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POLICY BRIEF

URBAN TRANSPORT & SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

This document is a part of series of six policy briefs that identify interactions of the urban transport with six UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); SDG1: No Poverty, SDG3: Good Health & Well-being, SDG5: Gender Equality, SDG8: Economic Growth, SDG11: Sustainable Cities & Communities, and SDG13: Climate Action.

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

About

This policy brief is part of the OPTIMISM (Opportunities for Climate Mitigation and Sustainable Development) project. OPTIMISM is an international multi-stakeholder partnership and research network funded by the UK Natural Environment Research Council as part of the research council's "Towards a Sustainable Earth" program. The international team consists of four partners: (i) Imperial College London, UK, (ii) Lund University, Sweden, (iii) Waseda University, Japan; and (iv) Ahmedabad University, India. Dr. Darshini Mahadevia (Principal Investigator-India) and Dr. Minal Pathak (Co-Principal Investigator) lead the project team placed in India that is supported and funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India. The project team in India consisted of Dr. Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, Saumya Lathia, Amitkumar Dubey, Kanika Gounder, Bandish Patel, and Saleem Yatoo.

Adopting a whole-systems perspective, the OPTIMISM project uses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework to analyze (i) the change in human development and the environment amidst rapid and extensive climate action and (ii) the role of insights from sectoral-SDG interaction in creating policies and practices that enable a transformational change. This document is a part of series of six policy briefs that identify interactions of the urban transport with six UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); SDG1 - No Poverty, SDG3- Good Health & Well-being, SDG5 - Gender Equity, SDG8 - Economic Growth, SDG11- Sustainable Cities & Communities, and SDG13 - Climate Action. The document stems from a literature review of over 250 publications.

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SDG 5: Gender Equality

What's the Goal & Why Does It Matter?

The Goal: To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Amid the intersecting crises of COVID-19, the climate emergency, and rising economic and political insecurity, progress on gender equality has not only failed to move forward but has begun to reverse. Around the world, a growing backlash against women's rights is threatening even well-established freedoms and protections. At the current rate of progress, it will take another 286 years to reform legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor gender equality in public life[i]. Violence against women and girls continues to rise in the wake of the intersecting crises; estimates indicate that 736 million women across the globe have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime[ii]. Although living in cities often translates into better access to economic and civic opportunities, increased personal autonomy and financial independence for women, but in developing countries more than 50% women globally lack access to clean water, sanitation and adequate housing [i]. Moreover, stressors like lack of access to decent work, ill-planned infrastructure, and unreliable, inadequate urban systems in urban areas, limit women's attainment of their full range of economic and social rights; 49 percent of women in urban areas feel less safe walking alone at night [iii].

What is its relationship with Transportation?

Transport is crucial to women's empowerment, helping them access economic opportunities and participate in civic and public life. Women's mobility, especially in low-income households, often increases their family's chances of escaping poverty (SDG5.2 and 5.5) [iv]. Urban transport also has a direct, two-way relationship with SDG 5, as easy access to economic, social, and civic

opportunities (via transport), in turn, creates additional travel demand and increases women's trip rates. In cities with safe and affordable healthcare services, access to robust transport systems is also linked to improved health outcomes for women (SDG5.6). Yet transport systems in cities worldwide fail to cater to women and girls, curbing their mobility and restricting their economic and interpersonal growth [iii] [iv]. To understand the role of urban transportation in forwarding women's empowerment and gender equity [1], one must understand women's and girls' travel patterns and needs.

Gendered Travel Behavior in Cities of the Global South

Although transport is considered gender-neutral, studies over the last decade show that transport is deeply gendered. The lack of gender-responsive [2] transport systems is universal. Yet women in the global South often experience exacerbated impacts of inequity and discrimination owing to the highly unequal urbanization landscape and the prevalence of traditional gender roles. For example, studies indicate that women in developing countries are less likely to have access to personal vehicles or hold a driver's license than men [v], curbing their access to work, healthcare, and other essential services. Lack of transport access and the fear of sexual violence hinder women's workforce participation; in developing countries, these factors are believed to decrease female labor force participation by 16.5%. Moreover, in about 20 countries of the global South, laws restrict women from working in the same way as men, Studies indicate that road-based transport solutions in these cities deepen gender inequity, especially for poor women [vi] [vii] [viii] [ix]. Although the continually expanding literature on women's travel behavior indicates nuances across socio-economic status, this section summarizes differential travel patterns among men and women, the range of constraints that govern women's travel behavior, and its linkages with SDG 5.

