

POLICY TOOLS - CROSS CUTTING THEMES

4.1 GENDER AWARENESS

Problem: Investment in transport tends to discount gender relations in the design and delivery of transport services and infrastructure.

Solution: A sustainable approach to rural transport policy and planning will incorporate gender mainstreaming and advocate capacity building.

BACKGROUND

Traditionally, the concept of gender equality in rural development points towards alleviating the transport burden of women who undertake the bulk of subsistence agriculture, domestic chores and marketing activities. Whilst this still holds true, emphasis has shifted towards creating awareness of this burden amongst men and women, and highlighting the transport inefficiencies of these tasks in terms of value of time and income generating capabilities.

The time and energy burden of transport for rural women is well documented. In addition to their major productive roles, women are almost exclusively responsible for household and child-rearing tasks, so they have numerous and diverse travel and transport needs. Women also suffer the physical and health burdens of headloading a large proportion of fuel, water and produce. Yet cultural traditions and male-control of household resources mean that women have even less access than men to the available means of non-motorised and motorised transport. The combination of 'multi-tasking' and poor service and vehicle access severely limits the time available for, and timing of other activities.

If cultural restrictions were relaxed, enabling women to readily use the same transport modes and services available to men, it would serve to increase both agricultural productivity (through a saving in transport time) and earning potential (through increased load capacity and reduced trip frequency). Yet, policy makers must ensure they reinforce these changes in attitude with the provision of IMT and spare parts manufacturers, and micro-credit schemes for female IMT users.

DIVISION OF LABOUR AND TRANSPORT TASKS

In most societies men and women have distinct economic and social roles and responsibilities, and consequently there are significant gender differences in travel and transport needs:

- The practised division of labour tends to assign heavy physical activities to men, and more burdensome and time-consuming activities to women.
- Women's participation in agriculture is principally concerned with subsistence crop production, whilst men undertake cash crop cultivation and animal husbandry.
- In rural areas, men frequently control income from agricultural production, so that women have limited control over financial resources.
- Women are frequently required to make more trips than men as they must combine their agricultural activities with domestic responsibilities (such as preparing meals for the household, collecting fuel and water, and child-care).
- Domestic activities are generally performed by women on a daily basis, and include:
 - Collection of water and firewood
 - Preparation and cooking of meals
 - Food processing and storage
 - Child rearing
 - Cleaning and washing
 - Household purchases and errands

These activities have a high economic and social value, yet this is not captured in conventional economic analysis, hence the importance of domestic work for the livelihoods of the household is grossly underestimated.

- Domestic activities are almost exclusively carried out by women, who perform 80% of the work involved, and therefore bear the brunt of corresponding transport tasks.

THE TRANSPORT BURDEN OF WOMEN

The daily responsibilities accorded to rural women contain a heavy transport component and tend to be conducted using head or backloading (see **Figures 1 and 2**). In Africa, 65% of the total transport effort and 65% of transport time is borne by women, who carry 3-5 times as much as men in a year. This extraordinary strain, in addition to that of reproductive and productive responsibilities has direct effects on women's health, and therefore ability to labour. Headloading itself causes damage to the spine, and the energy expended in regular portering causes fatigue and ill health. These health problems are compounded by the high cost of basic medical care, and are therefore neglected. Consequently, the life expectancy of rural women is significantly reduced, which has implications for the agricultural production potential of whole countries.



Figure 1: Headloading firewood



Figure 2: Transit of farm produce

The marketing of agricultural produce will frequently involve much longer trips than those undertaken within the village for water and firewood collection. Women's more limited access to motorised transport places an added burden on them and can also result in significant post-harvest losses when part of their produce rots due to lack of transport. Access to such simple equipment as a wheel-barrow or bicycle may more than double the volume of produce that women can transport to market.

All the time and energy consumed in these domestic activities is further exacerbated by the equally onerous task of childcare, particularly when load carrying weights are increased when transporting water, firewood and unprocessed maize. Howe and Bryceson (1993) express some concern over the inefficiency of 'passenger traffic' on women's productivity. The presence of a child for example, is incidental and its weight goes unrecorded; hence women are undertaking load carrying with additional weight, which further increases their travel time and imposes health implications related to overloading, and risk of injury.

A strategy is clearly required to improve the transport capabilities of rural women with the implementation of appropriate interventions whose performance matches need, and whose cost is sensible in relation to income.

ENGENDERING TRANSPORT AND NON-TRANSPORT INTERVENTIONS

Gender-analysis, monitoring and evaluation helps to identify the economic and social divisions of labour at the level of the household and community. Gender analysis recognises the cultural, economic and social factors constraining women's access to economic opportunities, and will help identify intervention strategies which are more likely to gain the support of male members of the household and the community.

