Wikigender online discussion: summary

Paving the way to gender equality:
gender perspectives for inclusive urban mobility
15 - 19 August 2016

Context

Cities can be places of new and expanded opportunities facilitating individuals' access to resources. However, a growing body of literature shows that women and men are not able to seize these opportunities equally due to obstacles hindering their mobility in urban spaces. Gender-blind transportation systems as well as fear of harassment and violence determine how and when women and girls move throughout urban communities. Women's underrepresentation in the transportation sector and in decision-making bodies perpetuates gender-blind urban design and planning. Thus, the promise of cities as conducive environments for women's and girls' empowerment remains unfulfilled blocking their equal access to education and employment opportunities and curtailing their rights to fully participate in the public sphere.

From 15 to 19 August, Wikigender organised an online discussion on the theme, "Paving the way to gender equality: gender perspectives for inclusive urban mobility", with UN-Habitat, Women in Cities International (WICI), and the OECD Development Centre. The conversation attracted visitors from more than 27 different countries and brought together experts from the International Center for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC), the FIA Foundation and Safetipin, among others. The discussion aimed to contribute to ongoing debates on gender and urban mobility and identify "what works" in this field.

Three main themes emerged from the debate: participants shared their experiences and knowledge of gendered patterns of transport and women's safety in urban transportation, while also shedding light on the data gaps restraining the analysis of urban women's mobility.

1. Understanding how women's and girls' navigate urban environments

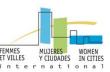As Kathryn Travers from WICI noted, public transportation is rarely adapted to gendered patterns of mobility. Participants referenced studies which have found that women are more likely than men to travel off-peak hours, with children, or link multiple trips for household-related duties (cf Key resources). As a result, women experience greater transportation costs and time constraints. Research has also shown that women are more likely to use slower and less expensive transportation options: for instance in developing countries, they are more likely to have to walk long distances trips instead of taking a car or bus.

> "When we understand that women's household responsibilities mean that she is taking several consecutive single bus trips as part of "trip-chaining", then we have a deeper understanding of how women move, when, and why"
>
> Kathryn Travers, WICI

The discussion highlighted the need for more dialogue around the potential role of the information and communications technology sector (ICT) in correcting gender inequalities and facilitating women's mobility. For instance, Kathryn Travers mentioned the idea of using ICTs as accountability and monitoring mechanisms to generate updated data on safety.

2. Women's and girls' security and their perceptions of fear when traveling in urban settings

Participants in the discussion agreed that public transportation must be perceived by women and girls as secure to ensure their equal access. However as participants noted, research has shown that sexual harassment towards women is a persistent issue on urban transport in both developing and developed countries. Céline Monnier from ICPC shared the results of a study by the French Ministry of Sustainable Development which found that only 48% of French women report always feeling safe in public transport, in comparison with 62% of men (MEDD, 2015). These safety issues strongly influence women and girls' travel patterns: as Hilary Murphy stated, fear is a "major contributing factor to how women and girls negotiate and make trade-offs regarding their commute".

> "Perceptions of safety are a major contributing factor to how women and girls negotiate and make trade-offs regarding their commute"
>
> Hilary Murphy, UN-Habitat

Kalpana Viswanath from Safetipin argued that one of the key factors restricting women's mobility is the lack of good last-mile connectivity. She pointed out that making sure public transportation is safe for women is not enough if the road to go from one's home to the nearest subway station or bus stop is not perceived as safe. Public policy must therefore focus on transforming cities as a whole into safe environments.

Women-only spaces in urban transportation were evoked as a possible solution to respond to women's and girls' safety concerns. Participants cited examples of several municipalities that have introduced such spaces, including Tokyo, Mexico and Cairo. However, they stressed that these should be seen as a temporary solution to protect women, as other measures are needed to address the underlying causes of their insecurity.
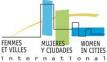
> "An awareness-raising campaign within schools and communities to teach everyone, both men and women, to be alert and support women in transport could add great value"
>
> Keiko Nowacka, OECD Development Centre

Multiple participants put forward the idea that urban planning efforts must go hand in hand with a social norms approach. This includes initiatives that encourage bystanders not to be passive when they witness sexual harassment. They also discussed how to engage men and boys in the debate: Kathryn Travers from WICI recalled that gender-sensitive training of male drivers and transit authorities has produced positive results (See *Tools and initiatives shared* below).

3. Difficulties in measuring women's and girls' urban mobility

There remain numerous data gaps in the area of urban mobility due in part to the difficulty of measuring gender-based crime and perceptions of safety. Céline Monnier from ICPC reminded the discussion that women and men do not experience crime or the fear of crime in public transport the same way, making sex-disaggregated data in this area a necessity. However, she pointed out that the data on crime in public transportation is often of poor quality, mainly because surveys lack a clear definition of what can constitute a crime such as sexist comments or verbal harassment. Heather Allen, from the FIA Foundation, added that women tend not to report when they are victims of crimes or incidents in public settings, either due to lack of time, feelings of personal guilt, and/or low confidence in the authorities' ability to deal with the matter.

