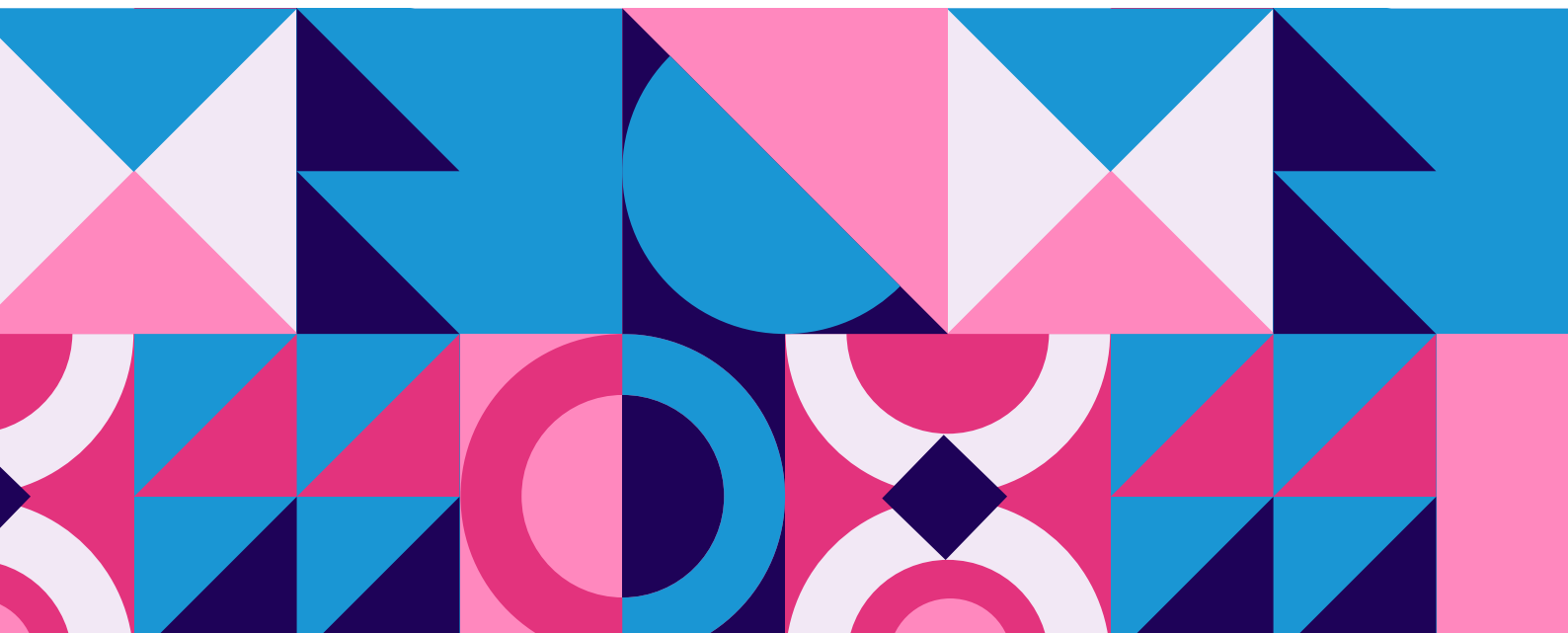# Beyond the Norm:

A Guide to Inclusive Events

Beyond the Norm:
A Guide to Inclusive Events

Limited participation of disabled individuals in arts and culture has led to the exclusion of potential artists and audiences, depriving them of civic engagement. This, in turn, hinders the cultural sector from benefiting from new ideas and diversifying its offerings.

In Nepal, the primary barrier is the inaccessibility of events, including unfriendly venues, inaccessible content, and the inability of event marketing to reach disabled individuals. To bridge this gap, the British Council has been bringing in sector experts from the UK, organising capacity-building exercises, outreach programmes, and collaborating with festivals and events since 2019. This book extends these efforts in collaboration with Diverse Patterns, offering a comprehensive guide to making both virtual and in-person events accessible to people with various disabilities.

In the following pages, you'll discover how to make your work accessible, and practical tips for planning and implementing inclusive programmes and events. Whether you are an artist, curator, cultural programmer, event organiser, or an inclusion advocate, this book empowers you to contribute to a world where all voices are heard, talents shine, and stories are told.

Have you ever felt frustrated by events that seem to only cater to certain types of people?

Recall a time when you missed an event because:

- It was so crowded that you could not even move. You felt like you were being pushed and jostled by the crowd every second.

- The music was too loud, or the sound effects were overwhelming for you.

- The event was poorly lit and you could barely see what was happening.

- The event was only advertised through a particular social media platform or website, and you missed out because you do not use that platform.

- The event was held in a location that was difficult to access due to lack of parking, unavailability of public transport, or other transportation issues.

- The event was only offered at a time or on a day that did not work for your schedule.

