

SYNOPSIS

Mobility for All: The Link between Gender and Urban Mass Transit

SUMMARY OF A TECHNICAL NOTE ON GENDER ISSUES IN URBAN MASS TRANSIT SYSTEMS¹



Urban mass transit systems should benefit men and women equally, but men and women often have different needs, priorities, and vulnerabilities. For example, women are more likely than men to make multiple stops, to be carrying packages or child-related items, and to be accompanied by children. More than men, they value flexibility over speed, affordable fares, comfort, good lighting, and safety. Systems must take those differences into account if they are to be as useful, accessible, and safe for women as they are for men.

International organizations have begun to promote the systematic integration of gender considerations into infrastructure projects, including mass transit projects, as part of the implementation of gender-equity policies. There is growing recognition that such a focus not only has direct social and economic benefits for women and their families, but can also produce increased returns on infrastructure investment by, for example, increasing the number of service users. Many such initiatives have been connected with efforts to prevent gender-based violence, with solutions such as train cars reserved for women and the deployment of police in transit

systems. In some cases, policies designed to accommodate persons with physical impairments have also benefited women who are pregnant or accompanied by children.

The guide summarized here provides tools to help project teams working on mobility-optimizing urban transport systems (UTS) as they identify opportunities to improve gender equality and women's empowerment and take steps to prevent exclusion from such systems based on gender. Relying on international best practices, the guide offers recommendations for the incorporation of such opportunities and measures into IDB-financed operations and presents questions and indicators for IDB project teams and member country counterparts to consider when designing and implementing projects.

Tools for integrating the gender perspective into UTS projects

Several tools can inform project teams about women's mobility patterns, access to services, and participation in the

1. The full note "Guía para la Integración de la Perspectiva de Género en los Sistemas de Transporte Urbano que optimizan la Movilidad" (Gender and Diversity Division, Social Sector, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC. November 2013) is available in Spanish and can be found at <http://www.iadb.org/document.cfm?id=38712784>. This is one in a series of sector-specific technical notes that have been developed as practical guides to support implementation of IDB's Operational Policy on Gender Equality.

transport sector. These include methods of raising women's participation in transit projects (as present and potential customers, as potential employees, or as beneficiaries of resettlement policies), disaggregation by gender of trip survey data, safety audits, and the hiring and training of women in connection with building and operating systems.

Tools are proposed for three project phases: (i) design, (ii) implementation, and (iii) monitoring and evaluation.²

Design tools: Identifying gender differences

Among the tools that can help UTS project teams identify gender differences that may be relevant to a project are the following:

- **Mobility diagnostics** can pinpoint factors that may discourage women from using transport. Such diagnostics may be carried out as part of pre-design social and environmental studies. Other organizations may already have performed studies that can yield valuable data.
- **Trip surveys and user satisfaction surveys** should allow for disaggregation of data by gender and include gender-differentiated questions and indicators. Gender-disaggregated data inform planners of the distinct needs and mobility patterns of men and women.
- **Baseline household surveys** (prior to project design) disaggregated by gender can reveal pre-project gender inequalities and point to the benefits that the project could have for both men and women.
- **Safety audits** with a gender perspective enable the project to address areas of danger or insecurity for women as well as men.
- **Interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups** involving beneficiaries of the project (and others affected by it) can help gather previously unheard opinions, suggest alternatives, and assess the satisfaction of project users. In some cultures it may be important for women to be interviewed by other women for the data to be reliable.

Implementation tools: Gender-sensitive activities during implementation

Among the activities that may help ensure gender equality during project implementation are the following:

- **Travel safety and personal security** can be maximized by generating awareness and respect for women's rights among transit system personnel and the public at large, improving law enforcement through consultations with police and the installation of security equipment and procedures within the system, and adhering to well-known safety principles in urban planning.
 - **Infrastructure design should respond to women's safety needs.** Buses, stations, parking lots, sidewalks, crossings, and paths to transit stops should be well lit, clean, open, and spacious (e.g., wide enough for strollers). Ideally, stations and stops should be located in areas that are busy and well-traveled and should reflect the fact that women are more likely than men to travel on foot and often have specific needs when doing so.
 - Many cities are providing bus, train, and metro **services reserved for women** only (as well as school-age boys) at least during weekday peak hours. The service may involve separate buses or cars, or special sections within buses and trains.
- **Differentiated fare schemes** may be needed to ensure that the transit system is truly accessible to low income populations, especially poor women.
- **A gender analysis of the concession model** may reveal previously unconsidered economic benefits for the operator and social benefits for the regulator. For example, it can help identify additional segments of off-peak riders that make it possible to build more accurate guarantees of ridership into the concession contract and thus enable the concessionaire to offer more favorable fare schemes and other accommodations to the newly discovered classes of riders.
- **More frequent buses that make stops on demand** may attract more women passengers by reducing crowding and cutting the distance from a scheduled stop to the woman's destination.
- **Signs** that require or encourage passengers to offer seats to pregnant women or women with children make trips more pleasant for many women and encourage a climate of respect.
- **Considerate, professional behavior** on the part of transit personnel is essential in promoting women's secure use of the system. One way to promote such behavior—while improving gender equality in the process—is to recruit more women employees into the transit system and into training programs that prepare people to work in the sys-

2. See the full note in Spanish for practical examples of inclusion of the gender perspective into UTS projects. Available at <http://www.iadb.org/document.cfm?id=38712784>.

tem. Hiring more female as employees can be included as a condition of the service concession or operating contract. In some cases it has been found that women can provide better service than men (e.g., as bus drivers).