> "It is crucial that, when discussing how crime affects women in public transport, we do not only consider crime statistics, but also how their behaviours are modified because of fear of crime"
>
> Céline Monnier, ICPC

Despite these difficulties, participants described new initiatives to generate relevant data on women's urban mobility for local policymaking. For example, UN Habitat's Safer Cities programme undertakes safety audits to capture women's sense of safety and inform local urban policy. The ICPC is working to generate sex-disaggregated data on crime and perceptions of safety through an array of alternative tools, such as exploratory walks, focus groups and victimisation surveys. New technologies have also facilitated the data collection process: Kalpana Viswanath shared her experience working on Safetipin, a mobile app that collects data about the key parameters that make an urban area safe, according to women and girls.

The next step is ensuring that these new data sources are successfully integrated into local policymaking. Emphasis needs to be placed on informing and convincing policymakers of the necessity to make use of it: as Heather Allen from the FIA foundation points out, "much of the data is there but not used or not accessible as it is not considered to be of interest or use in travel planning".

Moving forward: the SDGs and Habitat III

As mentioned by the participants, this discussion on gender and mobility occurs within a context of strong international momentum to mainstream gender into urban planning. Indeed, the UN Summit on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Habitat III, which took place from 17 to 20 October, offered an important platform for gender advocates and policymakers to push for gender mainstreaming in urban planning. Combined with the 2030 Agenda, with the Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), Habitat III's New Urban Agenda is a global call to action for gender and women's rights actors, urban policymakers, and the development community to pave the way for inclusive urban mobility that "leaves no one behind".

Tools and initiatives shared

Targeting women's safety needs through a female driver service: In Kenya, the mobile app Little Cabs allows users to easily order a cab on their phone. The company recently launched Ladybug, a service specifically targeted to women: after 6pm, Ladybug's female drivers only accept female passengers with the objective of making them feel safer.

Providing transport personnel with gender-sensitive training: In New Delhi, the Manas Foundation provides taxi and bus drivers with training on gender issues, with a focus on sexual harassment. Drivers who have completed the training carry a special sticker on their vehicle to signal their involvement and raise awareness around sexual harassment.
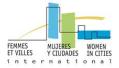
Campaigning to end harassment in public spaces: Hollaback! is a non-profit that works to raise awareness on harassment in public spaces. In 2014, Hollaback! partnered with Cornell University to conduct a multi-country study of street harassment, which provided key insights into the scale of this phenomenon. With over 16,600 respondents overall, this survey constitutes the largest analysis of street harassment to date. The results showed that in the 22 countries studied, over 50% of women reported being fondled or groped. 71% of respondents also reported being followed.

Promoting gender mainstreaming in infrastructure projects: In Kazakhstan, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) worked with Almaty's public transport operator to develop strategies encouraging women to become bus drivers: for instance, facilities for women were improved, and new job ads clearly stated that females were invited to apply. The programme resulted in the hiring of the first-ever female bus driver.

Promoting the representation of women in the transport sector: In India, "Women on Wheels" provides poor women with training to become taxi drivers, a profession in which females are still under-represented. The programme aims to empower women drivers while making passengers feel safer.

Key resources

- Women and the City (ActionAid, 2011)
- Planning and design for sustainable urban mobility (UN-Habitat, 2013)
- Poverty and Sustainable Transport (UN Habitat , 2014)
- Sustainable Mobility in African Cities (UN Habitat, 2011)
- Violence against women and girls resource guide: transport brief (World Bank Group, The Global Women's Institute, Inter-American Development Bank and International Center for Research on Women, 2015)
- Gender and Transport (International Transport Forum, 2011)
- The Safer cities programme (UN-Habitat)
- Adolescent Girls' Views of Safety in the City (Plan International, WICI and UN Habitat)
- Tackling Gender Exclusion (WICI)
- Smart choices for cities Gender equality and mobility: mind the gap! Policy note (Civitas, 2014)
- The Safe and Sound report: international research on women's personal safety on public transport (Fia Foundation, 2016)
- Fact Sheet: Women's mobility and personal security (Fia Foundation, 2016)
- Gender Tool Kit: Transport. Maximizing the Benefits of Improved mobility for all (Asian Development Bank, 2013)
- Promoting Safe and Secure Movement and Mobility of Women in Dhaka, Bangladesh: ADB's Bus Rapid Transit Project (Asian Development Bank, 2014)
- Gender and Sustainable Urban Mobility: Thematic study prepared for Global Report on Human Settlements 2013 (Deike Peters, 2013)
- Gender and Transport Resource Guide (World Bank, 2006)
- The Challenges in Addressing Gender Dimensions of Transport in Developing Countries: Lessons from World Bank Projects (Riverson, J., M. Kunieda P. Roberts, N. Lewi and W. Walker 2006)
- Gender and Urban Transport. Sustainable Transport: A Sourcebook for Policy Makers in Developing Cities (Kunieda, M A. Gauthier 2007)
- More dangerous transport systems for women (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2014)
- Safe Mobility for Women - Case of Guwahati (Mahadevia, Darshini, 2016)
- International Survey on Street Harassment (Hollaback! and Cornell University, 2014)
- Les violences faites aux femmes dans les transports collectifs terrestres (Ministère de l'Écologie, du Développement Durable et de l'Énergie, 2015)