

Information Paper 4.3

A Gender Perspective in the Transport Sector

Executive Summary

Transport can make a big difference in increasing women's productivity and promoting gender equality. In addition to its major contribution to economic growth, transport plays a crucial role in socially sustainable development by broadening access to health and education services, employment, improving the exchange of information, and promoting social cohesion. Yet, claims the World Bank, little attention appears to have been paid to women's needs in transport development projects worldwide.

Making transport policy more responsive to the needs of women requires developing a structured approach to understanding their needs, identifying instruments to address those needs, analysing the costs and benefits of those instruments, and establishing an appropriate policy framework. It also requires that women are represented at each step of the planning and design process of transport investments, including on user panels. Government agencies and NGOs, community-based organisations, and women's groups that can be used in planning and implementation should be identified and consulted. Gender findings should be included in project design.

Men and women have different mobility patterns. They differ in their roles, needs and perceptions regarding transport. Conscious efforts to address their views lead to better project design and performance. Therefore, it is particularly important that gender perspectives are fully integrated into initial surveys, appraisals and assessment. Pressure to design programmes rapidly should not lead to neglect of gender perspectives. If gender perspectives are not taken up at the early planning stage, it is difficult to give adequate attention to them later on in the process.

Four male vs. female aspects (The Four As) are of prime concern when integrating a gender perspective into transport interventions. They are: access to destination, appropriateness of mode, availability of service and affordability of traveller.

Recommendations for Action¹

1. All transport investments must pay special attention to gender aspects such as access, appropriateness, availability and affordability for women, and not include them as an afterthought.
2. All staff in the transport ministries should participate in gender awareness training and capacity-building.
3. More women should be employed in the transport ministries, especially at the management and senior levels to balance present gender inequality.
4. All statistics in the transport ministries should be disaggregated by gender.
5. Transport legislation should be reviewed to ensure that women are given equal rights to public transportation.

¹ These recommendations have been reflected in the terms of reference for the consulting teams to make up the cores of the Capacity Building Units; see Consultation Papers 1.7, 2.3 and 3.7.

A Rationale for Action: a Gender Perspective in the Transport Sector

”Human development, if not engendered, is endangered... Moving towards gender equality is not a technocratic goal – it is a political process. It requires a new way of thinking – in which the stereotyping of women and men gives way to a new philosophy that regards all people, irrespective of gender, as essential agents of change... Investing in women’s capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but it is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development... What it requires is a firm political commitment, not enormous financial wealth.”

Mahbub ul Haq, Human Development Report,
UNDP, 1995

”... governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.”

The Beijing Platform for Action (PFA), 1995

“We also resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.”

The Millennium Declaration,
The United Nations, 2000

“There must be specific programmes directed at enhancing the capabilities of our girls and women. More importantly, all programmes must pay special attention to gender, and not to include it as an afterthought. We have to engage in a societal dialogue to enhance the opportunities of women and improve cooperation between women and men on the basis of our culture, the experience of other Islamic countries and the global norms of human rights.”

The Afghan National Development Framework, 2002

“Full understanding of the different situations, needs and power relations between men and women, and the different impacts of policy and financial decisions on men and women is critical for achieving all of the national development goals. As the Government has acknowledged, gender concerns cut across all areas of policy, planning and implementation and resources must be allocated accordingly. This must be based on systematic gender analyses and consideration of the implications of policies, programmes and budgets on women’s and men’s well-being for all priority areas from refugee return and livelihood/social protection to trade and investment.”

The Afghan Gender Advisory Group Rationale, 2003

In October 2002, the Security Council of the United Nations recognized the vital role of women in promoting peace. The Council encouraged Member States and the Secretary-

General to establish regular contacts with women's groups and networks to develop clear strategies and action plans with goals and timetables, on the integration of gender perspectives in humanitarian operations, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, and to develop targeted activities focused on the specific constraints facing women and girls in post-conflict situations.

In December 2002, the General Assembly of the United Nations (Resolution 57/113) stressed the importance of the full and equal participation of women in political, economic, cultural and social life and appealed the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA) and the international community to mainstream gender issues in all humanitarian assistance and future rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.

