IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & MANAGEMENT OF AN INTEGRATED ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM: A PROPOSED GENERIC SYSTEM FOR MAJOR CITIES IN SOUTH ASIA TO MEET THE MANDATE OF UNCRPD

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SUMMARY
This research addresses the issue of how cities in Asia located in those countries that have ratified UNCRPD, can implement, monitor and manage an integrated accessible transportation system by linking existing bus services with BRT, trams/light rail, subways, taxis, three wheeled scooters, and even cycle rickshaws, to address the mobility needs of all citizens including the seniors, and the disabled (visually, auditory, cognitively impaired and physically disabled).

Key Words
UNCRPD; Asian Cities; Implementation; Accessible Transportation System

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The implementation status of selected Asian Countries who ratified the UNCRPD since 2007.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
To assess the implementation status, a combination of personal experience in Asian cities, and available research literature were used to establish the current status and also to propose a generic model of implementing the UNCRPD within the national, regional, and local decision making framework to accommodate the accessibility needs of the major Asian cities.
RESULTS

The research yielded little information on concrete steps taken by the selected nations of the SAARC countries, Indonesia, and South Korea. The proposed model for implementing the UNCRPD should assist officials and professionals at local, regional, and national levels. It is a framework designed to assist in overcoming opposition from politicians, engineering, planning, and transportation professionals, who have rarely worked together as a community of professionals responsible for an integrated multi-modal functioning transportation system within the major cities in Asia.

DISCUSSION

Since the initiation of the convention, establishment of a protocol, ratification of the convention, and ratification of the protocol, much time has passed between these four stages and the Asian countries who have signed and ratified at different times reflecting the decisions made at the government levels and their willingness to participate eventually to implementation (Table 1),

Table 1: Asian Countries' Participation In The UNCRPD Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Convention Signature</th>
<th>Protocol Signature date</th>
<th>Convention Ratification date</th>
<th>Protocol Ratification date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>9/2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>1/2008</td>
<td>9/2009</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>10/2007</td>
<td>4/2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td></td>
<td>12/2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>9/2008</td>
<td>7/2011</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
From the data it is clear that not all the Asian countries have ratified the convention and only three out of these countries have ratified the protocol. The focus of this paper will be those countries that have ratified the convention, and are officially democratic in their governance. Thus Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan, and South Korea are the selected countries, excluding the remaining countries that have ratified but do not have large cities. The exception to this is China which does not fit into a model of the concept of shared governance.

Korea

Of these with countries with large cities, South Korea with over 50 million people out of which over 24.5 million are in Seoul, clearly is in category of its own. Access to subways and buses in most areas of Korea for the disabled, elderly, and young children, is somewhat limited. However, Seoul Metropolitan Government has initiated a number of projects to improve the situation. Over fifty percent of the busses are in the process of being made accessible this year, with wheel chair access enhanced through elevators to assist seniors and the wheel chair bound or others with mobility limitations. Access for the blind is being built and made available in 20 bus stations, with special pedestrian blocks in some subway platforms, and sidewalks, as well as Braille signage at ticket counters, subway station entrances, and voice guide units to guide the blind to the platform. The current Taxi for the disabled and free shuttle services serving specific communities will eventually be integrated into one system to allow for a more seamless accessible system. Obstacle-free Zones are also planned in areas where the elderly and the disabled frequent such as welfare centers and hospitals (www.korea4expats.com). Another factor which separates South Korea from other countries with large cities, is its level of industrialization puts it more in the category of a number of European countries with well developed infrastructure and service industry, and its ability to meet the UNCRPD mandate is far greater than any of the other reaming Asian countries.

