

Gender, Transport, and Mobility: Investigation results and CODATU's position



Source: Chang Hsien, 2016

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On March 8th, 2021, on the International Women’s Day, one could observe a high number of initiatives from private companies and stakeholders of the transport and mobility sector about gender equality. Whether it was communication about professional equality index by the sector’s companies, projects promoting a broader access for women to mobility job or projects aiming for women safety during trips on urban transport networks, examples were numerous.

Nowadays, it seems that the topic of “gender” became unavoidable and appears as a secondary component in most calls for proposals launched by the main international donors (World Bank, French Development Agency) and cooperation agencies (AECID, GIZ).

What does gender mean?

According to Sagon, we can define gender as follows: “Gender, which refers to social relations between sexes, can be defined as a system of hierarchical bicategorization between men and women, and values and representations associated¹”.

If the term “sex” means biological differences between women and men, this of “gender” refers to the roles and characteristics attributed to men and women by social norms, following their biological differences. The gender approach helps to understand that inequalities between women and men are a social construct produced by each society’s norms. This term helps questioning and deconstructing stereotypes attributed to women and men and to fight inequalities and discriminations.

Gender mainstreaming is more and more used by international donors and by organizations working in the field of international cooperation.

“Gender mainstreaming, term elaborated by the European Union and Development Aid experts, aims to overcome these adjustments to existing systems in order to review the rules of the game and change systems of reproduction induced by structures and tools already in place.²”

At CODATU, we believe that there are three main challenges in links between transport, mobility and gender:

- **The struggle against gender violence:** meaning sexual and sexist violence defined as “Any act committed against a person’s will and based on the different roles that society assigns to men and women and on unequal power relations. It can be physical, emotional, psychosocial and sexual in nature and can also be expressed through the deprivation of resources or access to services.³” Applied to the field of transport and mobility, they are all types of violence that can happen during people’s trips, mostly aiming for women and gender. This gender violence is particularly important for women in public transports (In the Greater Paris, 100% of public transport female users faced at least once in their life sexual or sexist harassment, in more

¹ Sagon, E. 2012. “La coopération décentralisée : un levier pour la réduction des inégalités entre les femmes et les hommes.”

² Cornet, A. “Approche intégrée du genre dans l’élaboration des politiques socio-économiques » Regards croisés sur l’économie, 2014/2, n°15, p52 à 68

³ <https://www.morbihan.gouv.fr/Politiques-publiques/Droits-des-femmes-et-egalite-entre-les-femmes-et-les-hommes/Violences-sexuelles-et-sexistes/Typologie-des-violences>



than 50% of cases, the first assault occurred before the age of 18⁴). Gender violence is also present in various professional environments and the field of transport and mobility is one of them. It is therefore important to highlight actions that try to prevent this type of action in a professional framework, as well as actions that are implemented in case of sexual assaults or harassment.

- **The sector and its jobs’ feminization:** the sector of transport and mobility is traditionally considered as a sector with few women. Inside, women mostly have administrative and desk functions but are not really represented into the most operational jobs, specifically driving, building and maintenance of high-capacity vehicles (in Bogota, they represent only 1,5% of bus drivers⁵). There is a disparity as soon as we go up in the hierarchical positions. One of the main challenges of this axis is to ensure an equality of access between men and women to the different jobs and functions of this sector, as well as an equality of career evolution. This goes with ensuring access to different training and university career, and by women recruitment policies to jobs that are traditionally considered for male (specifically drivers and maintenance services). It is close to the first axis as it is necessary to ensure a professional environment free from sexual and sexist violence.
- **The supply of transport systems adapted to women’s mobility:** for dozens of years now, research contributed to demonstrate that men and women move differently (Hanson 2010, Levy, 2013, Gutierrez et Reyes 2017, Segovia et al. 2002, Tobio 1995) and that until now, transport systems developed in most urban territories of the world favored the mobility of men over women (by favoring public transport lines that rapidly join the urban centers to residential areas and not by favoring proximity trips for example). We know that women make trips that are more complex, that they are more often carrying children or heavy loads, etc. (Coutras, 1993, Segovia, 2002). We also know that women use more vulnerable modes such as walking instead of personal vehicles and are more victims than perpetrators of road accidents than men⁶. Therefore, we aim to identify initiatives and measures that aim for improving women’s access to mobility in all of its shapes and consider their mobility pattern.

