arrive at their destination





- Allow persons with disabilities or older persons to sit near the exit for easy alighting
- Call out major stops and transfer points as well as stops requested by blind passengers
- Speak to deaf or hard-of-hearing passengers in a normal voice, looking right at them as this may help them to read your lips
- Inform passengers with disabilities of the route and destination if you think they may need this information. Be willing to repeat information and use short sentences in a normal voice
- Make the public service vehicles accessible to wheelchair users through:
 - Make sure you know how to use the lift or ramp;
 - Check that the lift or ramp works when you start your shift;
 - Lower the ramp when requested;
 - Follow the rules about securing wheelchair users.



You may communicate to the deaf or hard-of-hearing passengers in a normal voice, looking right at them as this may help them to read your lips.



3.10 What SACCO Officials and Owners can do to ensure accessibility



 Due to their design, PSV vehicles pose accessibility challenges to many commuters. Sliding doors, low ceilings, crammed seating arrangements, and high boarding platforms create obstacles for commuters boarding and alighting from the vehicles. SACCOs should make infrastructure considerations that can help ease these challenges, including making all PSV vehicles wheelchair accessible by installing a ramp in the back of the minibus and making the back row of seats foldable. By making back seats foldable, the minibus can create space for storing assistive devices or luggage if necessary. PSV vehicles should prioritize this space for commuters living with disabilities, but should it not be used by persons with disabilities, it should be made available for luggage or large parcels.



- Display destinations or make stop announcements. Stop announcements help commuters with hearing and visual impairments and commuters who may be unfamiliar with a route. Announcements can be made at every stop and the upcoming stop. Where appropriate, SACCOs could also incorporate automated bus stop announcement systems.
- Sensitize or train all staff on disability awareness and inclusion
- Put up posters or displays showing that you are inclusive
- Put up posters to motivate drivers and staff to provide safe and accessible driving
- Employ and support staff with disabilities so that they can aid in mainstreaming disability within your SACCO

3.11 Tips for passengers with disabilities on interacting with transport operators

Passengers also have a role in ensuring that the public service vehicle operators support them. Some tips are provided below.

- Treat the transport operators and other passengers with respect and dignity.
- If possible, have the exact fare ready to pay for the trip.
- Inform the transport operators about your destination as you board the vehicle





- If available, sit in a designated seat or sit as close as possible to the exit door to alight easily.
- Keep your assistive devices safely and near you but not obstruct the walkways for transport operators and other passengers
- Keep your personal property safely at all times
- Request to be allowed to alight as near as possible to the bus stop or stage near your destination if possible
- Feel free to request help or assistance from the transport operators
- Do not change seats while the vehicle is moving.







4.0 CONCLUSION

Supporting and interacting with passengers with disabilities to access public transport requires awareness and extra caution. It should be acknowledged that the needs of persons with disabilities are so diverse that there is no single method that works for a single category of disability. It goes beyond understanding the basics and requires staff to understand and provide for each of their unique needs. Staff involved in the transport business ought to be aware and practice those guidelines as minimum standards.

The public transport companies ought to make it an inclusive policy for all their staff to get trained on these guidelines and can be adopted as part of training or continuous sensitization. This will ensure that the needs of all passengers are provided in a friendly and accommodative fashion in the effort to promote principles of human rights.



GLOSSARY: Definition of Terms

- 1. Arthritis: Arthritis causes inflammation and pain in joints, bones, and muscles. An individual with arthritis tends to experience muscular pains and aches, joint inflammation, and reduced movement or joint stiffness.
- 2. Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder: Refers to a broad range of conditions whose severity of symptoms can vary widely. The common symptoms include difficulty with communication, social interactions, obsessive interests and repetitive behaviours.
- **3. Brain injury:** Traumatic brain injury often occurs due to a severe sports injury or car accident. Immediate or delayed symptoms may include confusion, blurry vision and difficulty concentrating.
- 4. Cerebral palsy: Cerebral palsy is a physical disability resulting from injury to the developing brain during pregnancy, birth, or shortly after birth. Brain damage can be caused by illnesses during pregnancy, premature birth and meningitis in young children. When damage to the brain occurs, it causes motor function impairment, leading to movement and coordination problems.
- **5. Mental health disabilities:** There are many different mental disorders with different presentations. They



are generally characterized by abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.