India

Accessibility in India has struggled with many issues, foremost being one of bringing together legislation, implementation, ongoing monitoring, and Management to serve a huge population, with many mega densely populated cities, and a diverse ethnic/linguistic and regional interest groups. Prior to ratifying the UNCRPD, India had already passed the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act in 1995. However it had not been implemented in any systematic manner. Low busses have been introduced with services along dedicated bus lanes such as the BRT system in Ahmedabad, in Gujarat. The BRT corridor stretches over 16.5 km in an area which, unlike congested south Delhi, is still being developed by the government. The city is developing transit
oriented development (TOD) after the BRT was operational, unlike Delhi where the BRT occupied two car lanes, with the BRT platform located in the middle of the road, making them dangerous for the bus passengers and car drivers alike. On the other hand much progress has been made towards a total accessible airport system, as with metro rail system either underground or over ground. All major cities have accessible aircraft embarking / disembarking methods serving all major flights, or those locations where tourists count for the largest volume of airline passengers such as Aurangabad, Madhya Pradesh. In a similar way, flights to Dharamshala make use small aircrafts which can only accommodate wheel chair/ mobility impaired passenger by assisting them during disembarking or embarking. The Indian Railways as the largest transport System has as yet to be made accessible. Even to enter the compartments, requires a high level of dexterity and agility. While acknowledging the need to make the vast but aging rail system accessible, there has been little effort to address the problem of making this most common system of travel by the vast majority of people, accessible. Even platforms in many cities are still not readily accessible, many with overhead metal bridges connecting the main station and ticket counter with platforms to different lines.

However, busses on the other hand have become more accessible with the use of low floor bus designs, accessible ramps to platforms which allow passengers to enter busses at the same level. These changes are more visible in metropolitan cities and have helped to improve access to this ubiquitous mode which connect people from major cities to suburbs and smaller cities, and significant intermodal junctions such as the crossing of the Golden Triangle with the North South Road (from Srinagar to Bangalore and beyond). In a similar manner the pedestrian ways have not been designed to accommodate the needs of those with disabilities, and are often left to individual municipalities, to build, and repair. Major features in many Indian cities have been the “Pedestrian foot bridges”, which is in direct response to many advocacy groups’ request for safe crossing of major roads. These are few and far between and are often not always accessible.

An overall issue facing India is the lack of enforcement of the PWD Act, and the lack of training of professional engineers and planners to integrate the management of pedestrian, car and other large vehicular traffic, combined with penalties for violations, enforceable in court. Another element of concern to many disabilities group is the undercount of the disabled in the census 2001, which hopefully has been largely rectified.

**Indonesia**

Indonesia has made some gesture by addressing the need for accessible tourism starting with the research by Kurniawan, Harry, and Ikaputra (2004). Jakarta Globe (http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/jakarta/rough-ride-for-disabled-on-indonesias-public-transit/522764) has published the article of June 08, 2012 indicated that the disabled are unable to use the public trains in Central Jakarta, without help from their friends, since there are no ramps, elevators, Signs in Braille for the blind, or
prominently displayed running text for the deaf. The problem appears to be the lack of understanding and the government under estimation on the size of the disabled population which runs around 2.1 million nationwide in 2010, as stated by the Social Affairs Ministry, but is estimated to be by the World Health Organization’s 2011 report on disability, to be between 1 percent and 7 percent, which in Indonesia would translate to as many as 16 million disabled people. Jaka Ahmad, a member of the Jakarta Transportation Council, cites the TransJakarta bus network, with its series of ramps leading to each shelter, as a step in the right direction, but says it’s still far from ideal. He and several friends kicked off a campaign called the “Barrier-Free Movement,” in which they invite disabled people on regular tours using public transportation. This organization has earned the support of the Pedestrian Coalition, which seeks to ensure that pedestrians can walk the city’s streets safely and without hindrance. This proactive approach towards accessibility has accelerated in Indonesia judging by the July 13th Article on The Jakarta Globe, in which the NNCRPD is specifically cited by Enny Suprapto, an activist, who mentioned at a national conference, that “The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires states to do several things, including forming a national mechanism to monitor and protect the implementation of the convention”. As a former of the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), Enny stated that the UN convention required states that had ratified it to appoint a body in the government to implement the convention (http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/health). So far implementation of the UNCRPD is not uppermost in the minds of the candidates running for office.

Nepal

Nepal, while a small country has played a critical role in the subcontinent’s affairs serving as a country bordering Tibet/China/ India, flanked to the north by the Himalayan Range. Its public transport system is limited to a 59 kilometer narrow gauge rail system from Janakpur, Nepal to Jainagar, in Bihar near the Indian border. The rail bridge near Janakpur (a) and the transport modes available at the stations (b) are shown below:

(a) Walking across the rail bridge  (b)Rickshaws at the station
There is no railway near Katmandu, and other rail connections are from Indian railways to various towns near the border. Nepal has an ambitious expectation for running East-West Railway linking to Kathmandu. Nepal also hopes to have a North-South Railway line to link the railway systems of India and China. But it might take a longer time and it depends much on the political situation in the region. Accessible public transportation has not been implemented due to the political unrest and a lack of resource. Busses are often the inaccessible TATA busses built in India. A major issue which appears to be ignored is the high accident rates for busses leading to fatalities.

