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KEY ISSUES IN MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN RURAL TRANSPORT SECTOR IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This paper explored key issues in mainstreaming gender in rural transport sector in Nigeria and also encouraged policy advocates and researchers to address these needs.
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INTRODUCTION

Gender based differential in daily mobility is a well-known phenomenon in both the developed and developing countries. However, the profundity of this phenomenon differs considerably between continents and within countries and regions. A number of reasons have been adduced why transport policies in most developing countries are gender-blind. The primary reason according to Moser (1993) is that most experts involved in transport planning, policy and decision-making often lack the requisite planning and methodological tools with regard to Gender planning and development. This is applicable to transport planning field as well. Secondly, the theme of daily mobility has never been made an integral part of policy and programmes targeting development interventions in the developing countries. Besides, during programme assessment, gendered distribution of benefits or the impact of social-reproductive works on these development interventions were often overlooked (Venter *et al.* 2006).

In recognition of these issues, gender mainstreaming has recently emerged as an objective in transport planning, policy and decision-making processes. This is with a view to improving gendered travel patterns and working towards eliminating inequalities. Gender mainstreaming is all about a reappraisal of current practices and implementation of inclusive planning and policy mechanism for allocation of gender roles, responsibilities and benefits (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

Transport, with its two key dimensions of access and mobility is primarily seen as a key indicator of economic growth. This is because it facilitates productive exchanges of people, goods and services. It is the backbone of the economy because it connects all sectors of the economy. The benefits of a standard transportation system cannot be over emphasized because it leads to increased productivity, growth, stability and social interaction. Transportation should be accessible, safe, affordable and designed with gender sensitivity. Unfortunately in developing countries especially in rural areas, 1 billion poor people lack

access to basic all weather roads and about 70% of 1.3 billion people living in poverty worldwide are women (World Bank, 2010).

Transport in the rural areas relates principally to basic needs and is carried out mostly on foot or with the aid of intermediate means of transport (Tamene and Megento, 2017). Existing transport systems are not adequately geared towards the needs of women; making it unfortunate since transport plays a vital role in most women's daily routines which ranges from domestic work, health care, farm, market and education amongst others. According to FAO (2010) gender gaps in access to rural transport infrastructure appears considerable in sub-Saharan Africa where agriculture is the main source of livelihoods than in other regions. Reducing this gender gap is thus, a priority for improving women's access to basic resources in agriculture-based countries.

Rural Transportation

In order to define rural transport, we must first attempt to define rurality. Rurality is a vague concept. Establishing a common definition of rurality presents many challenges. This is partly because the use of the term "rural", is not restricted to one particular discipline rather it transverses various disciplines (sociology, agriculture, economics, population studies, geography, ethnography, statistics, history, political science, architecture, etc.) and all have their own definition of the concept according to their own peculiar perspectives. However, public agencies and researchers have used combinations of measures such as population density, number and size as basis to designate geographic areas as "rural." As Omeire (2015) indicates rural communities are those areas characterized by closeness to nature, prevalence of ascribed status, traditionalism, relatively lower standard of living and absence of social infrastructures like potable water, good roads, quality health centres . Other features of rurality include poor access to productive assets, close bonding, solidarity and fervent social interaction.

In Nigeria, rural communities are defined as settlements with less than 20,000 inhabitants that are majorly engaged in primary production (Aderamo, *et al* 2010) Rural transportation system is a transport system that serves those in areas identified as rural. Rural transport is one significant element of a broader concept of rural development. Rural transportation must facilitate accessibility, mobility and higher quality of life for rural dwellers. The rural areas are indubitably the growth engine of a nation.It facilitates access to markets, labour and raw materials. In addition to these contribution to rural development, rural transport plays a decisive role in economic development by widening access to health, food supply, education, employment opportunities, improving the exchange of information, and supporting citizen participation in national progress. Transport can also be a game changer in increasingly empowering women and promoting gender equality.