Results of CODATU’s investigation: a growing interest for the topic but with still limited resources

Until now, CODATU had only published a few articles on the matter⁷, but nowadays the association is seeking to understand how its ecosystem considers this topic and how does it materialize. To this end, CODATU conducted a survey with its members and partners in order to understand what their position

⁴ Haut Conseil à l’Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes, « Avis relatif au harcèlement sexiste et aux violences sexuelles dans les transports en commun : pour un Plan national d’action », 2015

⁵ Moscoso, M., Ome, L., Rincón, M., Aguirre, K., Sánchez, C., Lleras, N., & Patiño, M. (2021). Género y movilidad activa: Acciones para no dejar a nadie atrás en Colombia. GIZ Colombia & Despacio.org. <https://www.despacio.org/portfolio/género-y-movilidad-activa/>

⁶ Moscoso, M., Ome, L., Rincón, M., Aguirre, K., Sánchez, C., Lleras, N., & Patiño, M. (2021). Género y movilidad activa: Acciones para no dejar a nadie atrás en Colombia. GIZ Colombia & Despacio.org. <https://www.despacio.org/portfolio/género-y-movilidad-activa/>

⁷These publications appear in the bibliography at the end of this article.



was. We also wanted to identify projects and initiatives carried out by our members and partners to highlight them. All of this is part of CODATU’s long tradition of promoting the exchange of good practices between countries of the North and of the South.

We have then developed and released a questionnaire to our network, made up of members of the different colleges of CODATU and its main partners. We also conducted interviews to deepen our knowledge of initiatives that seemed particularly impressive. This investigation does not seek to give a precise overview of the whole international cooperation sector in the field of transport but aims at presenting some key trends.

A plurality of interested stakeholders

Respondents were mostly from Europe, Africa, and Latin America, which are the regions where CODATU has currently most projects and partners in. In the following table, we can observe that organizations which answered us are of diverse nature and represent the diversity of partners we work with. This allowed us to better understand what each type of actor achieves regarding the challenges of gender and what are their possibilities of action.

Type of organization	Geographical area		
	North	South	Total
Association	2		2
Local Authority/ Transport authority	1	4	5
Donors	2		2
Engineering office / Consultants	7		7
Operator	1	2	3
National Department of Transport		1	1
University / Research Center	4	4	8
Total	17	11	28

Distribution of responding organizations by type and geographical area (Source: CODATU)

We could observe that among the respondents, gender was of interest for the public sector as well as the private and research. Investigated organizations are interested about it for the transport projects they take part in but also in their internal policies.



Role of donors and cooperation agencies

Among the investigation’s results, we could confirm the shared interest by the majority of donors and international cooperation agencies about gender. Which means that, in the future, more and more calls for proposals will have gender-specific terms and that there is a need to consider the subject in order to align with the donors’ strategies. They played and still do play a major role in the dissemination of gender mainstreaming and are strategic partners for those who wish to carry out with this type of approach in their transport projects.

An often slow but sometimes innovative progress of authorities on the ground

There is an effort carried out by national and sometimes local authorities to take into account gender issues, even if these authorities are often large structures plagued by a certain inertia to change. We could identify certain local authorities which have their own entities specialized on gender topics, not only about transport. This is the case of the *Secretaria de la Mujer, Equidad de Género y Diversidad Sexual* (Secretariat for Women, Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity) in the Valle del Cauca, Colombia. Some also changed their legal framework, such as the city of Bogota whose Secretariat of Mobility adopted a Sectoral Plan of Gender Transversality⁸.

Research centers have been working on the topic for a long time and now want to get involved

Universities and research centers have been developing work about gender issues in mobility and transport for the last decades, even if we can observe a scale up of the number of works since the end of the 90’s and the beginning of the 2000’s. They wish to be more associated to operational projects, in order to bring initiatives their knowledge, to avoid identified mistakes and to bring change more rapidly. Some professional and university trainings are emerging about gender, but there is not, to our knowledge, any specific university career linking gender to transport and mobility. Even though we can see a growing interest about gender issues in mobility, we can observe that in the studied research centers, in matter of internal policies, there is little mention of gender issues.

