

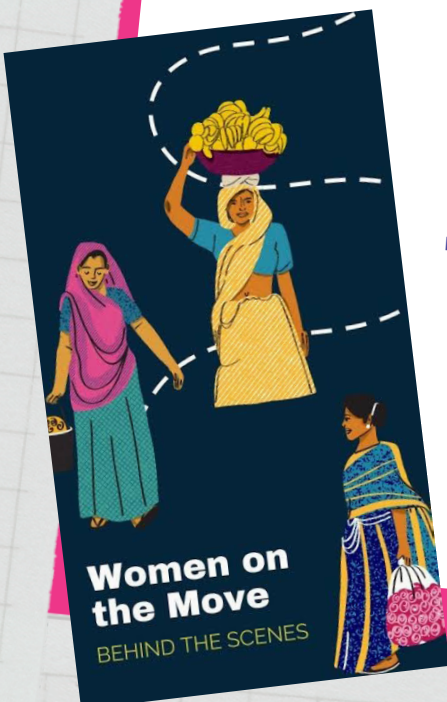


Lizbeth Godwin



Kerala, India

Lizbeth is a passionate urban transport researcher dedicated to advancing sustainable, inclusive, and gender-responsive mobility systems. Currently a Senior Analyst, Infrastructure Advisory at Ernst & Young and previously Senior Research Associate, Urban Transport, at the Centre for Public Policy Research (CPPR). Lizbeth has led impactful projects advocating for equitable transport policies and empowering women in mobility. Her work spans key areas, including non-motorized transport (NMT), electric vehicles (EVs), public-private partnerships (PPP), and transport financing models. As a thought leader, she regularly contributes to urban mobility discourse through publications in The New Indian Express, The News Minute, and Urban Transport News. A recipient of academic excellence awards, Lizbeth holds an MSc in Economics with a specialization in Urban Development from Symbiosis International University. She actively engages with policymakers, government stakeholders, and local communities to promote innovative, data-driven transport solutions. Lizbeth's ongoing mission is to create cities where mobility is not just a service but a right, accessible to all.



Transport systems can be considered inclusive only if...

... mobility systems address the unique needs of women, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups. Inclusive systems ensure that safety, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability are prioritized. My work, particularly through initiatives like Gender Mobility Systems, focuses on tackling these inequities by engaging women and other vulnerable groups to co-create practical solutions. My advocacy efforts on projects like the Vypeen Island transport study have highlighted the importance of last-mile connectivity, safer transit options, and community-led policy interventions to create truly inclusive transport systems.

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

... introduce a comprehensive mobility plan which includes representation of intermodal connectivity, gender mobility and infrastructure that promote safe, affordable, and sustainable transport. My hands-on work in urban mobility and stakeholder engagement has taught me

that long-lasting change requires a bottom-up approach. I would prioritize expanding non-motorized transport networks, increasing women's representation in leadership roles within the transport sector, and improving public transport safety through initiatives such as street lighting, surveillance, and community monitoring.

How does the current situation for women, young people and persons with disabilities in your city influence your work?

The lack of safety, accessibility, and affordability in public transport for women, young people, and persons with disabilities deeply influences my work and perspective. Many of my projects, aim to bridge these gaps. When being part of various mobility stakeholder consultations for city mobility plans, I make it a point to voice out for inclusive plans that consider the unique needs of women, differently abled and the marginalized communities. Whether it's designing safer commuting options or amplifying women's voices in transport policymaking, I focus on addressing the real challenges these groups face in urban mobility. My advocacy efforts are



My work aligns with the
Hamburg Charter Principles!



My work aligns with Hamburg Charter principles advocating for gender equality, sustainable transport, and equitable mobility. Through my involvement in initiatives like MobiliseHER, research on public transport gaps, and community-centered transport planning, I actively promote inclusive, resilient transport systems. My approach also emphasizes building safe, accessible, and sustainable networks that address the mobility needs of women, young people, and vulnerable communities.



driven by the belief that inclusive transport is key to achieving equitable cities.

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

One of the biggest challenges I encounter is navigating bureaucratic resistance and insufficient political will, which often delay much-needed transport reforms. However, through my work in stakeholder engagement, community consultations, and advocacy for gender-responsive transport solutions, I've learned to tackle this by building coalitions, amplifying underrepresented voices, and leveraging data-driven insights to push for change. Maintaining momentum in long-term projects, despite these challenges, is a crucial part of my approach.

