

Making transport policy sustainable requires paying attention to the mobility constraints and needs of both women and men

Transport & Gender

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT
BRIEFING NOTES



GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP, THE WORLD BANK, MARCH 2007

Why are gender issues important in the transport sector?

Because women and men in developing countries have different transport needs and priorities, they are frequently affected differently by transport interventions. For example, *Rural Transport Projects* that build roads for motorized transport often do not benefit rural women, who mainly work and travel on foot in and around the village. Moreover, the construction of roads may have an indirect effect on women as the increased mobility of their male counterparts could lead to the spread of *HIV/AIDS*. In fact, international evidence shows that the transport sector is a major vector for this pandemic (Social analysis in transport projects, 2006). *Urban Transport Systems*, which are designed to transport people to and from employment centers, may also respond inadequately to the needs of women, who must combine income generation with household activities, such as taking children to school and visiting the market.

The failure of the transport sector in meeting women's needs and priorities affects women negatively in several ways. Because of lack of access to adequate transport, women enjoy less mobility than men; their access to markets and employment is circumscribed. Women's safety suffers when their needs are not taken into account in transport project design, for instance due to the absence of street lighting. Women's health is also negatively affected by the lack of adequate transport. Every minute a woman dies in child birth, but many of these deaths (and the disability caused by obstructed labor) could be avoided with timely access to transport (Gender and transport resource guide, 2006).

Furthermore, poor women, who balance productive, social, and reproductive roles, often have higher demands on their time than poor men. Gender-responsive infrastructure interventions can free up women's time by lowering their transaction costs. This, in turn, increases girls' school enrollment and facilitates women's participation in income-generation and decision-making activities. Evidence from Pakistan shows that an all-weather motorable road may increase girls' primary school enrollment by 50 percent and female literacy by 75 percent (Dalil Essakali, 2005).

Addressing transport-related gender inequalities is smart economics. It benefits society as a whole. Reducing women's time costs and increasing their mobility and safety increases women's productivity which makes society as a whole more productive. Gender-responsive transport services can thus serve as a powerful vehicle to achieving several of the MDGs. They help empower women, improve health, provide education opportunities and ultimately reduce poverty.

Issues to consider

- What are the gender differences in demand for transport?
- When setting transport priorities, do policies reflect men's and women's different constraints and needs?
- Is transport project design and implementation based on consultations with women as well as men?
- What transport projects benefit women as well as men the most?

The World Bank, transport and gender

The World Bank Gender Action Plan (2006) assigns an important role to the transport

sector in contributing to women's empowerment. In fact, the World Bank's work on transport and gender consists of several different components. The Transport and Social Responsibility Thematic Group works on improving the World Bank's understanding of the transport sector's different impact on different social groups and by gender. The recently created Sustainable Development Network seeks to mainstream gender not only in the transport sector but throughout infrastructure.

The World Bank's Gender and Transport Resource Guide (2006) provides easy access to a wealth of materials on gender and transport and disseminates good practices in this area. The World Bank also conducts time poverty research in order to address cost-efficient ways to lower women's transaction costs in developing countries. Finally, the Guidelines for Social Analysis in the Transport Sector provide advice on social development issues, including gender, to task teams working in the transport sector.

Transport projects that mainstreamed gender successfully

Several transport projects in countries such as Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Senegal, and Yemen have sought to address the particular needs of women. The success of such projects depends not only on the project design, but ultimately on the work of staff who believes in gender equality. Yet, once effectively implemented, they produce benefits that accrue to all members of society. Below are three examples:

Peru's Rural Roads Program

The joint World Bank/Inter-American Development Bank Peru Rural Roads Program (RRP) worked with men and

women of the Andean region to improve main roads and smaller roads and tracks. It involved rural women in its design and implementation by requiring that women comprise 20% of the members of the road committees, 10% of the members of road maintenance micro-enterprises and 30% of direct beneficiaries. The project repaired and improved transport systems heavily used by women, such as 3000 km of pedestrian tracks often forgotten by road upgrading programs.

After project completion women participate more in markets and fares, and spend less time obtaining fuel and food supplies. 77% of surveyed women reported that the rehabilitated roads and tracks enabled them to travel farther, 67% reported that they enabled them to travel more safely, and 43% reported that they enabled them to obtain additional income (Making rural roads work, 2005). The project helped reduce travel times for both women and men by up to a half. Improved transport services enhanced communities' access to health services and markets, improved the quality of education, and facilitated social interaction. Women's participation in local initiatives and politics also increased.

Uhuru vehicle project in Zambia and Zimbabwe

The transport sector plays an important role in helping to achieve the MDGs of reducing maternal and child mortality. An estimated 75 percent of all maternal deaths could be prevented through timely access to essential care; yet many women with obstetric complications lose valuable time before reaching a health facility (Social analysis in transport projects, 2006). Riders for Health, who won the World Bank's Development Marketplace award in 2004, addresses this issue with the Uhuru, a motorcycle ambulance that provides access to emergency healthcare – and more (Riders for Health, 2007).

Uhuru vehicles consist of a lightweight and sturdy sidecar powered by a motorcycle fitted with off-road tires. Designed to carry a stretcher and a safe-motherhood chair for women in threatening labor, the Uhuru has

proved a cost effective way to provide life-saving transport for pregnant women with complications. Moreover, the vehicle may vastly facilitate home-based care that is an essential part of the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, thus benefiting women.

The Uhuru also helps providing educational and other services and bringing goods to markets. It has a power take-off at the back wheel which, when connected to a pump, can pump 120 liters of water a minute. Hence, in Zambia the Uhuru allows women to provide for their families and pay their children's school fees from the income obtained from the increased yield of their gardens. The Uhuru helps carry and pump extra water for these gardens and the additional produce grown is transported to urban areas for sale, providing extra income to the families and empowering women.

Western Africa HIV/AIDS project for Abidjan-Lagos transport corridor

Since 2004, the HIV/AIDS project for Abidjan-Lagos transport corridor is being implemented to increase the access to HIV/AIDS prevention, basic treatment, support and care services by underserved vulnerable groups. As cumbersome border-crossing procedures delay travelers and often force them to spend extra nights along the corridor, the project targets groups such as truck drivers, female traders, and sex workers that are particularly vulnerable to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The project's three main components are: prevention (e.g., information about HIV/AIDS, distribution of male and female condoms); basic treatment (e.g., training of health officers, ARV therapy); and transport facilitation (i.e., facilitating the free movement of people and goods).

The project includes two important gender-related activities: (i) female traders are educated and sensitized about their rights and the documentation required for crossing borders to avoid harassment at border check points; (ii) sex workers receive particular training on HIV/AIDS prevention, free female condoms and grants if they want to take up formal jobs. A "union" for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) has

been created in which women constitute a majority. These measures have informed women about the risks with HIV/AIDS, and empowered those women particularly vulnerable to the disease along the corridor (ALCO, 2004). The project also contributes to strengthening the capacity of women's associations legally constituted to fight against the discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Resources and research

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