Little written document is available on pedestrian walkways in Nepal, except for rules enforced on them for not using overhead bridges (http://xnepali.net). Kathmandu Metropolitan Traffic Police Division (KMTPD), from February 2012, has started to fine pedestrians who do not use overhead bridges to cross the road. Those, who cross the roads without using overhead bridges, though the bridge is nearby, will be fined Rs 50 and will be under detention of the Traffic Police for an hour. This action was taken to control road accidents. There is little information on the implementation of the UNCRPD to the ordinary Nepalese.
Pakistan

Pakistan is following a similar path to Indonesia, with public protest against Government inaction on the matter of providing accessible transportation. A more definitive article on the status of the disabled has been written by Shahida Sajjad (2008). While the research does not indicate when the field data collected, the value of primary data collected from employees with disabilities in Karachi, using a structured questionnaire to investigate the issues facing these workers at their workplace offers an assessment of their work environment faced by these disabled workers. The results of the study indicated that employees with physical disability faced mobility problems, those with hearing impairment faced communication problems. No special provisions were made to create a barrier free environment. Most had low paying jobs, with low status, few privileges, and most of these disabled individuals had no awareness of their legal rights.

Based on the available documents and various sources of information for each of the five countries used above, several common elements stand out:

- All countries need to implement a nationwide effort to address basic issues of more accurate estimation of the total disabled population, and the total in each major category of disability to plan to meet their need for accessible transportation to access education, jobs and recreation facilities
- There is also a need to establish an office for the disabled to advocate on their behalf for allocation of budget, monitor implementation, and management to ensure quality control to meet the needs of the entire disability community
- A final element necessary to ensure a long term benefit to the entire population is to educate the general public on the value of inclusive policies and practices towards the disabled members of the society, followed with publicizing any fines or penalties for not meeting the barrier free environment expected within a certain time frame.

In order to successfully implement, manage, and monitor the accessibility mandate ratified by all signatories of the UNCRPD, it is imperative to have a decision making model which is viable within the political framework of the four countries discussed here (excluding South Korea). Each of the remaining countries has immensely complex diversity within its borders, both culturally, and physically. Hence a regional implementation plan from the national level, can be more effective and sensitive to regional variations in creating a barrier free environment for the disabled community.

Figure 1 provides a framework which integrates, planning, implementation, managing, and monitoring at several levels, necessitated by regional rivalries, potential for waste, corruption, and rivalries among professional bodies who often have not worked in multidisciplinary teams. A final aspect of such a task is to ensure
voluntary monitoring by independent groups whose primary role is to ensure compliance to the UNCRPD.

**Figure 1**

**Proposed Model for Implementing, Managing, & Monitoring a Barrier Free Environment**

**Conclusion**

While the UNCRPD has been signed by many countries in 2007, it appears to be a concept that has not been fully adopted in practice and requires most countries in Asia to consider the cost of non compliance in the long run. Additional factors are evident: while the UNCRPD has been signed and ratified by the selected countries, few countries have actually implemented the mandate, or have a reasonably accurate count of their disabled population. Hence much work is needed prior to planning and implementing a well thought out strategy to address this critical area of public service. Of the four Asian countries, the task of implementing the UNCRPD is a major challenge due to the need for an integrated approach, along several fronts: communication through the media, appointing and defining national government role versus regional/local government roles, encouraging a multi disciplinary professional team to work effectively to implement the mandate, and finally to ensure the active role of voluntary bodies at all levels in monitoring compliance with the mandate.
signed and ratified, through some mechanism for penalties for delays or poor quality work, to be levied on companies awarded the contracts.

The disabled members of the community restrict the able bodied members of a household, from fully participating in the daily activities, since they require assistance and support, both financial and physical, to complete many personal tasks. Hence the volunteer bodies can be the best conduit for input from the disabled community if no disabled volunteers are available, to monitor the progress of tasks being implemented in a timely manner, while ensuring proper management. Volunteer bodies at both national and regional/local levels will allow for cross checking of management goals, prevent waste and ensure that projects completed will meet the needs of the entire disabled community equitably. Regional rivalry can also be prevented as also charges of corruption, and political favoritism.

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