



Key Notes for the Department of Social Welfare for Persons with Disabilities

#6. Accessibility

In order to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to participate on an equal basis as others, it is important to invest in accessibility. Investing in accessibility may have some costs up front, but reaps large benefits for society in the long run.

Accessibility is broadly understood as the ability to access or benefit from any product, device, service or environment. Having access means that persons with disabilities can live independently and participate fully in all aspects of society. Many public buildings in Cambodia, such as hospitals, schools and government buildings, are not accessible to persons with disabilities. The same is for public streets.

Why should the government invest in accessibility for persons with disabilities?

1. Accessible design benefits a user group larger than only persons with disabilities

- Designs created to benefit persons with disabilities generally end up benefiting a much larger user group.
- The amount of persons needing accessible design is increasing: the proportion of old people in Cambodia is expected to triple in the next few decadesⁱ; the number of persons disabled due to road traffic incidences is expected to increase as wellⁱⁱ.

2. Persons with disabilities are an underserved potential client base for accessible goods and services

- Tourism plays an important role in Cambodia's economic development, and this could be even bigger if Cambodia taps into the accessible tourist market by making the country an interesting destination for disabled travellers.
- Worldwide, persons with disabilities are an emerging market with a disposable income of approximately USD 1.2 trillion annuallyⁱⁱ.

3. Investing in accessibility at the beginning of a design is cheaper than doing so at a later stageⁱⁱ

- Accessible environments from the outset save the government money in the long run, e.g. because public transport systems are more efficient.

4. In an accessible environment, persons with disabilities can participate as active members of the labour force and social life

- If workplaces are more accessible, persons with disabilities can take part in employment, reducing costs for social assistance and increasing the tax payer's base.
- Accessible information means persons with disabilities can engage in societal issues, e.g. increasing the constituency of politicians if they can access voting information and polling stations.

5. Accessibility is embedded in legal frameworks

- Accessibility of information and the built environment is stated in multiple legal frameworks as well as in Cambodian laws.
- Developing accessible public buildings and services will help the Royal Government of Cambodia to achieve their obligations as well as their development goals.

National and International Legislative and Frameworks / Provisions

Law on the Protection and the Promotion of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities

Article 21 states that all public places shall be made accessible for persons with all types of disabilities.

Physical Accessibility Standards for Persons with Disabilities in Cambodia

This set of standards is developed by the Ministry for Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MoLMUPC), and the Disability Action Council (DAC). It is intended as a guidance for architects and designers to design and build a barrier-free environment, and equal access to public spaces and participation in civic life for persons with disabilities.

National Disability Strategic Plan (2019-2023)

Strategic Objective 4 of the NDSP targets accessibility, setting goals for the improvement of physical infrastructure, public transportation, and communication.

Incheon Strategy

Goal 3 of the Incheon Strategy focuses on enhancing access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 9 of the UNCRPD declares that “States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access [...], to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public.”

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The SDGs specifically name access for persons with disabilities in target 11.2 “provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all [...], with special attention to the needs of [...] persons with disabilities” and 11.7 “provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for [...] persons with disabilities.”

ⁱ HelpAge. (n.d.) *Ageing Population in Cambodia*. Retrieved 20 July 20202 from <https://ageingasia.org/ageing-population-cambodia/#:~:text=card%20for%20Cambodia-,Situation%20of%20older%20people,of%20the%20country's%20total%20population.>

ⁱⁱ United Nations. (2019). *Disability at a Glance 2019: Investing in Accessibility in Asia and the Pacific — Strategic Approaches to Achieving Disability-inclusive Sustainable Development*.