Transport and Gender

Transport can make a big difference in increasing women's productivity and promoting gender equality. In addition to its major contribution to economic growth, transport plays a crucial role in socially sustainable development by broadening access to health and education services, employment, improving the exchange of information, and promoting social cohesion. Yet, claims the World Bank, little attention appears to have been paid to women's needs in transport development projects worldwide.

Women in Afghanistan have less access than men to private vehicles and public transport. In urban areas public transport is generally less than satisfactory on non-radial and non-peak routes, on which women rely more than men. Little work has been done in urban or rural contexts on the most cost-effective interventions for gender-related transport problems. More knowledge is needed about the negative effects such as limited availability for employment and less access to markets and social services – and about the economic losses that result.

Making transport policy more responsive to the needs of women requires developing a structured approach to understanding their needs, identifying instruments to address those needs, analysing the costs and benefits of those instruments, and establishing an appropriate policy framework. It also requires that women are represented at each step of the planning and design process of transport investments, including on user panels. Government agencies and NGOs, community-based organisations, and women's groups that can be used in planning and implementation should be identified and consulted. Gender findings should be included in project design.

Household and public transport user surveys offer an excellent opportunity to improve basic data on the travel patterns of urban and rural women. Estimating women's latent (unsatisfied) travel demand is also important, although doing so requires that information be collected by women directly from women rather than by male interviewers from male heads of households.

Conventional analytical tools, often not including women, tend to undervalue the transport needs of women by not adequately reflecting the opportunity cost of their time. Improved transport facilities for women can result in better access to health and education services and employment, thereby leading to economic and social empowerment of women.

Men and women have different mobility patterns. They differ in their roles, needs and perceptions regarding transport. Conscious efforts to address their views lead to better project design and performance. Therefore, it is particularly important that gender perspectives are fully integrated into initial surveys, appraisals and assessment. Pressure to design programmes rapidly should not lead to neglect of gender perspectives. If gender perspectives are not taken up at the early planning stage, it is difficult to give adequate attention to them later on in the process.

The Four As: Access, Appropriateness, Availability and Affordability

“Gender-neutral” interventions are seldom neutral and are more likely to exclude women and overlook their needs and concerns. Therefore, equal involvement of women and men in planning and implementation as well as disaggregating data by gender are important ways of addressing this concern.”

Gender and Transport: IMT Package,
The World Bank, 1999

Until very recently, it was assumed that transport infrastructure and services such as roads and buses benefit both genders equally. However, more and more it is being recognised that men and women due to their different constraints, options, incentives and needs have different transport priorities and are affected differently by transport interventions.

The World Bank has defined four aspects of prime concern when integrating a gender perspective into transport interventions. They are called the 4 As:

1. Access to destination (female vs male)

Transport network, employment, education and health services, markets, government and municipal institutions, social activities

- Do women and men have equal access?
- Are bus stops located where they are easily accessible to women?

2. Appropriateness of mode (female vs. male)

Road, rail, air, IMT (intermediate means of transport) etc

- What types of journeys do women and men make? Why do they make them? How do they make them? What types of goods do they move?
- Are women-only transports needed? In traditional societies or where cultural and/or religious taboos are strong this may be the only feasible approach.
- In buses with separate sections for men and women, is the space for women satisfactory/sufficient?
- Safety/security? Are facilities provided for women employees and passengers, such as appropriate and safe toilets and rest areas/waiting-rooms in bus terminals? Should there be special ticket counters for women?
- Is there a system to collect and process complaints from women passengers?

3. Availability of service (female vs. male)

Frequency, space

- Are the time-tables suitable for women? When do activities occur and how long do they take? This is important because the scarcest resource of particularly poor women is time, which often cannot be stretched.
- Seasons, weekdays, time of the day? Is it possible to return within daylight hours?

4. Affordability of traveller (female vs. male)

By type of mode, by income group

- What are the costs of journeys undertaken (in time, effort, money, opportunities foregone)?
- What are the costs of limitations on mobility (in losses of income, in ability to accept employment, in lack of access to health and education facilities, social isolation)?
- What types of opportunities would a particular transport intervention provide?
- Will transport policies promote fare structures which will enable widespread public usage? Is the fee level acceptable also for poor women?
- Should preferential treatment for very poor, female-headed, and other disadvantaged families be considered? Perhaps free fares for secondary school girls from poor families and poor women attending adult education classes?