Whatever the reason, if any of these scenarios sound familiar to you, you're not alone.
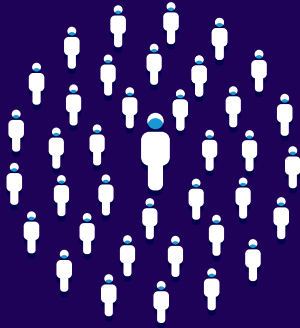
Every day, countless people miss out on events and experiences that they would have enjoyed, often due to factors beyond their control.

Contents

Who are we referring to?

Individuals with disabilities!

As per Nepal's latest census of 2021, **more than 650,000 Nepali citizens,**

accounting for **2.2% of the population,** live with some form of disability.

Hence, ensuring inclusivity is not just a social responsibility, but also an excellent business prospect for the arts sector.

Inaccessible venues, lack of accommodations, and social stigma are real challenges preventing disabled people from attending events they are interested in.

Let us see some examples:

Disability	Barriers to Participation
Wheelchair users	Inaccessible venues or stages, lack of wheelchair-accessible seating, narrow doors or aisles, staircases without ramps or lifts.
Blind or low vision	Inadequate lighting, lack of audio descriptions or captions, inaccessible printed materials such as programs or exhibit descriptions, lack of tactile or sensory experiences.
Hearing impairment or hard-of-hearing	Inadequate or lack of sign language interpretation or captions, poor sound quality, absence of visual cues and non-verbal communication alternatives.
Sensory processing issues	Overstimulation from glaring lights or blaring sounds, lack of quiet or sensory-friendly spaces, perplexing or uncomfortable sensory experiences.
Cognitive or intellectual diabilities	Lack of clear communication, unfamiliar or puzzling social cues, overwhelming or strange social situations, inaccessible or overly complex language and concepts.
Neurodivergent individuals	Difficulty comprehending intricate language or concepts, unfamiliar or confusing social cues, overwhelming or excessively stimulating environments, difficulties relating to sensory processing, executive functioning, and social communication.

A scene from the play *Saptarangi Awaj*. Produced by Creative Dwarf Women Society Nepal. The play is one of the first disabled team-led productions in Nepal. The play was performed in Kathmandu and at the Women of the World Madhesh, Janakpur in 2019.

Photo credit: British Council

What do we do?

To ensure cultural participation from the disabled community, organisers can consider actions during planning and executing events.

It is essential to recognise and address barriers that may prevent individuals with disabilities or other marginalized groups from attending or enjoying event.

By proactively planning for accessibility and inclusion, we can create a welcoming environment for all attendees and contribute to a more diverse and vibrant event culture.

Even minor changes like organizing events on the ground floor (level access) or providing support volunteers can help make the impact. However, it is crucial to also recognise that accessibility is a continuous process that requires team commitment.

There are numerous benefits of organizing accessible events.

- Organisers can expand and diversify their audience by reaching out to various underrepresented groups in addition to individuals with disabilities. This not only fosters inclusion but also increases income through the broadening of the audience base.
- Creating accessible and inclusive events can help to build a positive reputation for organisers- showing a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and social responsibility.
- Accessibility is a legal requirement. The Disability Rights Act, requires organisers to ensure equal participation.
- Providing accommodation and accessibility features can enhance the event experience for overall attendees, creating a more enjoyable and memorable experience.
- Organisers can use new perspectives and ideas promote creativity and innovation in event planning and execution.

So, how do we do it?

This comprehensive toolkit compiles strategies and best practices for ensuring event accessibility across physical, communicative and linguistic accessibility as well as social integration needs. By providing these suggestion, our aim is to equip artists and cultural event planners to organize accessible and inclusive events.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to accessibility; each event and audience may present unique challenges. However, by collaborating and exchanging knowledge and experiences, we can cultivate a community of practice that celebrates the diversity of its members.

So, let's dive into it!

Jargon Buster

Disability: A term denoting physical or mental disparities that can impede a person's participation in specific activities or environments. Disabilities can be visible or invisible, including impairments in mobility, sensory processing issues, and mental health conditions.
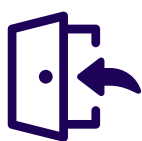
Access: The capability to enter, utilise, and enjoy a space or activity. Ensuring access can take the form of physical adjustments, such as ramps or elevators, or social considerations such as creating welcoming and inclusive settings for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities.

Inclusion: The act of ensuring that all individuals feel welcome and appreciated, irrespective of their differences or backgrounds. Inclusion involves creating opportunities and environments where everyone can contribute and participate without fear of discrimination or exclusion.

Sign Language: A visual language that uses hand gestures, facial expressions, and body language to convey meaning. Hearing impaired or hard-of-hearing people often use sign language to communicate.

Large Print: A type of print that is larger and easier to read than standard print. A programme schedule with larger reccomended font size can support individuals with visual impairments or other reading challenges.

