

Impacts and implications of gender mainstreaming in rural transport in Tanzania

Key policy recommendations

- The National Construction Policy of 2002, which aims to set aside at least 25% of road works and infrastructural development activities for women, needs to be strengthened by an Act of Parliament.
- The Tanzania National Transport Policy of 2011 should provide adequate strategies and instruments to give equitable roles to women experiencing intersecting vulnerabilities (such as widows, older persons, and those with disabilities).
- Develop strategies to achieve equal representation of men and women in employment in the infrastructure sector by 2025, as per the UN 2015 resolution, through a review of the United Republic of Tanzania's Women's Development Policy (1992) that seeks to mainstream gender in all sectors.
- The 2009 Checklist for Gender Mainstreaming in the Infrastructure sector, which provides a tool for gender mainstreaming in infrastructure projects, to be implemented more widely and in other sectors too.
- Ensure actions are taken to enable women (who represent 80% of those attending consultative meetings) to speak freely, allowing their voices to be heard and reflected throughout the project and programme lifecycles.
- Ensure data collected on the impact of transport projects is adequately disaggregated by age and gender; so that the most relevant initiatives aimed at building the capacity of women facing intersecting inequalities, can be effectively undertaken.

Brief problem summary

Although mainstreaming of gender in transport sector policies appear to have benefited women that have lived

with multiple vulnerabilities, their participation in the transport sector, particularly in infrastructure development through direct employment in road construction is limited. This is partly due to negative perceptions that society has towards women's ability to participate in physical activities, such as construction work, and constraints relating to culturally assigned duties within their families. The extent to which the use of mobile technology by women with intersecting inequalities, and related benefits from bridging the rural transport and communication gap is also under researched.

Most relevant evidence

Women play vital roles in the wellbeing of low income households in rural Africa where they contribute 80% of food produced and consumed, and where access to farms and markets remains a key life line. Due to poor rural transport infrastructure, their farm productivity, and ability to market what is produced, is often constrained.

Evidence shows that most of the goods transported from farms to households and later to markets in Africa are head-loaded, mostly by women (Porter et al, 2015; HelpAge International, 2015). This has serious implications on women's health, particularly those that are older, as studies conducted in Kibaha (Porter et al, 2015) and Kilolo (HelpAge International, 2015) in Tanzania demonstrated. While the gender issues associated with mobility and accessibility of rural populations are well known, they somehow neither feature in transport sector planning nor are factored in to subsequent infrastructure investments.

Figure 1: Many areas in Kilolo district are now accessible following the completion of road construction projects



Tanzania’s National Transport Policy of 2003 recognised the need to mainstream gender in rural transport, given that - most of women’s time is often spent on walking long distances to and from farm and other production centres. The Village Transport and Travel Programme (VTTP) project was introduced in seven districts across Tanzania with a view to address these issues. However, the extent to which this policy has led to transformative benefits, in particular for women experiencing intersectional vulnerabilities, remains largely unknown. It is against this background that HelpAge International sought to explore these benefits and identify any transformative changes for women.

Guidelines on equality do exist within the transport and roads sector, along with the construction and building industry, yet they have not adequately embedded gender mainstreaming. The gender gap still exists, evidenced by the few number of women who hold leadership positions within the sector. It is not obligatory during road construction for contractors to recruit women, contrary to the National Construction Policy of 2002, which requires that at least 25% of opportunities in the transport and infrastructure projects be set aside for women through direct employment. There are no deliberate efforts to sensitise contractors and consultants to involve women in roadworks, or to hold these employers accountable for their actions.

Therefore, a lack of women’s involvement in roadworks in Tanzania is endemic, and a result of systematic failures by the state at all levels. Furthermore, contrary to the 2009 Checklist for Gender Mainstreaming in the Infrastructure Sector, infrastructure projects in Tanzania remain insensitive to their differentiated needs.

Gender issues on the ground

An assessment by the HelpAge International and its partners on the transformative changes among women living in rural communities suggests a largely negative conclusion. Despite strong attention to gender issues in most policies that were reviewed, state programmes and projects still tend to be prejudicial to women’s potential to contribute to the design of programmes and in construction activities. In addition, their participation through direct employment in road construction is also limited. The situation is worse for women facing intersecting inequalities. Their chance to gain employment in the programmes and projects is often diminished with the exception of those targeted by TASAF. Some groups – notably people living with HIV and AIDS or with a severe disability – face particular

prejudice. This is likely to be especially the case now that road contracts are tendered out by the district administrations to contractors whose goal is profit not social assistance.

The main exception to this discouraging story comes from interviews with women professionals working within the road sector and associated local government. These interviews offer evidence that transformative change is possible for professional women working in this arena. As observed through this study, there is a need for much greater emphasis on training women (engineers, in particular) who can act as role models for their peers.