There are major gender inequalities in access to IMTs, as most are owned and used by men. Most transport programmes and IMT initiatives are determined by men, designed for men, and men are the major beneficiaries. Men are also much more likely to adopt new intermediate forms of transport than women. Women are marginalised from the use of IMTs because of their lack of purchasing power relative to men, and because their acquisition of IMTs is circumscribed by notions of cultural impropriety. IMT programmes need to address this issue, by creating a ‘critical mass’ of women users that will justify the manufacture and sale of suitable IMT designs, and break the male-dominated cycle of IMT use.

The potential of non-transport interventions is often overlooked. Implementation of rural water projects and woodlot schemes which provide boreholes and regenerating wood supplies, located close to service users, serve to reduce the time and effort spent per household, per day on water and firewood collection (see **Figure 3**). Similarly, the creation of enabling environments for small scale market enterprise in rural areas proliferates competitive pricing and sale of consumer goods, thus negating such frequent long distance trips to district or provincial markets.



Figure 3: Village borehole

In addition, the provision of affordable and appropriate technologies to undertake daily chores at the household level also conserve energy reserves and remove the need for extraneous travel. Energy efficient wood burning stoves and grinding mills are cases in point, whereby firewood collection and consumption is greatly reduced, and less energy is expended compared with manual grinding (see **Figure 4**).



Figure 4: Manual maize grinding

When considering both transport and non-transport technologies in an effort to reduce the burden of women, policy makers must first consult the end user to identify priority needs of women in each community, and examine thoroughly the time, energy and cost savings made from implementing such technologies.

REFLECTIONS ON MEN IN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The resource constraints and requirements of men have until recently been missing from gender discourse. Gender concerns should recognise that men and women may be disadvantaged by social and economic structures and

that both have the right to live free from poverty. Empowerment processes should enable women and men to be liberated from the confines of gender stereotyped roles.

Indeed, the ‘demasculinising’ effects of poverty and of economic and social change may be eroding men’s traditional roles as providers. The impacts of development on the transport sector have changed the way in which men’s duties are undertaken. Transport practitioners for example, promote the use of Intermediate Means of Transport (IMT’s) amongst rural women who undertake the majority of short distance, subsistence tasks; yet, the majority of longer distance journeys undertaken for marketing of agricultural produce, are carried out by men. **Figure 5** demonstrates that men also require IMT technology to transport heavy loads over long distances. Similarly, road maintenance projects are increasingly requiring labour to be provided by women, which significantly reduces employment opportunities for men, and results in a domestic role reversal. Traditional gender roles can become threatened under external influences, giving rise to hostility. Clearly, the decision making process,

especially for prioritising transport related interventions, should incorporate sensitisation of men and women prior to investment.

Whilst gender equality should be encouraged in rural communities, there must first be a change of attitudes and behaviour between male and female members. In order to maximise their livelihood potential, they must recognise a compromise with regards to changing gender roles and divisions of labour. With this in mind, gender research and policy initiatives would benefit from:

- Investigating the changing roles, needs and identities of men over life courses
- Researching men's roles in families, the reproduction of gender inequities through work, and men's specific health vulnerabilities
- Tracking and monitoring changes in gender relationships over time, in different cultural contexts, and apply lessons to gender focused policies
- Developing positive role models for men and boys by influencing mass media images through NGO's, religious and youth groups.



Figure 5: Men transporting firewood in a 'pushtruck'

GUIDELINES FOR POLICY MAKERS

It is generally recognised that the lack of gender disaggregated information is a key constraint to the development of appropriate policies and practices at the macro level. Policy makers should provide for an enabling environment in which gender sensitive transport interventions can be implemented to optimise the production and income earning capabilities of men and women, whilst improving the livelihood outcomes and life chances of both. Transport policies should encourage community participation of men and women in decision making processes and prioritisation procedures to ensure that specific gender needs are properly accounted for:

- All agencies dealing with transport issues (government, non-government and donor) should collect and analyse gender disaggregated data in formulating plans and policies, and develop gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation. Agencies should work collectively and avoid duplicating effort.
- Women's full economic and social contribution to each sector of the economy should be recognised and documented.
- Policy support for developing infrastructure and credit facilities for transport and non-transport interventions to be accessed by women, including IMT's (Intermediate Means of Transport) should be provided.
- Policies should facilitate research into appropriate transport and non-transport technologies for use by women to reduce their need for travel and to alleviate the burden of load carrying. Research should investigate the benefit of ergonomics to this end.
- Policy makers should advocate participation by women in labour based road rehabilitation and maintenance programmes, and training of women to adopt supervisory roles.
- There is a need to involve women and women's perspectives in decision making processes concerning transport policies, IMT initiatives and non-transport technologies at national level, at decentralised regional level and within communities.
- There is a need to locate the individual actions and beliefs of men and women within a wider framework of social, economic and political change.

KEY REFERENCES

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