Audio Description: A verbal narration that depicts the visual components of a performance or exhibit. Audio descriptions can help visually impaired individuals fully experience and enjoy art events that are staged like theatre plays.

Captions: Written text appearing on a screen or display, providing a written version of spoken language. Captions are widely used to enhance access across media platforms, including television, films & arts.

Wheelchair ramps: Inclined surfaces that allow people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices to move between different levels or areas that would otherwise be inaccessible. Ramps may be constructed from a variety of materials, such as metal, wood, or concrete, and can be permanent, portable or make-shift.

Disability organisations: Groups or organisation that advocates for the rights and needs of people with disabilities. Disability organisations may offer resources, support, and services to people with disabilities and their families, as well as work to influence public policy and promote social change.

Colour contrast: The difference in brightness or hue between two colours. Colour contrast is critical to ensuring that people with visual impairments or colour blindness can distinguish between different items on a page or screen.

Level access: A flat space or surface with a gentle slope that facilitates movement between different areas or levels. Level access is crucial for individuals with mobility impairments, who may have difficulty navigating venues.

Screen Readers: Software used by individuals with visual impairments to help them use computers or mobile devices by reading aloud all screen elements.

Mairi Taylor of Birds of Paradise, Scotland, facilitates a workshop for disability and art leaders during the Disability Arts workshop at British Council in 2019.

Photo credit: British Council

A. Planning

It is essential to prioritise accessibility from the beginning of planning by considering the needs of your attendees and incorporating accessibility into the event design.

The following section covers into important strategies and considerations for planning.

Creating an Accessibility Task Force

To ensure that accessibility is seamlessly woven into all aspects of event planning, it is vital to establish an accessibility task force comprising representatives from each department involved in the event. Preferably this should include individuals from marketing, programming, production, and operations. There are also options to invite and involve an external accessibility expert if the organisation or event is new to accessibility planning. It is crucial that the task force members are diverse in terms of gender, caste, and disability, as this brings broad range of perspectives and ideas to address accessibility issues.

The Accessibility Task Force should meet regularly throughout the planning process to evaluate progress and ensure that accessibility is incorporated into all facets of event delivery. Each department should provide updates on the tasks they are working on, and the task force should discuss strategies to enhance accessibility and meet the needs of all attendees.

It is recommended that task force members be accountable for accessibility considerations in their respective areas of work in the event delivery. For instance, the marketing department should ensure that all promotional materials are accessible, while the programming department prioritises the needs of diverse audiences.

Choosing an Accessible Venue

When selecting a venue start with wheelchair access. This means finding a venue with level or ramped entryways, wide doorways, and accessible restrooms. This lays a strong foundation for taking on other changes that can ensure the event is accessible to others with diverse abilities.

A wheelchair-accessible venue may have the following features:

- A ramped entrance with a gentle slope and no steps.
- Wide doorways and corridors that are free of obstructions.
- Accessible restrooms with grab bars, turning space, and accessible sinks and fixtures.
- Installation of elevators or lifts to facilitate access to upper floors (if the event is located on such floors).

Referring to disability organisations when selecting a venue makes for effective strategy to assess the accessibility of venues and can provide recommendations on modifications or accommodations needed to ensure that the venue is accessible to all.

Access Audits
An access audit is a review of a building, venue, or event space to identify barriers and areas for improvement in order to make it more accessible to individuals with disabilities. If you are unsure about the venue's accessibility, you can conduct an access audit using the checklist created by the British Council.

Quiet Space (Rest Space)
Having a designated rest or quiet space in the venue is crucial for attendees with sensory disabilities who may need a break from overstimulating environments. For attendees with physical disabilities who may need a comfortable place to rest and recharge during longer event.

Booking Accessibility Services

Providing accommodations like sign language interpretation, captioning, and audio description can help ensure that everyone can participate fully in an event and access the information that is being presented. When planning an event, it is essential to book these services well in advance to ensure that these are available on the day. This may involve hiring professional service providers or exploring do-it-yourself options (which will be discussed later in this guide).

Regardless of the approach, planning and ensuring that the necessary accommodations are in place is important. This will not only make the event more accessible but also ensure that all attendees feel welcome and valued.

Creating an Accessible Marketing Plan

Marketing an accessible event requires thought. This includes selecting appropriate terminology, contacting disability organisations, and ensuring that social media and other marketing materials are accessible.

When developing a marketing plan, it's important to consider the following:

- **What to post:** Consider the language being used. Make sure that it is inclusive and avoids stigmatizing or offensive terminology. Avoid using words like "special needs" or "handicapped," which can be viewed as derogatory. Instead, use person-first language and focus on the individual rather than their disability.

- **Reach out through disability organisations:** Partnering with disability organisations can provide easy access to disability community and also to, if required, accommodations. Seeking inputs, review and guidance from organisations that work with different types of disabilities is an effective way to plan delivery.

