Gender perspectives on transport infrastructure and services in Africa:
issues, challenges and the potential for positive change

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Plenary 2: Engendering infrastructure sectors in Africa: issues, challenges and good and innovative practices
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Presentation outline

• Background to discussion: intensive transport-focused field research in rural and urban Africa:
  – Off-road/remote communities and gendered service access [Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya]
  – Market access [Nigeria, Ghana, Zambia, South Africa]
  – IMT action research with women [Ghana]
  – young people’s mobility [Ghana, Malawi, South Africa]

• Constraints on female mobility and access to transport
• Implications for education, health and livelihoods
• Interventions for positive change
• Building gender-sensitive transport policies: opportunities for social and economic empowerment
• Conclusions
Key issue: Transport and mobility constraints shape women and girls’ access to services and livelihoods

• Transport deficiencies
  – Poor roads, especially in remoter areas
  – Inadequate transport services [re availability, reliability, cost]

• Greater impact on females due to constraints on their mobility:
  – Time and income poverty [caring duties, doorstep anchors, lower incomes, less credit]
  – Expected to fill the transport gap as load carriers
  – Cultural + financial constraints on women operating transport equipment
  – Male association of female mobility with vulnerability and promiscuity
Load carrying often culturally a ‘female’ activity

• Males over 15 often only head-load for *domestic* purposes in emergencies

• Female load-carrying in remoter locations conducted in groups [safety issue]

• Traffic surveys in 5 coastal Ghana villages [*excluding water*]:
  Load carrying trips:
  by women= 47%    men=27%
  girls under 18=12%    boys under 18= 14%

  Girls 15+ regularly carry 20-30 kg

• Loads are often extremely heavy:
  *I always carry things: water, foodstuff, fire and pito. Most of the times the loads are heavy and the distance to the house is long. I often feel very tired and feel pains on the knees, joints, neck and back*
  [Matilda 15 years, 1 child. Farmer/pito seller for mother, rural forest Ghana]

• When transport technology introduced, boys/men may take over transport tasks
Women and girls as transporters
Men and boys as transporters
Girls’ perceived vulnerability as a mobility constraint in rural areas

These days children, especially girls, are being abducted. There are people who abduct children and then cut their body parts. Letting girl children travel alone on public transport is not safe because of this. [Grandmother carer of 2, rural Eastern Cape, RSA]

When people detect that she cannot find her way to wherever she came from, she may be raped by other people. [Taxi driver, rural forest zone, Ghana]

[We fear girls will be cheated on or get raped on the way to school. [Fathers’ group, rural highlands, Malawi]
Girls’ perceived vulnerability as a mobility constraint in *urban* areas

- I do not feel comfortable to be letting girls be mobile and coming home late [Father of 2, Blantyre]

- I don’t like traveling alone ... The thing I fear about traveling on a minibus taxi is that the drivers propose love to us and they say they want us to be their girlfriends. I am scared that they might kidnap me or rape me ... The taxi conductors are very rude. Just because we are girls they talk trash and vulgar language to us. They don’t have respect.
  [Cecilia, 12 yrs, Umtata]

- Boys can even come home very late at night but not us. .. Parents always doubt our movements. They fear we might get pregnant... [if we are late] parents shout at us, we are not allowed to enter the house, we are whipped.
  [FGD out-of-school girls, 16-18 years, Blantyre]
Mobility as incitement to promiscuity: a common subtext

*I think a woman who travels a lot is befriending other men and that’s why she travels*
[Men’s group, rural southern Ghana]

*To raise a girl child properly, you need to have a keen eye on her always*
[father of 10 children, Blantyre, Malawi]

[boys are allowed more freedom to travel because] *boys are more responsible and less susceptible to bad company*
[women’s group, Blantyre, Malawi]

**BUT**

*Controlled* [pedestrian] girls’ and women’s mobility is key to family survival i.e. load carrying and other work for household reproduction and production
Implications for access to services: 1. Girls’ Education

• Load carrying demands ► girls’ enrollment delayed/no school/early drop-out

• Pre-school tasks [water carrying + housework] ► late to school ► punishment [caning, barred entry etc.] + tiredness, lack of concentration, headache etc. in school ► poor results

