

Cynthia Chepkemoi Kipsang

Cynthia is a dynamic urban planning professional from Nairobi, Kenya, with over three years of experience in transport planning, specializing in gender and social inclusion. Currently serving as a Programs Assistant at Flone Initiative, she is dedicated to advancing equitable mobility and social justice in transport systems. Passionate about creating inclusive, accessible transport solutions, Cynthia actively works to integrate gender-sensitive approaches and universal accessibility principles, believing that sustainable mobility is a fundamental right for all. She is committed to shaping a future where transport systems truly serve everyone, regardless of their background or abilities.



Nairobi, Kenya



Transport systems can be considered inclusive, feminist, and equitable only if...

... it is centred around people taking cognisance of their diverse needs, rights, and lived experiences. It must be feminist in design, enabling women to enjoy the same freedoms of mobility as men, taking into account women's caregiving roles and complex trip patterns, all while ensuring affordability, safety, and security. It must be inclusive through upholding the rights of persons with disabilities to access a barrier-free system that supports independent movement. And it must be equitable, reflecting changing age demographics; therefore, the young and older persons can move through our cities with equal ease and dignity.

If I was in power of our transport systems, the first thing I would do is...

... implement fare regulations to make public/popular transport genuinely affordable for all. In Kenya and across much of Sub-Saharan Africa, the informality of the public/popular transport system often hides the true cost of travel. Women and persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected, incurring

hidden expenses due to inaccessibility, fear of sexual harassment and lack of reliable last-mile connectivity. This often forces them to rely on alternative, more expensive modes of transport just to complete a single journey. For persons with disabilities, the cost of mobility is much more than just a fare. In most cases, they may need to travel with a caregiver or pay additional for the assistive device. These instances are economically unsustainable and further limit their mobility.

Picture a woman who has to drop kids at school, go to work, and shop for groceries, all while relying on public/popular transport to make these trips. If the transport system is not made affordable, it places an undue financial burden. Affordable public transport is a key step towards achieving equitable transport.

How does the current situation for young people in your city influence your work?

As a young person living in Nairobi, Kenya and a daily user of public/popular transport. I experience firsthand how our transport systems are designed more for cars than

for people. The public/popular transport vehicles and terminals are largely inaccessible, and many operators lack the necessary etiquette to handle and support persons with disabilities. For persons with disabilities, all these contribute to increasing the severity of their existing disabilities, making what should be a simple commute a daunting experience. Through my work at Flone Initiative, leading the moving barriers program, we continually work to change this narrative through evidenced-based advocacy, capacity building to policy implementers and transport operators to influence behaviour and mindset change that persons with disabilities are right holders to accessible transport systems.

What's the main challenge that you face in your daily work?

One of the main challenges I face in my daily work is the deep-rooted resistance to change within transport systems, particularly when it comes to incorporating accessibility and inclusion. While there is a growing awareness of the rights of women and persons with disabilities and policies put in place, implementation often lags. Decision makers and transport operators sometimes view the provision of reasonable accommodation in the transport systems as an afterthought, a

charitable gesture or an imposition of undue financial burden.

Why is it important to listen to young people?

Young people are the active change-makers of today and the leaders of tomorrow. I have seen first-hand how listening to the opinions of young people gives us a genuine sense of what matters in the world and the attention we need to pay to certain societal concerns that tend to be overlooked. A compelling example is the 2024 protests in Kenya against the Finance Bill, where Gen Z activists effectively utilized digital platforms to mobilize nationwide demonstrations, advocating for economic justice and policy reforms. This underscores the importance of amplifying youth's voices to lead and champion for inclusive governance and reforms.

What would you tell other young people working in the transport field?

As a young person in the transport field, be passionate about the cause, don't underestimate the power of your voice, and speak even when your voice shakes!. Your fresh ideas and innovation are what is needed to drive change towards inclusive and just transport systems.