- **Making social media accessible:** Social media posts are accessible to people with disabilities when alternative text descriptions are used for images and videos. Additionally using accessible colour contrast, and providing closed captioning or audio descriptions for media content can make most campaigns accessible for a very wide audience.

- **Offer benefits to appeal to people with disabilities:** Consider offering free tickets for accompanying attendant or support person. Offer accessible seating or viewing areas, and accessibility features such as captioning or sign language interpretation, to those who need them. This can be an audience development strategy.

Budget

The budget for accessibility should be incorporated into the main budget plan from the beginning, so that is an integral part of the program design and not addressed on an ad-hoc basis. Begin by evaluating the additional costs associated with making events inclusive. These costs can include booking accessibility services, modifying the venue for accessibility, providing additional signage or printed materials in accessible formats, and more. Budgeting for these expenses from the start of the planning process will allow you to consider seeking additional funding or sponsorship specifically for accessibility measures.

Reviewing the programme

Be mindful of how programming and content are sensitive towards disabled people and other minority groups. Promote a culture of inclusion by including disabled people in the actual programme. Accessibility and disability experts can provide valuable advice on programme content.

The timing of the programme and the day's schedule should be reviewed to ensure that they are suitable for all kinds of audiences, and that audiences have adequate time to participate fully. For example, if simultaneous programmes are held in different locations within the venue, providing sufficient time between programmes for people to transfer is important.

For events spanning across multiple venues, it is crucial to take into consideration how disabled people will navigate and access the different locations.

Sunita Gyawali performs her poem at the Women of the World Nepal Festival at Lumbini Park. The poet was selected to perform through a grant programme organised by Access Planet and supported by the British Council.

Photo Credit: British Council

B. Preparation and Promotion

This section will cover different approaches to promote an accessible event, including print and online materials, audio and sign language announcements, and access required forms. We will also explore methods to reach out to the disability community and promote the event through disability organisations and social media.

Access Guide

An access guide is a comprehensive document that provides detailed information about the event and its accessibility features. This document is intended to provide attendees with the necessary information to plan their visit and ensure they can fully participate in the event.

The access guide should cover the the following:

- **Inclusive Greetings:** A welcoming message to all participants, including individuals with disabilities.

- **Venue Information:** Details about the venue such as its location, accessibility features, and availability of restrooms. Also, provide relevant contact information for venue management in case of any accessibility concerns.

- **Transportation Options:** Guidance on accessible transportation options, including public and private vehicles to take, and accessible routes for people with mobility challenges.

- **Parking Information:** Information on parking options and guidance on how to access them.

- **Ticketing Information:** Outlining ticketing options, such as wheelchair-accessible seating or discounts for attendees.

- **Accessibility Features:** Detailing the accommodations available at the event, such as sign language interpretation, captioning, or audio description. It should also specify which features are available for each show or performance.

- **Contact Information:** Contact information of the access team or access focal person who can answer questions related to the event's accessibility.

The access guide should be made available in various formats, such as Microsoft Word or Text files, for easy download. Here is an example.

Language and Tone

Using language and tone that emphasise the accessibility features of the event and inspire attendees to participate can help create a welcoming and inclusive space at an accessible event. Therefore, when promoting the event, it is essential to use language and tone that are inviting and highlight the event's accessibility.

For example, when designing marketing materials, using images of people with disabilities will showcase the event's commitment to accessibility. This can also promote a positive image of disability and encourage attendance from the community.

> *Example: "Welcome to our accessible event! We are thrilled to offer a welcoming and inclusive space to people of all abilities. Whether you have a disability or not, we want you to feel valued and included in our community. We've taken great care to ensure that our event is accessible, from wheelchair ramps and accessible seating to sign language interpretation and audio description. Join us for a day of celebration and inclusivity!"*

You can include an similar paragraph in your event literature to get the message across.

Print Accessibility

We often rely on print and text material to elaborate essential details about our events. This may include posters, schedules, maps etc, which are necessary for navigating the event.

When designing printed materials, consider the following:

- **Large print:** Use a font size 18 points or larger to make the text easier to read.

- **Contrast:** Use high-contrast colours (like black and white) for optimal legibility.

- **Multiple formats:** Create and make available print information in various formats (both digitally and physically). Consider using audio, braille and other aides to cover possible accessibility needs.

Accessible Website

Websites are often the main source of (detailed) information for potential audiences. These days, websites come with many features that support access for people with disabilities. Incorporating features to address visual, auditory, and motor impairments allows potential attendees to plan their participation better.

When designing an accessible website, consider the following:

- Simple, easy-to-read font with a size of at least 16pt.
- High-contrast colors and avoid using colors alone to convey information.
- Input alternative text descriptions for images and graphics so that people with visual impairments can effectively use reading applications to cover all of the website or event page's content
- Review if any website functionality requires the use of a mouse, consider users who might only be able to navigate using a keyboard.
- Include captions or transcripts for videos or other media content.
- Test accessibility features, for example use a screen reader to see if all details are covered. Run checks periodically to make sure functionality is maintained.