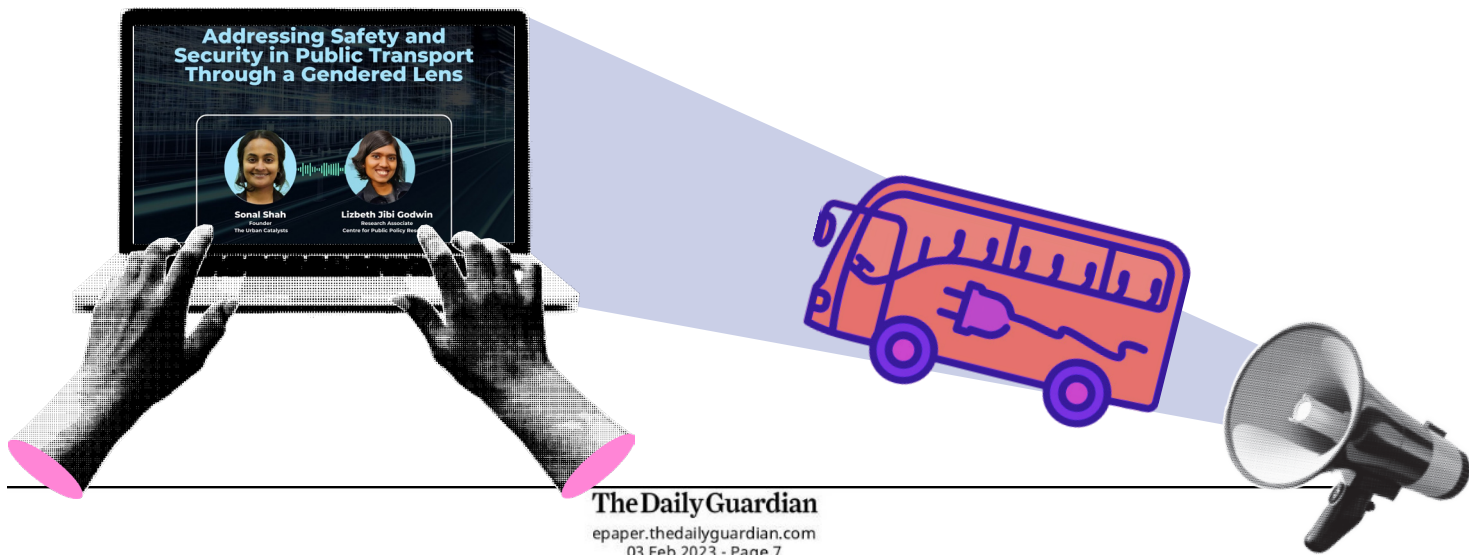
Why is it important to listen to young people?

Young people bring innovative ideas, energy, and unique perspectives to the challenges facing transport systems today. By listening

to them, we ensure that the future of mobility reflects the values of sustainability, equity, and resilience. My work with youth-driven projects, including public engagement campaigns and interactions with fellow youth at colleges when I deliver talks, demonstrates that involving young voices leads to practical, forward-looking solutions.

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

I would tell young professionals in transport to stay resilient, stay curious, and always engage with communities. Real change happens when research, advocacy, and on-ground realities converge. In my experience, projects have shown that challenging the status quo and focusing on grassroots, gender-equitable mobility planning can lead to meaningful impact. Keep pushing boundaries, collaborate across sectors, and focus on inclusive, long-term solutions.



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GROWTH ENGINES

Budget boost will help leverage Municipal Bonds

Push from the central level would motivate urban local bodies to step in to mobilise finances from the market, leading to more investment.



LIZBETH JIBI GODWIN

The Union Budget 2023-24 has emphasised incentives to urban local bodies (ULBs) through property tax governance reforms and ring-fencing user charges on urban infrastructure. Ring-fencing is a legal or financial arrangement of separating the activities, assets and liabilities, revenues and costs associated with the functional unit as if it were to operate independently. Municipalities currently function in a way that different functions overlap in such a manner that revenue and operational costs of different functions cannot be determined inde-

pendently. However, by ring-fencing the status of functions, one could tell much about the cost-effectiveness of operating and if municipal bodies are getting value for what they have put in. For instance, water supply, which is a function of municipality upon which user charges are collected, could be ring-fenced to obtain accurate information about cost efficiency. This aims to improve credit worthiness of ULBs and help them raise funds through municipal bonds.

Fiscal autonomy in the form of availability of funds as well as power to make financial decisions, is one of the core elements of effective decentralisation. Municipal bodies have been struggling long enough to build their capacities to raise finances. Indian cities are experiencing a myriad of issues as a result of their fast urbanisation, including poor infrastructure, congestion and

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environmental damage. The RBI believes that the municipal bonds are a reliable source of funding for ULBs. A much-needed secondary market for municipal bonds in India may arise as a result of efforts to list municipal bonds on stock exchanges.

According to the World Bank report "Financing India's Urban Infrastructure Needs: Constraints to Commercial Financing and Prospects for Policy Action, 2021", India will require to invest \$840 billion over the next 15 years into urban infrastructure to effectively meet the needs of its urban population. The Union government on 11 January 2023 identified 35 mu-

nicipal bodies in the country that can raise funds from the market by floating their bonds for infrastructure development. Currently, only those municipal bodies with "A" credit rating are able to access bonds which are based on the overall financial performance and there are many municipal bodies in the country which need to improve it.

The first step in raising funds from the markets by issuing municipal bonds is credit rating. Credit rating provides a reliable assessment of an instrument's inherent risk. By highlighting this aspect in the budget 2023-24 and providing incentives to civic bodies for credit worthiness, many

ULBs could access the market now to raise resources. Since the municipal bond market in India is still developing, credit rating can be crucial in luring in new investors. The Central government has previously included credit rating of Municipal Corporations in the reform agenda of the Smart Cities and AMRUT programme. However, the untapped potential for bond financing by Indian cities was highlighted by the fact that of the 94 cities given credit ratings in 2018, only 59% obtained a rating of investment grade or above. The

dards of bond issuance. The initial cost of bond issuance is prohibitively expensive for India's 200+ municipal corporations and many smaller ULBs. From the Finance Minister's Budget speech 2023-24, it is evident that capacity building of ULBs has been envisioned by incentivising them to raise finances and be self-sufficient. This kind of push from the central level would motivate the ULBs to step in to mobilise finances from the market, leading to more investment. Cities being the engines of growth have a huge role to play in paving the way towards India's dream of achieving a \$5 trillion economy. Improving the leveraging of resources by ULBs can be done by driving a programmatic effort to get the relatively capable cities to tap capital markets.

Lizbeth Jibi Godwin is Associate, Centre for Public Policy Research.

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