- **Inclusive and equitable resettlement** policies can ease the stress of the involuntary resettlement that accompanies large transit projects. Equity may depend on the availability of gender-disaggregated data and policies that do not discriminate against women, who may be less likely to hold formal title to property, more likely to have children to care for, and more likely to have an informal or location-specific livelihood.
- **Institutional strengthening efforts** can be used to sensitize transit personnel to the need for gender equality—and to secure the commitment of top managers to that goal.

Monitoring and evaluation tools

Appropriate indicators, such as those suggested in table 1 (see full note in Spanish for a longer list of indicators),

should be used to assess the results and impact of project activities on gender equality and women's empowerment. Each project, of course, will require its own indicators, including those that permit disaggregation by gender. The expected project results related to the indicators should be expressed for men and women separately, as well as in total, in order to guide efforts to close gender gaps and to enable information on the project's impact on gender equality and women's empowerment to be built into the results matrix.

Determining whether a project presents opportunities to promote gender equality or potential risks of exclusion

Some projects offer more opportunities than others to promote gender equality and women's empowerment; some pose more risks than others to those same goals. The sample set of questions in table 2 can help identify the opportunities and risks that the project may present (See full note in Spanish for additional questions).

Table 1. Sample indicators for monitoring and evaluating gender-specific results in UTS projects

Result	Indicators
1. Increase in the number of women users of the UTS	Increase in #/% of new female users as a share of all users of the UTS
2. Improvement in women's satisfaction with the system	Increase in #/% of women who report feeling safe within the transportation system
3. Women's participation in project consultation processes	Increase in # of public consultations that incorporate a gender equality approach Increase in % of women participating in public consultations / total number of participants
4. Women's access to jobs generated in the construction and/or operation of the project	Increase in # of affirmative action measures used in selection of workers Increase in % of women employed in the construction or operation of the project
5. Women's access to training	Increase in #/% of women trained in any activity related to the project
6. Awareness of the implementing agency, manufacturer, and/or operator regarding the gender perspective	Increase in #/% of workers linked to the project at various levels who attend gender workshops Increase in # of workshops on gender equity
7. Women's access to property and involuntary resettlement compensation	% increase in number of joint property titles Increase in #/% of women who receive financial compensation as part of the resettlement plan (e.g., vendors who received a title to property as restitution)
8. Decrease in sexual assaults in the UTS	Decrease in rate of sexual assault Increase in the rate of complaints
9. Reduction of accidents with pedestrians in the area of the project	Decrease in #/% of pedestrians injured (disaggregated by gender)

Table 2. Sample questions to guide gender analysis when planning projects to address UTS

Project stage	Examples of gender questions to identify opportunities and risks
Design	<p>Patterns of mobility and use of public transportation: Do women use the bus regularly? For what reasons?</p> <p>Personal and transit safety: Do abuse, fondling, and gender violence occur in the local urban transportation system? Are data available on traffic accidents disaggregated by sex? What are the main causes of pedestrian injuries/fatalities?</p> <p>Public consultations: Will there be public consultations? Are both men and women invited to participate?</p> <p>Resettlement: Are there groups of women with special needs (heads of households, widows, etc.) among those to be relocated? What do the local laws say about the joint titling of assets?</p>
Monitoring and evaluation	<p>Design of infrastructure and operations: Does the project provide for infrastructure adapted to typical women's mobility (Example: spaces reserved for strollers, seats for pregnant women)?</p> <p>Job creation: Does the project contemplate measures to avoid excluding women from the direct or indirect jobs generated during and after the project?</p> <p>Resettlement: If necessary, does the project guarantee joint titling of resettled homes? Have indicators been established for monitoring the gender-related results and activities proposed in the project? Have specific individuals or units been assigned to supervise and monitor gender-related results and activities?</p>

Recommendations

The guide offers five recommendations for successfully integrating the gender perspective into UTS projects:

Design and implement a gender action plan. To demonstrate solid commitment to gender equality, it is useful to align project activities with a more comprehensive gender action plan that includes specific objectives, strategies, results, and indicators; a schedule for completion; and a clear assignment of responsibilities.

Designate focal points within the organization's executing agency, the operator, and the IDB, and secure the buy-in of all parties. To ensure that gender-related activities are implemented, a network of qualified point persons should be designated to track and report periodically on the progress of activities specified in the gender action plan.

Propose pilot projects. When the client is resistant or reluctant, or when resource limitations make it difficult to integrate the gender perspective into the entire project, gender-related measures can be piloted on selected buses, routes, or

lines, or in selected stations. A successful pilot becomes an example of good practice that can be replicated. It can also help to detect problems and identify additional opportunities before gender-related measures are applied within the system as a whole.

Ensure inter-institutional cooperation. Transportation authorities can and should develop joint actions with other actors to promote greater equity in transit systems. By reaching out to the country's women's affairs agencies and organizations, for example, developers may identify studies or promising practices that can inform their efforts, rather than reinventing the wheel. Cooperation with police and public safety authorities can be mutually beneficial when planning system security. Developing ties with statistical agencies and equipment manufacturers can yield equally satisfying results.

Include technical specifications that promote equality. The technical specifications included in requests for proposals and in procurement contracts can be powerful instruments of gender quality. To cite just one example, contracts for buses can include a requirement for reserved spaces for baby carriers or for pregnant women.