You can see the NFD-N's website to see an example of an accessible website

Accessible Social Media

Often we rely on social media promotions to reach our audience. To widen reach we should consider accessibility to not only benefit disabled community but all potential audience regardless of their barriers. Organizers should be cognizant that individuals with disabilities prefer certain platforms over others so using different channels is always better.

When designing accessible social media content, consider the following:

- Use plain language and avoid using jargon or complex terminology.
- Use high-contrast colors and avoid using colour alone to convey information.
- Provide alternative text descriptions for images and graphics so that people with visual impairments can understand the post's content.
- Provide captions and transcripts for videos to ensure that people who are hearing impaired or hard of hearing can access the content.
- If the image or video you are posting contains text, use easy-to-read font, sized at least 16 points.
- Use hashtags to make the content more discoverable and help people with disabilities find relevant content.

Accessible audio & video content

Consider the needs of all event participants, when creating audio or video content to ensure their full engagement. Here are some tips for making audio and video content accessible:

Captions and transcripts are essential for people who are hearing impaired or hard of hearing. This will also benefit those who may have difficulty understanding spoken language or accents. Ensure that the captions are synchronised with the video content and are accurate and clear.

Include audio descriptions for people who are blind or have low vision. This provides an additional audio track that describes the visual content of a video, giving the listener a sense of what is happening on the screen. Ensure consistent and appropriate volume levels for your audio content. People with hearing impairments may need to adjust the volume to a comfortable level.

Ensure appropriate colour contrast for your visual content so that it is visible to all participants, including those with colour blindness or visual impairments.

Test your audio and video content with a diverse group of people, including those with disabilities, to ensure that it is accessible and user-friendly.

Accessible Communication Material

If you are making promotional media content consider how the audio and as well as the visual content is accessible. Subtitling your video content is an easy place to start.

Descriptive audio content can be added to compliment media content for people with visual impairments or reading difficulties.

The content of the promotional content can be signed with the help of a interpreter and recorded for sharing with deaf audiences.

Accessible audio
- Keep the message short and simple, and use a clear, easy-to understand spoken voice.
- Provide a description of the event and the accessibility features that will be available.

Accessible video content material
- Work with a qualified sign language interpreter to create the video.
- Include information about the event, including date, time, location, and accessibility features.

These contents are primarily developed for website and social media use. Check compatibility requirements of the platforms that you are uploading to.

When you are communicating with your audience/stakeholders via email, make sure that your emails are accessible. You can add alternative text, and maintain high colour contrast in your text. Additionally, it is helpful for everybody if your emails are short, precise, and in simple language. Most importantly, it is integral that you know who your target audience is and how they prefer to communicate. It never hurts to ask.

Access Requirement Form:

An effective way of understanding what features to provide can be the Access Requirement Form. By collecting relevant inputs during the registration or inquiry portion of the promotions, you can fully understand and act on the access support needed by the people who are planning to attend. It is best to ask than to assume.

When creating an access requirement form, consider the following:
- Create a list of features you intend to provide and ask them to select the ones they require for full participation. Options like wheelchair access, sign language interpretation, or audio description, as well as other communication and dietary requirements should be included.
- Provide space where they can input their own views and requirements.
- Make the access requirement form visible and easy to access on event website. Here is an example of an access requirement form.

Reaching out to the Community

For many disabled individuals communication channels are limited. Although there is increasing access to Internet and has opened up great possibilities for digital promotions, consider the fact that not all major social media platforms are accessible.

A possible way to address limitations in reach is by accosting organizations who work with disabled individuals. Most organization will be happy to oblige as accessible cultural opportunities are unfortunately still rare.

When reaching out to disability organisations, consider the following:

- Where are they based? Preferring organisations in your local community can be effective in developing longstanding relations with the community.
- Request advice on what types of channels, media and formats are best suited for their network.
- Provide drafts and seek feedback. This can make sure the promotional content is relevant and builds ownership of the efforts.
- Make sure to invite your supporting organization so that they can see your efforts first hand and provide feedback.

A sign language interpreter performs alongside the Dharma Wheel Flash Mob Theatre group at Women of the World Nepal Festival, Lumbini, in 2022.

C. The Event (D-Day)

The day of the event is the culmination of your planning and promotions. So it is crucial that you have checklist and walk-through to make sure that accessibility features are in place as expected.

The next segment discusses what will be necessary at the event venue to assure that there is access for the disabled audience targeted in promotions.

Accessible Space Planning

Creating an accessible space involves eliminating physical barriers - access to restrooms, and optimum lighting and sound levels.