Thanks to this investigation, we could observe that there was a tendency towards a better knowledge of gender issues. 70% of the respondents consider that gender is better taken into account in their organization whether it is in internal policies or in the realization of their projects. Inside transport projects, gender is mentioned in a very punctual and limited way, even if we observe a growing interest.

There are some organizations or individuals that did not consider the gender mainstreaming as a priority or even as a pertinent action. They mostly oppose the fact of creating populations categories which should be favored at the expense of others.

⁸ District Secretariat of Mobility, Resolution 325 of 2015.

<https://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=61679>



Generally limited resources

Generally, gender mainstreaming costs, whether it is in terms of investment budget and or working time. As it is a topic that can seem secondary or optional, organizations don’t dedicate an important part of their budget. The limited resources are the main obstacle of organizations or teams which would want to develop projects considering gender issues. Indeed, respondents indicated that lack of budget is one of the main reasons why they can’t develop gender-related projects. Very few have dedicated budgets (50% never had any, and 40% sometime have some) and when they do, it represents less than 20% of the total project budget.

Beyond a lack of financial resources to dedicate to this subject, organizations which answered the survey also lack sufficient human resources and knowledge about gender issues in International Cooperation and Transport. Several of them do not know how to work on the topic and wish to be supported in order to better answer the challenges. Therefore, there is a need for training for professionals for them to better integrate gender issues in their projects and their professional life.

Notable initiatives

Women moving the city – Scania: Training female bus drivers in Ghana

In 2016, in order to obtain new market opportunities for its trucks and buses, the West-African branch of Scania launched a training program for drivers and mechanics in Ghana (the West African Transport Academy, WATA) in collaboration with the GIZ. For its involvement, GIZ required that the project facilitate women’s access to jobs that are traditionally more “men’s jobs”. Despite some initial reluctance by some of the partners, the project was carried out and women were recruited for the training program. Registrations were more numerous than expected and 60 women completed the training that year. By studying the driving capacities of the trained women, instigators of the project observed that women had a more fuel-efficient driving style, a lower accident rate and less wear and tear on the equipment. This program allowed Scania to develop its activities in West Africa by offering an all-inclusive service to transport authorities it works with, by supplying them buses and also a training center for drivers and mechanics.

The Ghanaian training center created in 2016 is still operating and 10% of the trainees are females. Women are mostly trained to become drivers even if there are a few that become mechanics.

This example is quite innovating, coming from a company, by constituting a new service as well as considering women’s access to jobs that are traditionally not opened to them.



Investigation about women’s mobility in African cities – Transitec: a new look at household travel surveys⁹

Transitec launched during the year 2021 an investigation on women’s mobility in five African cities (Yaoundé, Dakar, Sousse, Tangier and Casablanca) gather data from previous investigation they conducted, mainly household travel surveys.

The first results confirmed that women are less mobile, by approximately 30%, than men. They also show that women have different mobility practices, such as higher share of trips made by foot and a lower motorization rate. Even if numbers vary according to the different cities, we can find some common trends.

Thanks to this investigation, the consulting firm found that the household travel surveys they used to carry were not adapted to make a precise analysis, data are generally not disaggregated by gender. One of the main findings was that there is need to review how questions are asked to better observe gender disparities. For example, there are few questions on walking habits, favored by women. There is no question about the duration of the trip, the distance with public transport stop, or who is managing the household’s transport budget.

Accessing gender data is one of the main challenges of mainstreaming gender in transport policies, even if the way women move is increasingly documented, there is a necessity to obtain more precise and localized data in order to create transport systems which are the most inclusive as possible.

Safety audits – SYTRAL: valuing and considering the experience of users

The project of SYTRAL, Mobility Organizing Authority of Lyon (France), aims to identify gender-related issues and is part of a broader security strategy. This strategy involves different institutional levels and gathers a total of 16 signatories (namely the prefect, the prosecutor, the President of SYTRAL, the General Director of Keolis Lyon¹⁰, the President of Greater Lyon, etc.). It includes a component to fight against violence against women through the tool of safety audits. Called “Marches exploratoires” in French, it is an action of volunteer groups, particularly women, that walk through an identified sector in order to identify spaces generating insecurity.