- 6. Multiple sclerosis: It is a condition that can affect the brain and spinal cord, causing a wide range of potential symptoms, including problems with vision, arm or leg movement, sensation, or balance. It is a lifelong condition that can sometimes cause serious disability, although it can occasionally be mild.
- 7. Muscular dystrophy: Muscular dystrophy occurs when the muscles responsible for controlling movement become weak and lead to restricted walking and joint motion. Mostly, people with muscular dystrophy use wheelchairs because the muscles are too weak to carry their weight.
- 8. Epilepsy/seizures: Epilepsy, which is sometimes called a seizure disorder, is a brain disorder. A person is diagnosed with epilepsy when they have had two or more seizures. A seizure is a short change in normal brain activity. Seizures are the main sign of epilepsy. Some seizures can look like staring spells. Other seizures cause a person to fall, shake, and lose awareness of what's happening around them.
- **9. Spina bifida:** Spina bifida is a type of physical disability which occurs during pregnancy when there is incomplete closure of the bone that covers the spinal cord, leaving the spinal nerves exposed. Spina bifida can cause paralysis



of the lower part of the body. A person with spina bifida can also experience weakness, sensory loss, or both. Additionally, many individuals with spina bifida tend to lose control over their bowel and bladder. This type of disability requires a wheelchair or a pair of crutches to enable movements.

- **10. Spinal cord injury:** Spinal cord injuries result from insufficient blood and oxygen supply to the spinal cord, mainly caused by accidents. The injuries can cause paralysis of many body parts or parts, leading to movement challenges and/or loss of bladder and bowel control.
- 11. Stroke: An individual with stroke experiences a sudden impairment on one side of the body, making it difficult to carry out daily activities, including movements. People who suffer from a stroke can regain their independence after treatment but can continue to experience paralysis and weaknesses on the body's affected side. A walking crutch or wheelchair may be required to enable an individual who has had a stroke, to help move from one place to another.



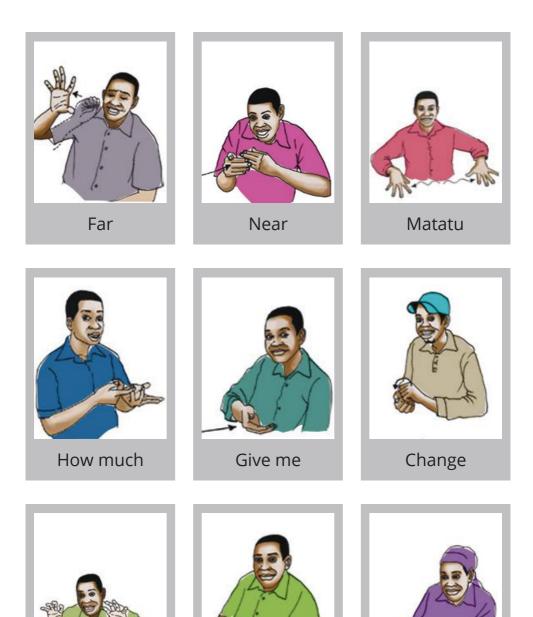


Basic Kenya Sign Language Signs commonly used





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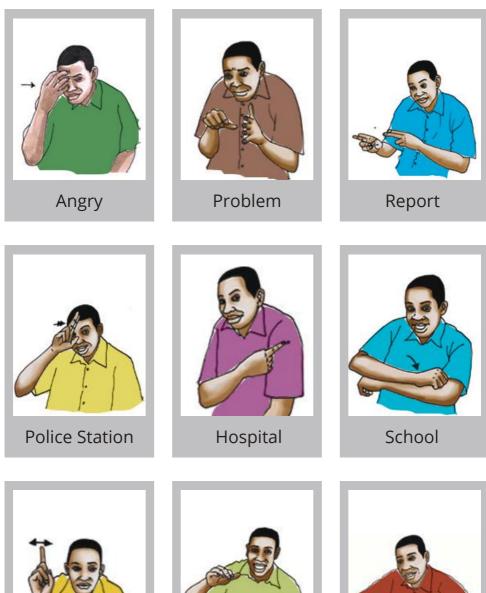
Insult



Touch



Rape



Nairobi



City



Hour



Basic Kenya Sign Language Numbers commonly used



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NOTES





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