- **Barrier-Free and Level Access:** It is paramount to ensure that the event space is physically barrier-free. Stairs and uneven surfaces are be difficult for those with devices. Wheelchair ramps or lifts can be installed where necessary. If you have a permanent venue, installing ramps for longterm use would be most cost effective. But there are temporary options. To audit a particular space you can walk around the full breadth of the venue and consider all potential areas where an audience requires access. Take note of every obstacle on the floor, even the smallest ones, then plan your adjustments accordingly.

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- **Accessible Bathrooms:** Adequate and identifiable accessible restrooms should be installed. There are a few basic things that make bathrooms accessible. First, they are spacious enough for wheelchair users to get in through the door and to move inside the room. Second, they feature grab bars to facilitate seating on the toilet. Other features may include, lower height of all fixtures include the faucet, urinal or commode.

- **Lighting and Sound:** Lighting and sound levels can significantly impact the accessibility of an event. Consider how bright the venue is, if it could be uncomfortable to some individuals, same goes for the sound levels. For staged programming, consider where the speakers/ screens when designating accessible seating.

- **Accessible Seating:** for events with staged programming, dedicated spaces for people with disabilities should be preferred. Consider such spaces near the entrance or aisle seats for ease of entry/exit. Adequate space should be between seats to allow wheelchair users to navigate comfortably.

Improvising: In an ideal world, a well planned programme can deliver excellence in access. However, there are always going to be instances where event features are not fully accommodating of certain groups, individuals or participation barriers. When confronted with an access challenge on the day of delivery, speak to the person or group with the unique requirement(s) and listen to their advice. It is not reasonable to expect that all requests can be fulfilled but these conversations and learnings can contribute to future actions and impact.

Quiet (Rest Area)

Events can be highly stimulating and/or tiring for attendees with sensory issues or physical disabilities. As such a break from engaging the event activity might be warranted.

- A rest area can be useful for attendees who wish to take a break from event activities. Designating a quiet or rest area within the event venue(s) can be a easy way to address this issue.

- The rest area should preferably be in low-traffic area of the venue or space.

- Soft lighting and comfortable seating can help create the calming atmosphere for attendees to recover.

- Attendees with non-visible disabilities like mental health issues are also likely users of such spaces. Event organisers should understand this and acknowledge that quiet/rest space will be used by not just disabled audiences.

Accessibility Measures

Sign language interpretation, audio description, captions, and accessible signage are some features that can be introduced to events to make them more accessible. And integrating such features into the event can be a creative exercise.

Sign Language

Shilu Sharma performs sign language for play Gainda Times directed by Sijan Dahal. Performed during the Nepal International Theatre Festival 2019, the play was one of the first to incorporate sign language in Nepali theatre.

For the hearing impaired and hard-of-hearing, sign language interpretation is a must. Conventionally, sign language interpretation involves a person standing at a designated spot and translating the spoken word into sign language. However, this does not have to be the case always.

For example, a musical show can promote collaboration with sign language interpreters, reinterpreting the signing as a visual element of the performance. Besides making the performance accessible, such a collaboration can be engaging for non-disabled audience members as well.

Similarly, in other performing arts, like theatre plays, actors can learn and use sign-language as motif. Allowing it to seamless blend artistic expression and accessibility.

Regardless of how we creative approach sign language interpretation it is important to provide a clear sight line to the interpreter. They need to be highly visible either on a raise platform or with good lighting. It is recommended that seats in front of the interpreter is reserved for appropriate audiences.

Audio description

Visually impaired and low vision audience experience a theatre performance through live audio description at the Nepal International Theatre Festival 2022.

Audio description is the narration of visual elements in a performance or exhibition for individuals who are blind or have low vision. There are a number of ways audio descriptions for accessible events:

- Live events require using headsets with a receiver which can receive the narration over wireless channels. In such cases a person is required to narrate the visual elements which is then broadcast to the listeners in real time. This option is most effective for events where the action is fast-paced or dynamic, allowing attendees to keep up with the description without missing essential details.

- For events with timed performances such as theatre productions or film screenings or for exhibitions with static content, prerecorded audio description can be used. This can let attendees listent to description at their own pace and is more cost effective. Prerecorded content can be made downloadable or loaded on to cheaper equipment like (non-smart) phones.

- Additionally, event organizers can consider working with skilled orators to create more engaging audio content. Performing artists who are trained in delivering emphatic dialogues can be excellent addition to a team planning and developing audio descriptions.

Captions:

Captions are text or written version of spoken language provided in real-time to an audience. They are essential for individuals who are hard of hearing, or have hearing impairment. People who may have difficulty processing auditory information also require this access. There are several low-cost and creative ways to incorporate captions in your event.

- Use presentation applications like MS PowerPoint or Google Slides to display captions. Presentations can help manually move through text during a performance/presentation providing live captioning. These applications also offer a range of customization options which can align with event branding at low to no costs.

- For events with multiple speakers or performances with extensive dialogues, it is recommended to use individual microphones. Lapel mics, which are installed on person, are most unobtrusive . options. Using multiple mics can help assure that the captions sync with dialogue and no time is lost in sharing the equipment.