Women walk more often than men, longer distances than men, and in

more precarious conditions than men.

Walking is the most preferred mode of transport for women in developing countries [vii] [ix]; irrespective of trip lengths, the share of women walking to work in India is much higher than men [ix]. Census data for Indian districts also shows that women walk much longer distances than men. Women, especially those from low-income groups, are forced to walk as they face greater cultural barriers (clothing and other) to cycling and often cannot afford public transport [vi] [x]. Since women's dependence on pedestrian infrastructure is greater than men, the poor state of pedestrian infrastructure in cities of the global South cause women discomfort, increases their fear of violence (SDG target 5.1 & 5.2), and curbs their mobility [xi]. Additionally, studies show that harassment while walking down the street is a common occurrence for all women and is exacerbated by the inadequate and ill-maintained physical infrastructure like inadequate lighting on streets and underpasses, deserted alleys connecting their residences to the transit, etc. [xii].

Women tend to depend on public transport (PT) more than men.

Women's dependence on public transport is far more than men's [xiii], as women lack access to personal motorized vehicles, and public transit is the most affordable motorized mode. The role of women as primary caregivers (despite their employment status) results in a more 'complex' travel demand than men-who largely have a single work trip demand. Hence studies [v] of women's travel demand in Latin America and South Asia show that women take shorter and more frequent trips for multiple purposes (also known as trip-chaining) at off-peak hours. More than a quarter of women's trips are caregiving related and include traveling with a dependent (children, elderly, etc.) [vi]. While access to public transport is linked with improved socio-economic and health outcomes for women, the poor state of public transport systems (inadequate coverage, lack of last-mile access, poor frequency of buses, unsafe and ill-maintained

bus-stops, overcrowding, etc.) in most cities of the global South deter women from actively choosing public transport and curtail their mobility [xiv] (SDG targets 5.1 & 5.2). Experiences of harassment are prevalent for women using public transport; in Bhopal, 88% of the surveyed women mentioned they had faced harassment while using buses at least once, with 40% reporting they experienced harassment on a regular basis [xv]. In Karachi, 31% of students, 23% of working women, and 20% of homemakers said they reduced the use of public transport after harassment [xvi]. In Indian cities with meager public transport coverage, women and girls from low-income neighborhoods are forced to walk for at least 15-20 minutes to reach a bus stop or rely on intermediate public transit modes like shared autos (often more expensive than PT).

Women experience greater time poverty than men.

Time spent walking to work due to lack of affordability for public transport forms a considerable share of women's unpaid work. Hence, women's time allocated to unpaid work increases due to the lack of affordable, convenient, and safe transport; this time can be substituted by paid work or personal care if affordable public transit is available. Women's travel behavior involving trip-chaining and travel during off-peak hours results in longer waiting hours and trip times than men [xvii] [vii]. These factors result in greater time poverty for women than other citizens, especially low-income women (5.1 and 5.4).

Women face greater barriers to accessing economic opportunities than men.

While transport projects provide access to jobs, education, and social infrastructure, including health care, within those transport systems, those dominated by private, fossil-fuelled light-duty vehicles further limit accessibility for women or other disadvantaged groups [xvi]. In Indian districts, where private motorized vehicles are the predominant mode to commute to work, the share of women commuting to work is much lower than men [xiii]. Reasons for this include- majority

of households in Indian districts tend to own only one vehicle (predominantly a two-wheeler), which is used by the head of the household (predominantly men) for commuting to work; cultural barriers and resource constraints keep women from driving or knowing how to drive. Women do not prefer long-distance commutes as they have to earn enough to justify high travel expenses and need to intermittently check on their families, especially children/ elderly at home [xviii]. For example, In Delhi, 2019 research showed that the average length of trips made by women was 38% shorter than those made by men; however, men's average travel costs were 35% lower than those of women [viii]. Another problem is that public transportation, typically designed to cater to the needs of male commuters, is less frequent during non-peak hours when women typically travel more. As a result, they often resort to using informal modes of transportation, such as autorickshaws, which can be more costly. Women are more inclined to use hired modes that provide them door-to-door services, even if it comes at a high cost. Women are known to forgo an opportunity to work outside their neighborhoods if they perceive transport fares and services as expensive and unreliable [xvi]. Discrimination against women and girls that manifest through denial of their physical mobility (like street harassment) usually pushes women out of the workforce.

