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**BLAZING A TRAIL FOR NEW JOURNEYS THROUGH
DEAF INCLUSION**

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Why the work was done and what it aimed to achieve?

- The Deaf community is largely overlooked regarding their safety and access in transport.
- Raising awareness and sensitizing policy-maker stakeholders including government, transport industry, is therefore vital.
- The Deaf are persons with disabilities (PWDs) because of societal communication barriers
 - Discrimination & inequality pervasive in every area of life, including transportation.

How evidence was gathered?

- Desk review of previous studies revealed a gap.
- Field study was conducted with prior consent in the form of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) of 30 women and girls who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing from various settings in Nairobi county.

What was found

- Communication barrier was found in 100% participants, confirming the desk review of the societal double stigma of being Deaf and female.
 - They narrated feeling unfairly treated as hyper-sexed *“because I am a woman (they) want to treat me as a sexual person”*, and some stating that *“sign abusing words like bubu by putting thumbs in ears and waving open hand”* and *“I feel bad when they mock my signing and think I am pretending, although sometimes they just stare surprised”* because of being Deaf.
- Deaf women and girls’ transportation challenges affect educational and other outcomes such as when they are often not allowed to commute by their families
 - *“I do not travel to new areas without an assistant”; “misinterpreting fare”; “boarding wrong route or/and alighting wrong stage”*. One 21-year old college student narrated that *“I had boarded matatu and the fare to be paid Kes 30 and I gave conductor Kes 100 to give me back change. Only for him to give me Kes 20 and told me to wait for the rest. I waited until I arrive my stage and ask conductor to give me back only for him to change mind. No change. I was angry and was forced to pick change from his pocket and go.”*
- Daytime travel was preferred for matatu and bodaboda riders, citing that
 - *“day easy to watch out”*, but night was okay only for taxi riders, *“with loud music I do not feel safe in matatus” “bus is safer than the (hyped up) matatus” “Night fear rape and robbery”*.
- Majority (96%) participants citing that generally the driver & conductor crew over-charge, waste time at the bus stops and drive carelessly
 - The crew *“are not friendly but harsh, do not wear uniform and it is risky” “I had to quarrel with a drunkard man over a seat” “poor attitude, loud music, insulting so I never ‘talk’ in the matatu”*
- To resolve the challenges, all participants agreed that signage at every stop would inform the honest fare and stage name because *“fare must be fair”*. Handicap seats and training on Deaf culture to matatu crew including courtesy and honesty in announcing the destination.

What were the challenges of undertaking the work

- There was initial low uptake of research, as some Deaf respondents may suffer low trust from the data mining of many researchers, who in the past do not explain future benefits nor share these with the Deaf community
- Facilitation for the Deaf girls and women
- Sign language interpretation services for full inclusion of Deaf; as well as Deaf relay interpreters in data collection were a hurdle.

What is the importance of the findings and for whom?

- The Deaf community will benefit from timely policy change to ease transport concerns, as well as transport industry workplace inclusion.
 - World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) has tasked each country's national association, such as Kenya National Association of the Deaf (KNAD) to lobby for serious implementation regarding the Deaf peoples' concerns.
- The Kenyan government will be informed on the Deaf legislation needs.

What more work needs to be done in this area?

- In-depth analysis of the various aspects for least restrictive environment for a Deaf traveller, which means the most enabling environment, full inclusion through a totally supportive, signing and Deaf-centred environment. This permits the Deaf person to develop to his/her full educational, social and emotional potential.

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