

AN UNBALANCED LOAD

Women and men experience different travel and transport constraints. Women and girls often spend more time and effort on transport, have less access to public services, face greater safety and security risks while travelling, have less control over resources and fewer opportunities to use transport technologies.

“The real rural energy crisis is women’s time”
- Irene Tinker, 1987



An Unbalanced Load: Mainstreaming Gender in the New World Bank Transport Business Strategy.

Response by Marinke van Riet, Executive Secretary, International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), London.

May 22nd 2008

“The real energy crisis is rural women’s time”

An Unbalanced Load: Mainstreaming Gender in the New World Bank Transport Business Strategy:

Response by Marinke van Riet, Executive Secretary, International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD)

London, 22nd May 2008

Dear Mr. Juhel, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It has been two years since the World Bank consulted the Gender and Transport Network or GATNET on how to mainstream gender in what was then still a *Draft Transport Strategy*. As a member of GATNET, I feel honoured today to have been given the opportunity to respond to the final product. It is considerably different from the mainstreamed strategy GATNET proposed but still offers us interesting gender and transport perspectives and important opportunities to move beyond rhetoric and to start to ‘walk the talk’. This is what I would like to focus our attention on today.

The title of my response “*The real energy crisis is rural women’s time*” is an appropriate follow-up on the climate change issues the previous respondent highlighted. Many of you will recognise this quote from Irene Tinker, the gender and development specialist. She made this statement in 1987 and I think it is important for us to reflect on its continued validity more than 20 years later.

Despite considerable research, including amongst others, the IFRTD coordinated ‘*Balancing the Load*’, and the World Bank’s ‘*Integrating Gender into World Bank-financed Transport Programs*’, today, seventy percent of goods transport in Africa (predominantly agricultural) continues to be head-loaded; mainly by women who make up the majority of agricultural producers and transporters. In some areas this can take up to eight hours of a woman’s productive time, leaving little time to spend on income-generating activities and helping to achieve Millennium Goal One – the eradication of poverty and hunger.

In addition to time poverty, there is a clear link between distance to school and girls’ school enrollment, the latter being one of the indicators used to measure progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment, the third MDG. Every year over half a million women die of pregnancy-related complications and it is estimated that 75% of these maternal deaths could be prevented through timely **access** to essential health services and skilled birth attendants. As we all know reducing maternal mortality is the Millennium Development Goal that is most off track, yet there is a clear transport-related component that we still need to address.

I can continue listing bleak statistics for hours as they are numerous but I would be ‘causing’ my own mini-time and energy crisis, and I am sure the painted picture is clear: *there continues to be an unbalanced load*.

Unfortunately despite several wake-up calls the transport sector, including the World Bank, has been slow in responding to this crisis, potentially due to the highly technocratic nature of the sector. The 2007 IEG evaluation on a decade of transport at the World Bank, states that the sector has demonstrated economic effectiveness and efficiency but on the flipside has ‘scored’ a very poor performance in social and gender dimensions. Another recent evaluation by IEG- titled “*The health benefits of transport projects*” was carried out to assess how the WB transport lending portfolio (1997-2006) has contributed to health outcomes. It was shown that of the 229 projects managed by the Transport Sector Board (totaling 29 billion US\$) only 24% or 55 projects had explicit health objectives of which 45 focused on road safety. There was only one (!) project that focused explicitly on enhancing social inclusion through improved access to health facilities. And there were no projects that proposed health indicators specifically among the poor; and we can safely assume no health indicators among poor women either!

Fortunately the new World Bank Transport Business Strategy offers hope on the horizon, especially in the context of the wider World Bank-adopted Gender Action Plan titled *Gender Equality as Smart Economics* (2006-2010). In the latter there are specific gender and transport objectives combined with actions that need to be followed closely both internally and externally. The fact that the transport sector is now part of the Sustainable Development Vice Presidency within the Bank is a step in the right direction as they are responsible for ‘*enhancing access of women and vulnerable groups to infrastructure services so that they are able to benefit equitably from those investments.*’ In the new Transport Business Strategy, anchored in the MDG context, there is specific reference to transport for health and for education, the need for transport services in addition to road building and maintenance, renewed

focus on linking rural transport and roads to increased agricultural outputs, inclusion of gender and disability into transport, focus on non-motorised means of transport and their potential impact on poverty reduction.

As is the case with all strategies, however, the proof is in the implementation. I would therefore like to dedicate the last part of my response to sharing ideas on how this can be done and how we, as civil society organisations, can help the World Bank to make this ambitious Strategy a reality. Most of the recommendations I will mention are taken from the 2003 studies on Integrating Gender into World Bank-financed transport programs and from a round table organised at the Bank in 2007 to brainstorm taking the gender and transport agenda forward. We recommend:

- Setting specific targets and benchmarks for an optimal transport lending portfolio that strikes an effective balance between roads, local infrastructure and services. The reality is that thus far in rural transport and infrastructure 90% of the annual 1 billion U\$\$ is spent on roads with the remainder spent on a combination of capacity building and services. Without specific targets for each strategic objective the World Bank runs the risk of continuing business as usual.
- Ensuring that gender is an integrated component in the whole lifecycle of the project and not simply an add-on. This means from identification, preparation and design, appraisal (which includes gender-disaggregated analysis) to implementation and supervision and monitoring and evaluation, the needs of women and vulnerable groups are considered as equally valid and valued.
- 'Retrofitting' gender into existing programmes as well as setting up a system of gender auditing which would be carried out at project, client as well as World Bank level to ensure gender is mainstreamed throughout. Civil society organisations in country, as well as international networks such as GATNET, could help to establish the internal and external monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that we need to ensure gender is mainstreamed.
- Including dedicated social scientists with gender and transport expertise in transport teams and give them an equal voice.
- Developing a gender and transport learning agenda for both social scientists as well as the transport sector (including the task managers at country office level), for the World Bank as well as its clients. This should include sound practices and knowledge sharing. Again networks such as GATNET, IFRTD and gTKP could be very helpful in disseminating information such as the Gender Resource Guide.

These are just a few recommendations for implementation and I hope the World Bank follows them up. We are here to help as we need to make sure that, to use the World Bank's own words, '*transport is not just about roads; [but] is about development for people with different needs!* Or as I learned this week from the disability sector and which I think is equally applicable to gender and transport '*nothing about us, without us!*'

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