“Gender issues associated with the mobility and transport of rural populations are well known but are rarely prioritised in transport planning and investment”

Figure 2: Men and women in Kilolo district participating in a self-help road construction project



Research Methodology

Sampling of project sites at the district level was based on the following inclusion criteria: completed project with sufficient length; on-going construction projects with sufficient length and; projects currently under construction. Kibaha and Kilolo Districts were purposively selected for this qualitative study to build on the transport and mobility studies previously conducted (HelpAge, 2015; Porter et al, 2015). The two districts provided two contrasting scenarios, with Kilolo District fitting well with remoteness, while Kibaha District, although located closer to Dar es Salaam, has strong urban and peri-urban characteristics.

Figure 3: Research sites in Kibaha



HelpAge International conducted desk reviews, separate focus group discussions with women and men from the research sites, and key informant interviews at national and district levels. Participants in each group were identified so that women and men facing various forms of discrimination and exclusion, such as older people, people with disabilities, orphans, widows/widowers, and single women headed households were included.

Figure 4: Research sites in Kilolo (highlighted in green)



A total of 297 individuals participated in the study at the district level (147 in Kibaha and 150 in Kilolo) through 32 focus group discussions and 30 key informant interviews. An additional five key informant interviews with national level actors were conducted; and three further interviews with development partners (World Bank, African Development Bank (ADB) and the Department for International Development (DFID)).

Results

Overall the study found that although women may be visible in areas where there are road construction projects and at roadwork sites, their involvement was limited to cooking for male workers. Only in a few cases were women involved in construction activities at the beginning of a project, and even then, their work mainly involved digging trenches and uprooting tree stumps. Their involvement in more technical aspects of the project was minimal. Women were replaced by youth on the pretext that they cannot assemble pipes nor do other hard work. Some men added that women spend their time participating in traditional dances; “therefore, it will be impossible for most of them to attend road construction activities going on at the same time”.

In remote districts, villagers only got to know of a project starting in their community when they woke up to find a bulldozer begin to push large quantities of soil, sand, rubble, or other material at the start of construction. Decisions to involve women in community roadworks are typically made by the local council, “You find that you do not even know what the contractor looks like”. The Assistant Planning Officer for Kibaha District noted in one of the interviews that projects which originate from the community mainly require unskilled labour, so both men and women can participate equally for wages, but larger projects involving contractors are put out to tender and are commissioned almost entirely to male contractors.

The assistant planning officer in Kibaha asserted that, although women in general did not benefit greatly from construction works, they benefitted mostly from the improved roads “since they are the engines of family life”. While views on the employment benefits from road projects varied, most informants agreed that better road networks have improved access to health and education services for women, girls as well as the general population. A female social development officer in Kwala observed that in one way or another, they all benefit, because these roads are used to evacuate patients to the dispensary or for referral at the Mlandizi Hospital. The clearing of dense vegetation around the road and the increased frequency of road use is also seen to specifically improve travel safety for women who walk along the road.

Widespread use of Mobile Phones

The research study investigated the use of mobile phones by women with intersecting inequalities, and found that they are widely used across Kibaha and Kilolo Districts, though the network coverage of individual providers varies: *Even the older people own phones. They carry the phones in their pouches and seldom stay without phones...we are all at par; the disabled have them [too] [Kwala village leader].*

Community members interviewed in Kibaha district spoke in very general but extremely positive terms about the importance of phones and how they intersect with physical transport arrangements. They observed how phones are used for organising transport (especially motorcycle taxis) for diverse activities, but particularly moving farm produce to market and for calling an ambulance from the nearest hospital (at Mlandizi) when people are very sick. They are also used for communicating messages as a substitute for travel.

Increasingly, phone use substitutes for travel in the transfer and receipt of money via M-Pesa (especially older people receiving money from their children in town). The female contractor interviewed in Kibaha who also runs a microfinance company lending to women's groups observed that phones have grown the size of women's networks and that, in her groups, members plan together mostly through the phone. The main disadvantages of using a phone were identified as the cost of airtime and the cost and inconvenience of charging phones in areas without mains electricity. The greatest challenge of phone use in Kilolo District was found to be the network, where vast areas are not covered by any network and women have to travel long distances to access a network in order to make calls or send messages.

Although use of mobile phones has reduced the need for travel, it cannot substitute entirely for physical travel, and hence access and mobility to roads and transport services remains significant. The vital importance for disabled people of being able to call motorcycle transport to their door was also recognised.

The massive improvement the mobile phone offers for organising their lives encourages many women with intersecting inequalities to allocate a portion of their sparse resources to obtaining and maintaining a mobile phone. Even if they do not own a phone, they will try to keep funds to buy airtime so they can then borrow a phone from a family member or neighbour. The field surveys suggest that many women in this demographic appear to use and benefit from mobile phones far more than the general population.

Figure 5: Women participating in a road project



Summary of Project/Background

In 2003, Tanzania adopted a National Transport Policy to mainstream gender in rural transport. However, little is known if the policy has been effectively applied and has resulted in transformative changes to the lives of women facing multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion. This research investigated whether women facing intersecting inequalities benefit from gender mainstreaming, identifying some of the constraints and factors facilitating transformative changes in programmes such as the Village Travel and Transport Programme (VTP).

References or further information sources

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