SYTRAL’s safety audits started in 2015 and are carried out on the long term on several of the network’s lines with groups of ambassadors, which include between five and eight women from different social categories and ages. Lines are selected because they’re the ones with the lowest sense of safety and the highest numbers of incivility incidents according to the network’s surveys. The audits’ process lasts around six months and demands important time investment for the ambassadors, approximately 40 hours on these six months. Once this work is completed, ambassadors present their results to representants from Keolis, SYTRAL, concerned municipalities, the Greater Lyon, as well as the Prefect or State representants. A few months later, experts propose line-specific solutions. There are several possible solutions: works on the path leading to the transport line or on the surroundings of the

⁹ <https://transitec.net/fr/actualites/item/11054-la-mobilite-des-femmes-dans-les-villes-africaines-comment-expliquer-les-inegalites-dacces.html>

¹⁰ Keolis Lyon is the operator of public transports in Lyon.

stations, advocacy against sexist and sexual harassment (such as specific training for Keolis’ employees), bus descent on demand after 10pm, etc.

One of the main ideas behind the safety audits systematized by SYTRAL is to value women’s experiences and perceptions. Experts from the transport authority or the operator are not the only ones with knowledge about safety and security. An awareness campaign against harassment was carried out in the transport network in 2017. This example shows how a French transport authority can act as a pioneer to reduce sexist and sexual violence towards women, as well as improving comfort and efficiency of its transport network. In this process, integrating a wide range of stakeholders is key.

CODATU’s position: disseminating good practices and supporting projects on gender, transport, and mobility

This small survey made us aware of the variety of initiatives towards gender mainstreaming and women’s participation to transport projects in both Northern and Southern cities and countries. Outside of our members and partners, there are also numerous initiatives on the subject and numerous mobilized stakeholders: from female operated and designed transport mode to Gender Action Plan, women’s mobility studies, apps to report harassment suffered by women, bike trainings for women, etc. These actions help making transport and mobility systems more accessible and welcoming for women but also contribute to make them more accessible and welcoming for all.

For mobility and transport stakeholders, there are more and more opportunities to get involved in such projects, that we can primarily observe by the importance given to this topic by the main donors. However, we can note that even if there is a will to get involved, oftentimes stakeholders lack internal resources to make projects a reality. We also see that these initiatives are developed as much in cities of the North than in cities of the South.

We identified among our partners a real need to be supported on gender-mainstreaming awareness and in formalizing gender-based actions. 80% of the respondents are interested in CODATU to disseminate best practices and wish to develop their activities on the matter.

CODATU aims to become a focal point to gather and disseminate best practices linking gender, transport, mobility, and international cooperation. Our association has the ambition to raise awareness and support its partners who would want to on this subject through workshops, forums, trainings, publications as well as operational projects. It seems very important to enhance South to South and South to North exchanges that we can anticipate as very fruitful, as well as associating research and operational projects to promote the success of the actions on the ground.

If you have a project related to gender, transport and mobility that you wish to share and/or you want to work with CODATU to set up a project, you can contact Lucile Boudet lboudet@codatu.org or Noémi Mené nmene@codatu.org.



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CODATU’s productions (In French):

- Three articles from MobiliseYourCity about Gender and Transport made with the contribution of AFD
 - o <http://www.codatu.org/actualites/genre-et-mobilite-1-3-acteurs-bonnes-pratiques-et-projets-pilotes-a-linternational/>
 - o <http://www.codatu.org/actualites/genre-et-mobilite-2-3-acteurs-bonnes-pratiques-et-projets-pilotes-en-france/>
 - o <http://www.codatu.org/actualites/genre-et-mobilite-3-3-ressources/>
- « Mobilité urbaine et genre en Tunisie, quelle place pour la femme dans le transport ? », 2017 <http://www.codatu.org/actualites/mobilite-urbaine-et-genre-en-tunisie-quelle-place-pour-la-femme-dans-le-transport-en-2017/>
- « Harcèlement sexuel en Egypte : quelles solutions au niveau des transports ? » <http://www.codatu.org/publications/harcelement-sexuel-en-egypte-quelle-adaptation-au-niveau-des-transports-publics/>

