



ITF in Focus session: Looking towards the 2022 Summit: Transport for Inclusive Societies

Humans have diverse and unique needs – and transport is key for creating inclusive societies, where all people can meet theirs. The session brought together speakers, but also around 100 members of the audience, to discuss the meaning of inclusiveness and the role of transport for promoting societies that are more inclusive. Members of the audience defined inclusive societies as those where communities work for providing dignified social basic rights for all. From this perspective, mobility was underlined as one of the key components for ensuring inclusive societies. Nowadays, one people in eight lacks access to affordable mobility. Yet, mobility is essential for going to schools, to find jobs opportunities and to get health treatment. An introductory video for the session, highlighting the work of World Bicycle Relief in Palabana, Zambia, emphasised this point: transport, through something as simple as a bicycle, can mean the difference between having a stagnant community and one that is on the move.

Passenger and freight transport are essential for including and bringing prosperity to all communities, especially rural ones. Kristina Jasiunaite, Managing Director for Europe of World Bicycle Relief, explained that around 80% of the global poor live in rural areas; and although lack of mobility is at the heart of this poverty, it is often overlooked. In this context, Larbi Fahim, Head of the New Road Works Monitoring Department within the Moroccan Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water, presented the work of the Moroccan government for including rural communities into the economic development countrywide. The Moroccan government's programmes to increase accessibility in rural areas of the country follows the principle that 'the road of development starts with the development of roads'. While in 1995 only 34% of rural households had access to a road in proximity, nowadays the rate has increased to more than 80%. Among other things, road availability has increased access to health services by more than 30% and decreased costs of transporting goods by 14%. In regions where surfaced roads are lacking, having a bicycle can be an important and sustainable solution: Kristina Jasiunaite showed how providing bicycles in areas of Kenya allowed health volunteers to increase monthly patient visits by almost 90%.

Inclusive transport is more than just about going from A to B – it is to do so in a way that is dignified and affordable. Camilo Adas, President of SAE Brazil, highlighted how 'each individual is unique and has different needs, so truly inclusive mobility needs to be planned more broadly than simply meeting the statistical standards of normality. Martine Abel-Williamson, Treasurer of the World Blind Union, complemented this view by explaining how transport is about the experience of the accessible journey. Transport it is about how people feel; what they hear; see or smell during their journey. This experience needs to be understood while thinking from an integrational perspective, considering the needs and realities of all. This includes those of the elderly, of children, of people whose first language is not English, of lower-income people and of people with disabilities. Martine Abel-Williamson also

addressed the way the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the quality of the mobility experience for all, but especially for disabled people. Social distancing measures, both in public transport and in public spaces, have not in all cases taken into account the needs of disabled users, such as blind and partially sighted people – amounting to more than 250 million worldwide. Finding mobility solutions for all groups in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic is essential, as she indicated ‘a society that does not have room for everyone does not have room for anybody’.

All stakeholders have a role to play in planning, designing, funding and operating inclusive transport services that grant mobility for all. Speakers highlighted how it is crucial that people from all user groups are included in the service planning and design processes. Camilo Adas mentioned that truly inclusive services will come from having a workforce that is inclusive, and that integrates people from all user groups. This way service planning and design, as well as operation, will be done in a way that includes all types of capacities and mobility experiences. Martine Abel-Williamson echoed his thoughts, mentioning that blind and partially sighted people want to be an active part of the solution, and serve as a real market for new mobility solutions and innovations. Kristina Jasiunaite underlined that new mobility innovations will be key for bringing about real inclusion in and through transport, but only if they put humans at their centre. Finally, Larbi Fahim talked about the importance of having a wide array of resources, both from national and international actors, to fund and put in place transport infrastructure and services for a more inclusive tomorrow.