Importance of Gender Mainstreaming in Rural Transportation

Generally speaking, transport infrastructure is not gender neutral. Gender based differentials in mobility is widespread across the globe. However, the gravity varies considerably, given that most research studies have focused on the developed world and there is paucity of gender segregated research on mobility in developing countries. (Peters 2001). The different tasks and roles women and men perform in the society means that women and men have divergent transport needs and are impacted unevenly by transport infrastructures and interventions. In rural areas, women, who bear heavy burden of both productive and reproductive duties in the societies, often have higher demands on their time than men. Most

times when roads are built in rural areas,it is mostly for motorized transport, rural women who largely travel on foot do not benefit from such intervention.

Women spend more time than men in rural transportation activities, according to studies. Time spent on transportation activities accounts for a sizable component of a woman's working day, particularly in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, where women work 12-13 hours more each week than males(ILO, 2018)According to a study conducted in Mozambique, women spend seven hours per day on transportation tasks, with 3-4 hours spent moving agricultural produce and materials and 3-6 hours spent transporting firewood and water for the home (Hook, 1994). The imbalance in the distribution of the transport burden limits time and energy available for women for economic activities thereby adversely affecting their livelihood asset and standard of living.

Furthermore, the heavy head loads borne by rural women during farm activity, firewood collection or marketing activities also take their toll on their health and on the health of their infants. It is documented that in rural Africa, women transport at least three times more ton-kilometers per year than men (UNEP 2016).

Peters (2001) posits that gender mainstreaming came up as an objective in transport planning, policy and decision-making in order to better account for gendered travel patterns and work towards eliminating inequalities. Without accounting for these differences, the overall design of our public transport facilities is likely to be inappropriate or even inadequate for the physical needs of women.

Nigeria's Transportation Infrastructure

According to the Gender Gap Report (2017) many empirical research have demonstrated that attaining gender balance could result in substantial economic gains. In this regard, the transportation sector is crucial. Nigeria's transportation infrastructure is made up of a combination of Federal, State, and Local Government roads totaling roughly 195,000 kilometers.

The Federal trunk highways are the system's key vectors, with a total length of 32,100 km (16%), the majority of which is paved. State highways cover 30,900 kilometers (16%) of the total road network, whereas local government roads span over 132,000 kilometers (68 percent). There are about 60,000 km of paved highways, 3,775 km of railways, three international and 78 domestic airports, and 13 sea and river ports among the 195,000 km of highways(Adedeji et al, 2014).

Roads are the primary means of transportation in the country, carrying more than 90% of cargo and passenger traffic . The majority of Nigeria's road system consists of rural roads. Considering the role of rural transportation, the government released a policy framework in 2004 called the "National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy" (NEEDS). Interventions in rural infrastructure, health, housing, and employment are all part of the development plan. Its two main goals are to improve transportation infrastructure and to encourage agricultural development. The construction and management of road infrastructure to improve accessibility and enable the transfer of agricultural goods is the emphasis of the road sub-sector. The "State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy" (SEEDS) was prepared at the state level as a follow-up to the NEEDS. The Federal Government also developed a National Policy on Rural Travel and Transport (NPRTT)

through the Rural Travel and Transport Programme (RTTP). The goal of this programme is to improve rural access and mobility (Adedeji *et al*.2014).

Key Issues in Mainstreaming Gender in Rural Transport Sector in Nigeria

This section will examine some of the key issues to consider in mainstreaming gender in rural transportation in Nigeria.

Transport policy and development

In order to successfully mainstream gender in rural transportation in Nigeria, there is need for gender-based policy analysis so as to ascertain the effect of rural transport policy on people and look at how this impact could vary for women and men, given gender differences and inequalities. Gender-based policy analysis starts with an analysis of the basic household mobility needs. In Nigeria there have been several efforts by successive governments aimed at improving rural transportation and rural development but the most ambitious was the establishment of Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) by the Ibrahim Babangida military regime in 1985.

Government reports revealed that 60, 000km of rural feeder roads were either constructed or rehabilitated under the first phase programme completed in 1987. In 1990, a total of 30,724.34km of rural feeder roads were completed, in 1991 another 55,576.24km of rural roads were constructed and in 1992, a total of 85,592.82km of rural feeder roads were completed (Oluseyi, 2017).