- Alternatively, creative integrating captions into the visual components of the event, such as projecting captions onto theatre props or incorporating captions into visual effects, can be more immersive and captivating - for not just disabled but also other attendees.

Captions require immaculate timing and synchonisation with the audio to ensure optimum impact and event experience.

NOTE: You might still have a communication gap if sign interpreters, audio describers and captioners do not comprehend the content being presented. Orientation and briefing sessions help manage such risks. In this regard, content producers should consider involving such professionals during rehearsal or in the development phase. You can also provide printed subtitles for films, scripts for talk programmes or a summary to the support professionals ahead of the event to prepare.

Signage

Clear, visible signage can enhance the experience of event-goers. For people with disabilities this can mean having access to the right information when needed - creating a less anxious and safe engagement. Signage and venue branding are crucial aspect of any event - they help navigate the venue, locate essential amenities, and accessing designated areas with ease.

- When creating signage use legibility should be priortised in design of fonts. They should be large enough to be read from a distance. High-contrast colours can improve visibility for individuals with low vision.

- Incorporating symbols, graphics, or other visual elements that compliment text-based information - creating additional context and cues. For example, adding wheelchair symbols to indicate accessible seating areas is a simple yet effective way to communicate with attendees

- Signage is an easy win. It is practical and low cost. If you have access to an office printer, you can easily create simple prints, path markers and other signage. Some media like adhesive-backed vinyl cut text

can also make the information accessible who people with visual impairment as these have slight relief on their surface allowing for tactile reading.

Information cum Access Desk

Having a dedicated station to receive information at an event is very helpful. Especially so, when there are multiple events and activities at the same venue or multiple venues. These stations can be placed educatedly to be within key audience pathways within teh venue(s).

Information desks always add value to event communication. And these can easily double up with access information/volunteers to cover all features. When setting up a desk, consider incorporating creative and engaging elements to make it more appealing and approachable. Consider easy solutions like table cloth and designed poster/banners to furnish the space. Add plants or other decorations to create the right atmosphere.

 # Accessibility Volunteers

Enlisting Accessibility Volunteers to support your event can make a significant difference in delivery. But volunteers require strong orientation and induction so that they are well-versed in disability etiquette and are familiar with the accessible features being provided. Their assistance can be invaluable in providing a human touch to the experiences of disabled attendees.

Accessibility Volunteers should be easily identifiable. To have them stand out, consider using bright clothing or accessories like caps with labels identifying them as support staff. Availability of volunteer support should be covered in event signage and should be placed strategically across the venue to create optimum visibility for the feature.
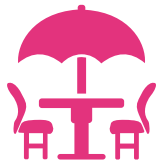
Outdoor Event Considerations

If the event is being held outdoors event additional considerations need to be made. Here are some important details to keep in mind:

Venue Information: Acknowledge that the event is outdoors, and make sure to communicate important weather details such as temperature and precipitation. If possible suggest appropriate attire and gear, including umbrellas or raincoats.

Terrain: Consider if the setting will impact any users of using mobility devices such as wheelchairs or scooters. Make sure that the ground surface is level and is free of obstacles such as tree roots, rocks, or gravel.

Weather Conditions: Certain weather conditions such as rain, snow, or extreme heat can burden attendees with specific disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to provide access to shade or water stations to help attendees stay comfortable and hydrated.

Audio and Visual Elements: Outdoor events need to consider the impact on audio and visual elements of the event and consider how these are experienced by attendees. Making sure that music or announcements are played at reasonable volume for all, and provide visual alternatives such as captions or sign language interpreters.

Signage: Ensure that all event signs are easily readable and decipherable. Use larger font sizes or high-contrast colours to make the signs more visible.

Rest Areas: Provide designated areas that offer some peace and quiet or shaded spots for attendees who need to rest or take a break from the event's activities.

Artists use sign language to applaud their audience after a theatre performance at Rastriya Naach Ghar, Kathmandu. The play *Khailabaila* was produced by National Federation of the Deaf Nepal in 2019 through a British Council Disability Arts grant.

Photo Credit: British Council

D. Review

In this section, we cover the post-event of conducting a comprehensive review and outline various steps involved in the process to enable us to continually improve and create events that prioritise accessibility and inclusivity for all.

Following the successful organisation of the event, a critical step is to evaluate and review every aspect to guarantee its effectiveness and highlight areas that require improvement. Through this review, we can gather valuable feedback from participants, ascertain what worked and what didn't, and modify the process to achieve superior results in future events.

Access Monitoring Plan

An Access Monitoring Plan can be helpful to compare planned outputs with the actual delivery. It can provide information on the effectiveness of accommodations made and can overview all processes/actions undertaken.

At a minimum the monitoring plan should include an after action review within a short period after delivery. Such reflections can provide a productive and safe space to discuss improvements. Simply asking what the planned objective was, what actually was delivered and what can be

improved can help team digest the delivery into meaningful lessons and better actions in the future.