How can transport empower women and girls?

Safe transport options and preventive measures enhance the personal security of women and girls and are a major step toward gender equality [xix]. Although dense, mixed-use areas are believed to foster a better street environment, gender studies show that in the absence of proper infrastructure and capacity management, followed by congestion, women's risk of harassment and violence increases. [xvii] [xx]. Most studies on women and transport mention that transportation planning and systems need to be more gender-sensitive [xi] [xxi] [xxvii] and also emphasizes a gender-responsive approach to low-carbon transport interventions.

What can states do?

Although the implementation of sustainable transport planning and design is anchored by cities, the state has a vital role to play:

- Incorporating gender-responsive transport planning in national and sub-national visions for the transport sector.
- Ensure women's representation in transportation boards and committees to promote equitable decision-making.
- Incorporate gender-equity and gender-responsive planning in State Action Plans.
- Mandating gender budgeting in cities.
- Creating financing mechanisms that enable local bodies to upgrade public transport networks.
- Promote and aid investments in non-motorized infrastructure provision and maintenance.
- Create a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the impact of transport on gender equity.
- Incentivizing gendered transport data collection in cities to record disaggregated trip data to enable gender responsiveness in transport policies and plan.
- Decrease barriers for women's employment in the transport sector by subsidizing intermediate public transport (like auto-rickshaws and E-rickshaws) vehicle ownership for women.
- Ensure equal opportunity for women-led organizations and businesses while bidding for transport sector projects, especially for public transport and non-motorized transport-related projects (ex., Metrorail, footpaths, cycle tracks, street design, etc.).
- Improve women's capacity to avail transport sector jobs through skill-building and training programs

What can cities do?

It is essential that transportation systems are designed for as well as invite employment from all genders (SDG targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.4 & 5.5). Cities can:

- Institutionalize gender equity in transport via city's Gender-Action Plans.

- Conduct comprehensive and regular safety audits of transport infrastructure, including that of footpaths, metro stations/bus stations, and other elements of the transport system.
- Collect disaggregated trip data to include socio-demographic indicators like (by age, class, caste, religion, employment status, family structure, etc.) and more nuanced trip details (trip mode(s), purpose(s), length, time, cost, number of stops).
- Use findings from safety audits and gendered transport data to inform transport plans and service provision upgrades.
- Redesign transport infrastructure, especially non-motorized and public transport, to accommodate the needs of women (including that of pregnant women, lactating women, elderly women, etc.).
- Maintain adequate lighting along all streets and transport infrastructure.
- Introducing feeder services to increase women's last-mile access to Public Transport.
- Subsidize public transport for women users.
- Ensure public spaces are connected via safe, affordable, and reliable public transport networks.
- Ensure all public transport modes (city buses, BRTs, monorails, Metrorail, Light-rails, local trains, etc.) have special seats reserved for women and girls, as well as dedicated women-only carriages for enhanced safety and comfort.
- Plan thoughtful round-the-clock activities (ex. vending zones) along public transport stations.
- Improve gender inclusion into the transport sector jobs (Mobility-as-a-service, IPT & PT) by vocational training programs; examples of this include women drivers in Malaysia's Grab & Uber, Delhi's Sakha Cabs, Jaipur's and Pune's Pink Autos, and Bengaluru's Metrorail (SDG target 5.5 & 5.B).

Footnotes

[1] Gender equity means that men and women are able to enjoy the same conditions and opportunities to exercise their rights and achieve their social, economic, political, and cultural potentials. It differs from gender equality, which only means that the same opportunities are there, but does not include if they can be accessed

[xvi].

[2] Gender responsive planning is a differentiated planning culture that considers gender, age, and group-specific interests [xvi].

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Appendix

SDG 5 Targets

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

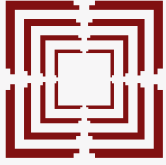
5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decisionmaking in political, economic and public life.

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.



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