However, in all these laudable blueprints, rural women's peculiar transport needs were not mentioned nor addressed. In Nigeria, infrastructure planning and interventions are always skewed to mainly gratify the needs of the car- or motorcycle-driving, mainly male majority. Inadequate planning and disproportionate provision of transport infrastructure in rural areas across Nigeria is one of the contributory factors for high incidence of poverty among rural women in the country. A gendered policy planning will not only promote more informed policy options and outcomes, it will also encourage decision-makers to look for ways to bridge gender gaps.

To achieve gender parity, we need to change this by focusing on planning interventions that frankly target the particular transport needs of rural women in Nigeria. Efficient procedures should be put in place to give women a greater role in the rural planning and management of transport projects.

Gender perspectives in statistics

Measuring who is included in and excluded in rural transportation is a key consideration in mainstreaming gender. Data provides essential information for policymakers, international institutions and others which is needed to set priorities, design programmes, and guide policy. Given the importance of data in planning, it follows that mainstreaming of gender perspectives in statistics is essential. Mainstreaming gender in data collection and analysis means that all data are produced and analyzed taking cognizance of gender roles and gender dissimilarity in society. Disaggregation of data by sex is one way of achieving this. From a policy maker's standpoint, sex-disaggregated data at a national level is useful because it facilitates effective monitoring of progress made against targets and consecutively encourages smarter policies.

Socio-cultural issues

Another key issue to address in order to mainstreaming gender in rural transport is socio-cultural constraints on travel and access to transport which are found within communities, institutions and legislation. In certain parts of northern Nigeria for instance women and girls' are prohibited from using public transport. Again, fear of sexual harassment limits women's, and girls' use of public transport in most remote villages in Nigeria. In addition, in most rural areas, men generally control household income resulting in control of women's mobility and also use of available transports.

Women Participation in the Transport Sector

Women in most African rural areas have restricted access to transportation services. This lack of transportation limits their access to health, education, and other social facilities and services, putting them and their children at greater risk of serious injury or death during childbirth or other medical emergencie (Samina, Ben and Lisa, 2020).Men dominate the transportation industry, particularly in road construction and maintenance (World Bank, 2010). Women's engagement in the transportation sector is hampered by gender discrepancies in access to education and training. Lack of access to financing and other services, such as renting or purchasing equipment and vehicles, is also a barrier. Women should be encouraged to participate in transportation workforce. Promoting women participation in transport sector and allied enterprises will help to address this issue.

Institutional Capacity Building

Women are unduly underrepresented in government, particularly at high level decision making positions where issues affecting them are discussed. The shortage of a critical mass of women in positions that influence policy and programme design lead to top-down decision-making and implementation that ignore women perspectives and needs. There is urgent need to deliberately promote capacity building within the government agencies and ensuring that more women are employed in the transport sector to the same extent as men.

CONCLUSION

Rural transport infrastructure and services are vital to the sustainable rural development. Although multiple factors can hamper rural development, unequal access in transport has long been considered a particularly important impediment to agricul-tural growth and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa (Engel, O'Neill & Regmi, 2017) Women are a driving force in sustainable rural development, both in economic and cultural terms. They make enormous contributions to agriculture and development of the rural sector (though their efforts are often discounted). While it is important that gender issues are integrated into rural transport strategies, it is also important that these strategies must address aforementioned key issues. In order to effectively mainstream gender in rural transportation in Nigeria, policy makers must consciously consider gender equally throughout policy/project design, implementation, and results monitoring.

New legislation must be enacted and old laws that impeded women participation in the transport sector must repealed to ensure the creation of a level play ground for women entrepreneurs when they compete against big companies, most of which are owned by men.
Furthermore, there is urgent need to continually create awareness, challenge gender stereotypes and eliminate cultural barriers which militate against the emergence of all inclusive rural transport system in Nigeria.

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