If you have provided multiple access features, please make sure to have an agenda for the action review to cover all actions. A moderator can be appointed to make sure everyone participates equally as well.

Audience Review

Reviewing who attended should be a routine process. Understanding who participated can help provide valuable insights and in fact measurable data to assess performance. Collecting feedbacks is important to improving impact, this can be done in many ways, conversations with disabled participants at the end of the event, comment cards or more structure feedback forms can be easily created depending on the insights/data you are interested in capturing.

You can also report on achievements through audio-visual documentation. Testimonials are particularly best for telling the story of your event through the experiences of the participants. Hearing about experiences can inspire others from the community to attend future events. Such outputs can then be also applied in future promotional campaigns.

Open to Follow Up Questions

Be open to receiving communication after an event. This can be crucial for developing a positive relationship. This can help you receive in-depth feedback and provide additional insights as to the performance of the event both in terms of artistic content as well as the access amenities provided.

It is always best to anticipate common inquiries and put together a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section on the event's website or social media platforms. This proactive approach not only reduces follow-up inquiries but also displays the organizers' preparedness and attention to detail.

It is always a good idea to provide multiple options for your audience to get in touch with the organising team. Please make sure to mention in days how long the team will take to respond to emails - this can be an automated response when you receive emails/queries on social media (if you have a business page). Being prompt and professional provides reassurance and can be an excellent way to nurture a repeat audience from the disability community.

Reporting and Documentation

Documentation can take many forms. It can be a narrative report, a summary read out or even an audio/visual recording. Documentation helps tell the story of your event. And it should capture both achievements and challenges in the form of lessons and recommendations. There are always lessons when working with the breadth of possible disabilities and barriers. By documenting we can create a valuable resource to improve quality of our efforts.

It might be good to includes some of the things listed below:

• Summary of the event
• Images/visual content that helps showcase the work that you have done.
• Accessibility features offered by your programme and its impact.
• Data, graphs and charts that provide insight on our programme.
• Testimonials from organisers, participants, and audiences that can help your stakeholders understand the outcomes and impact of your event.
• Good practices, lessons learned and actions that can be taken to improve similar programmes in the future.

Important Resources

1. Shape Arts: Accessible Event Checklist

2. Attitude is Everything: Accessible Festival

3. Attitude is Everything: Accessible Venues

4. Attitude is Everything: DIY Accessibility

5. Birds of Paradise: Accessibility Event Toolkit

6. British Council: Disability Arts International Resources

Support Organisations

1. National Federation of Disabled Nepal

2. National Federation of the Deaf- Nepal

3. Blind Youth Organisation Nepal

4. Diverse Patterns – Accessibility Service Provider

5. Nepal Association for the Welfare of the Blind – Braille Printing

6. Nepal Association of the Sign Language Interpreters

7. Shruti – National Association of People with Hard of Hearing (Captioning Services)

8. Blind Rocks (Visually Impaired People in Arts and Music)

Digital Version of this book, including accessible formats and collections of all the mentioned resources and links, is available on our website.

Please visit the link provided below or scan the QR.

If you have any comments or feedback, please email us at
connect@diversepatterns.com.np
arts@britishcouncil.org.np

Credits

Conceptualised by: Sagar Prasai and Nischal Oli
Developed by: Sagar Prasai and Nhooja Tuladhar
Edited by: Nirvana Tandon and Nhooja Tuladhar
Proofread by: Sewa Bhattarai
Graphic Design and layout: Nipun Bajracharya

All photographs courtesy of the British Council

About Diverse Patterns

Diverse Patterns is a disability inclusion service provider dedicated to helping organisations foster diversity and inclusivity. Our core expertise lies in social surveys, diversity and inclusion training programs, accessibility recommendations in digital and physical spaces, and developing valuable resources and toolkits. Our guiding tagline is 'Achieve more with diversity and inclusion,' emphasizing our commitment to building stronger, more inclusive organisations.

About the British Council

British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and Nepal, through arts, culture, education and the English language.

Culture Responds is British Council's global programme that supports and celebrates culture's contribution to sustainable development. It aims to reorient countries and communities' development need to be driven by its own values and be self-determined.

Through Culture Responds, we support under-represented groups from across Nepal to participate in culture life and increase the diversity of contributions and narratives in cultural production. Similarly, we support the art/culture sectors' response to climate emergency by improving sustainable practices within the sector and raised awareness and strengthen engagement of national audiences.

Discover how you can shatter barriers in the world of arts and culture.

Limited participation by disabled individuals has led to missed opportunities and untapped potential. This book, a collaboration between the British Council and Diverse Patterns, offers practical guidance for making both virtual and in-person events accessible to people with disabilities. Artists, curators, event organisers, and inclusion advocates will find the tools to create a world where all voices are heard, talents shine, and diverse stories come to life.

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