

## Press Release

### CUTS partners with ZABS to improve quality in the public bus transport sector

On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016 CUTS International, Lusaka hosted a technical committee meeting in collaboration with the Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZABS) on the 'Passenger Vehicle Body Construction Draft Standard'.

Studies by the World Health Organisation estimate that in Zambia almost 1,900 fatalities are recorded per year at an estimated cost of three per cent of the nation's GDP. Additionally, further evidence has shown that in Zambia more passenger fatalities occur because of the bus seat material rather than the accident itself.

CUTS has therefore been working on improving the bus transport sector for the past three years as the NGO sees a need for an intervention on this issue through the development of a mandatory standard for seat occupancy in intra city buses.

The meeting last week was organized under a CUTS project entitled 'Competition Reforms for Enhancing Social and Economic Welfare in Developing Countries' (CREW). One of the outcomes of the CREW project was the need to improve the quality control system for public buses to ensure that only buses of good quality are allowed on the roads.

The meeting was opened by **Mrs Margaret L. Lungu, ZABS Deputy Director**, who gave the welcoming remarks and thanked CUTS for coming up with this project. She stated that the purpose of ZABS is to facilitate the standards development process which can in turn enhance trade and raise the standards for businesses. She also mentioned that Zambia participated in SADC and COMESA and because the tripartite has been signed for a more integrated market, new standards would have to be raised to facilitate trade in Africa.

**Ms. Chenai Mukumba, CUTS International**, gave an overview of the CREW project which she said had focused on two sectors, namely: staple food and transport. The sectors were selected due the significant impact they have on the day to day lives of ordinary Zambians. In Zambia it is estimated that commuters spend about 8.6 per cent of their income on transport.

The process was then facilitated by **Mr. James Mwewa, ZABS Standards Officer**, who began by giving a brief presentation explaining: what a standard is; the different types of standards that exist; how standards are developed; and the benefits of standards. Mr. Mwewa then presented the various components of the standard opened the floor for comments, questions and answers.

In order to ensure a consultative process, the meeting brought together stakeholders from various backgrounds including representatives from Malata Driving School, PPDZ, CRAZ, Toyota Zambia Ltd, ZRST, Commuters Rights Association of Zambia, ZSD, RDA, Capital Buses, LCC, CCPC, UNZA and TEVETA.

The committee resolved to circulate the draft standard for public comments and meet to review the responses. It was agreed that given the importance of consumer safety it would be important to try and make relevant components of the standard mandatory. The meeting ended with closing remarks from Ms. Chenai Mukumba who reiterated CUTS commitment to consumer safety and expressed that all efforts should be made to ensure that standards were raised in the bus transport sector. Mr. Matthews Kaonga from RDA closed the meeting.

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