An inventory should be made of the constraints and opportunities, some of which may be present in the categories listed above. The active participation of women's groups and networks in market research and transport planning should be stimulated. Both Sida and the World Bank have developed checklists and discussion guides for this purpose. ("Handbook for Mainstreaming: A Gender Perspective in the Rural Transportation Sector", Sida, 1997; as well as "Discussion guide for individual or group interviews with women on IMT" and "Generic sample survey for IMT public transport user", The World Bank, 1999)

Gender Awareness Training and Capacity-building

If policy-makers and planners in the transportation ministries, at present almost exclusively male, are to work towards gender equality they need gender awareness training. They are not likely to change attitudes unless they become aware of the transport-related problems women face. The need for understanding and acceptance of gender issues and the commitment to help resolve those issues are crucial. Only then will the appropriate implementation arrangements be made and adequate resources committed.

Gender awareness training for all staff, male and female, at all levels of the organisation, should be provided. There should be a gender balance within each group. The training should be of a few days duration. It should include relevant films with women active in the transport sector in Islamic and other countries. It should also include some field work doing a survey of women's (latent) transport needs, including route planning, special buses for women and secondary school girls and services off peak hours and on less travelled routes.

The training should be planned with women's NGOs and networks, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. If needed, outside Gender Adviser/Adult Education Specialist staff should be hired for the planning of the training.

There should be a conscious inclusion of women in all study trips arranged by the transport ministries.

Funds for training in gender awareness should be allocated. According to the DAD Website (19 Sept 2003), 0.05US\$M has been approved by the Ministry of Transport for AFG/03140 Gender Sensitivity and Female Driver Training for the year of 1382. This latter project is in addition to the gender awareness training outlined above. Lessons should be learnt from the activities of the Gender Sensitivity Project.

Increased Employment of Women in the Transport Ministries

“Resolute steps are needed to ensure that women’s concerns form an integral part of all actions to rebuild the country... Employ Afghan women, inter alia, in management positions, promote security in their employment with the assistance community and respect the right of women to freedom of movement.”

The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan:
Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2003

Women are returning to the workforce in Afghanistan. In the transport ministries, the top positions are held by men. Therefore, specific targeting of women for management and senior operations positions would be a start to balance present gender inequality, and create a more favourable environment from the gender point of view for all transport-related activities. Ensuring that women are represented in the planning, design and decision-making of transport investments, including on user panels, is crucial.

There should be active recruitment efforts to identify those women who have the relevant qualifications. Some tasks may need to be performed by qualified engineers. Other tasks may require good judgement and management skills rather than a particular educational degree.

Funds for equal employment opportunities for women should be allocated.

ILO has established an In Focus Programme (IFP) on crisis response and reconstruction that capitalises on the capacities of Afghan women in the reconstruction and development processes. Since women’s rights and access to the labour market were severely constrained under the Taliban, ILO’s work has a focus on the needs of educated women who were forced to leave their jobs as well as on illiterate and poorly educated women who have not had access to employment opportunities. The ILO IFP Crisis programme has started a “SOS Computers” programme which includes a computer centre in the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The purpose is to break gender stereotyping by enabling women to enter into a new range of occupations with better prospects for upward mobility. It should be investigated if the transport ministries could benefit from the IFP programme.

Statistics Disaggregated by Gender

To make gender differences visible, all statistics should be disaggregated by gender, e.g. staff (planners, decision-makers and other employees at different levels), participants in training and study trips, passengers and persons involved in accidents. Gender-disaggregated data are also needed for monitoring and evaluation.

Review of Transport Legislation

According to the Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan (January 2003), restrictions are often imposed on women's freedom of movement and expression, as well as on their right to work. For example, many women, especially in rural areas, are banned from travelling without a male relative.

There may be a need to review transportation legislation in Afghanistan from a gender point of view. The legislation should actively and explicitly require that women are given equal rights to public transportation. To facilitate acceptance, Islamic scholars with a modern outlook could be helpful in this work.