• Physical hazards on journeys to school: e.g. rivers [n.b. girls lower swimming competency], ► late arrival, punishment, truancy...... [urban + rural]

the mud on the way makes us dirty and ... we have to put off our shoes if it is raining. Our teachers understand our route, they do not punish us much.. two lashes, but sometimes we miss morning classes... (Busi, 19 years South Africa)

• Fear of verbal abuse, men/boys propositioning, rape, on journey to school:

I don’t like to travel to school because there are boys who mock us on the way... They wait for us on the road where they smoke dagga and then they follow... (Zodwa, 13 yrs, South Africa)
% children who reported carrying water every day in the week prior to our survey [N=1000 per country]

‘Drawing and head loading water is a feminine job and parents are taking advantage of the concept of gender equality [when] they send the boy child to draw water’ [boys’ 12-15 yr group discussion, urban Malawi]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement type</th>
<th>Ghana girls</th>
<th>Ghana boys</th>
<th>Malawi girls</th>
<th>Malawi boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote rural</td>
<td>95.9 %</td>
<td>89.1 %</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural with services</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All settlements</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications for access to services: 2. Health

• Distance to services and transport failures implicated in:
  – Maternal mortality rates
    [www.people.cornell.edu/pages/mg294/maternalmortality.htm](http://www.people.cornell.edu/pages/mg294/maternalmortality.htm)
  – Obstetric fistula (from obstructed labour)
  – Reduced uptake of pre-natal and other health services
  – Possible health implications of load-carrying e.g. deformation of the vertebral column etc?

• Maternal deaths/chronic health problems in mothers
  ► chronic poverty ► cycle of poverty continues
Ghana: Young people[9-17yrs], reported use of health services within last 12 months (N=943)

‘a 15-year old expectant mother had obstructed labour and I needed a car badly to take her to the hospital [30 km distant]. She gave birth eventually the following morning but the pain was too much for her to bear [she died]. She was in primary 6...

[rural Ghana, forest zone, trained Traditional Birth Attendant, 50 years]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement type</th>
<th>Any health facility</th>
<th>Regional/specialist hospital</th>
<th>Local hospital</th>
<th>Local clinic</th>
<th>Drugstore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peri-urban</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/services</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote rural</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All settlements</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Implications for rural livelihoods

Market trading a common source of income and entrée to off-farm opportunities for rural women and girls **BUT:**

- Concentration of markets in accessible (roadside) locations ▶ Decline/death of off-road markets

- Late market arrival from off-road areas due to transport delays/failures ▶ loss of ‘customers’ ▶ low prices, failure to sell, produce deterioration

- Women especially disadvantaged in the context of:
  - Limited funds for transport fares/goods haulage
  - Time poverty, including requirements to head-load produce of male householders to road/market
  - Mobility constraints + poor/delayed market access ▶ less money for school fees and health care, limited social networks, limited off-farm diversification
    ▶ Cycle of poverty intensifies
Cycling can aid low-cost mobility, but mostly for boys/men.

Females, even if they learn they will not get the money to buy a bicycle... even if they ride they just ride it around they do not send it on long distances... they do not have the strength.

[Yaw, 18 years, out-of-school boy, rural forest zone Ghana]

Girls are afraid to learn [to cycle] because they feel shy if they fall down during cycling lessons... people laugh if they see a girl riding a bicycle ....

[out-of-school boys group, rural highlands Malawi]

It would seem strange to see a girl riding a bicycle in this settlement because it is unheard of.

[out-of-school boy 18, rural Eastern Cape, RSA]

Survey data: knowledge of how to ride a bicycle [n=2967]
Ghana: 56% girls, 87% boys.
Malawi: 44% girls, 72% boys.
RSA: 52% girls, 71% boys.
Interventions for positive change?

1. Road improvements

Crucial role of basic road maintenance especially in remoter rural areas [for farm inputs, marketing, local market survival and associated settlement viability]

BUT

Road improvement not necessarily beneficial to all women

– Labour-based construction jobs often go to men
– Roads are not enough [need low-cost, regular, reliable transport services too]
– Off-road market/service decline
– Increased road traffic speeds/volume ➤ more accidents ➤ impact on (female) carers
– Roads as routeways for STD transmission ➤ impact on sex workers and clients ➤ impact on (female) carers
Interventions for positive change?

2. Improved transport services

- Improvement of conventional transport services on feeder roads [potential for women’s group/community low-cost transport schemes?]
- Subsidies for motorised transport in remote areas?
- Carefully planned, piloted and monitored IMT interventions and associated track improvements in rural sites
- Improvement and expansion of cycle- and motorbike-taxi services: positive value for women
- Cycle riding/maintenance/repair training for girls (at school)
- Cycle hire centres based at schools (girl pupils assisting)
- Experiment with walking bus schemes for rape/harassment prevention
- Value of complementary interventions e.g. Load-carrying IMTs + motor-cycle taxis + mobile phones for emergencies
Basic transport with potential?
Interventions for positive change?

3. Possible non-transport interventions

• Mobility is a means, not (necessarily) an end in itself

• Improved availability of water supplies, community woodlots, grinding mills, fuel-efficient stoves etc. to reduce load carrying and female time poverty

• Sensitization of teachers to girls’ work and transport/distance related lateness and punishment regime impacts

• Increased girls’ school boarding facilities at primary and secondary level

• Rapid expansion of mobile phone networks [+ other ICTS] and use in rural areas ► substitute/complement to transport services?

• Lobby for a stronger focus on gendered mobility and access issues in the development community

• Attention to more fundamental aspects of gender inequity and time poverty, NOT JUST TICKING THE GENDER BOX
Mobile phones offer virtual mobility
Gender-sensitive transport policies and projects: current constraints

• Transport sector dominated by male civil engineers often reluctant to take on gender issues [focus on delivery/outputs, not user need]

• Development gender specialists rarely engage with transport issues

• Participatory + qualitative approaches often discounted by transport engineers and planners

• Gender = one component in transport projects, rather than a gendered approach to design ▶ gender component vulnerable to budget cuts

• Women seen as welfare objects, not decision-makers

• Gender and transport literature sidelined in professional discourse
Opportunities for social empowerment: enhancing gendered input into the design of policies, programmes and projects

• Value of a social-sustainability approach to transport planning i.e. engagement with social processes ➤ improved quality of life
• More attention to attributes, methodologies, ethics and potential barriers to genuinely participatory planning
• Collection of gender-disaggregated data for policy formulation
• Needs assessments involving end-users - voice of both genders
• Value of innovative mobile methods for community data collection
• Value of Community-based peer research (for data collection and advocacy e.g. by women and girls)
• Value of post-intervention gender-monitoring
Opportunities for economic empowerment in the transport sector

Road construction/maintenance:
• Labour-based construction – but women need better access to technical training and to SME credit

Transport services:
• Transport often an employment niche for the very poorest, including women
• Potential for IMT expansion in a carbon-constrained world ► need to build a more women-friendly IMT culture
• Need to dismantle strong connections between male identity and motor-mobility that shape current patterns of transport use
• Vital role of transport in social capital construction and employment/livelihoods [including occupational flexibility/diversification]
Gender-sensitive transport policies: building an agenda for change

Requires attention to:

• Gender/transport knowledge and literature *which already exists*
• Gendered transport in *Urban* contexts [less researched than rural]
• Stronger consultation with users, including women’s diverse needs e.g. differences across the life-course
• Pedestrians, Non-Motorised transport, public transport users
• Safeguarding women’s safety and security in transport contexts
• Head-loading impacts on health [essentially unknown]
• Linkages between women’s social capital and access to transport
• Better integration of land-use, education, health and transport planning for improved physical access to services
• Expansion of teaching re socially sustainable transport planning
• More women transport professionals trained and promoted
Conclusions

• Interconnectedness of deprivations
• Female time poverty+ limited mobility/transport access ► severe deprivation re education, health, livelihoods and life chances ► continuing inter-generational transfers of poverty from mother to daughter
• Effective gender mainstreaming in the transport infrastructure and services sector requires
  – commitment
  – concerted action
  – willingness to ‘think outside the box’.
Children, Transport & Mobility

Sharing experiences of young researchers in Ghana, Malawi & South Africa

Child Mobility Project Young Researchers Group in collaboration with Marinke van Riel and the project research team