UNDERSTANDING GENDERED TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND CHALLENGES FROM A FCS LENS

Preview of an IFC research study on the demand for gender-segregated transport in Afghanistan

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**Why?**

Unique data set collected from women and men in the Fragile and Conflict States (FCS) context.

Afghanistan has the sixth lowest women's employment rate globally (ILOSTAT, 2018).

IFC research found that gender-sensitive transport in Afghanistan can increase access to higher education and vocational courses in the medium term, potentially supporting greater participation of women in the workforce.

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**How?**

1. **Literature Review**
   - 7 types of literature reviewed including reviews of women-only transportation initiatives, newspaper articles, scholarly reports, policy documents etc.

2. **Quantitative Data**
   - Surveys with over 2,000 Afghan women.

3. **Qualitative Data**
   - 12 focus group discussions with men and women.
   - 47 key informant interviews with government officials and representatives from the private sector.

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**What?**

This IFC study identifies a business case linking transportation with the social and economic mobility of women.

97 percent of women surveyed in Afghanistan were highly supportive of women-only transportation and claimed they would use the option, if made available.

Currently, a woman traveling alone in public transportation in Afghanistan will typically pay double the fare to ride in the only seat that social norms enable her to occupy (due to the norm of travelling with a mahram/male chaperone from the family).
GENDERED MOBILITY BARRIERS

The financial and non-financial costs of travel are significantly higher for women than for men: These account for the greater monetary cost to access socially acceptable transport, and the cost of time spent waiting for vehicles that can accommodate them. A third cost is the sexual harassment that women face.

Afghan women must navigate multiple stakeholders and settings to enable mobility for themselves: The family, community and public spaces (schools, vocational training institutions, workplaces) play a critical role in enabling and/or hindering their mobility.

IFC analysis revealed that there is intersectionality at play for Afghan women’s mobility: The higher the wealth gap, the more varied the safety challenges between different economic groups i.e. wealthier women tend to feel safer while commuting than women from less secure economic circumstances.

It is likely that the mobility barriers faced by women have intensified further due to lockdowns triggered by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Employment vulnerabilities faced by women have also been compounded by increased risks of gender-based violence – already widespread in Afghanistan.

Four Key Gendered Mobility Barriers

1. Socio-cultural barriers
2. Financial constraints
3. Perceived lack of safety
4. Lack of infrastructure for urban public transport
## Opportunities and ‘Pockets of Hope’ in Afghanistan

### Six medium-term key impacts of women-only transportation

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<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Enhance social life and recreation</td>
<td>by enabling access to public spaces and personal contacts</td>
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<td>Create jobs</td>
<td>by increasing the number and types of transportation service providers</td>
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<td>Mitigate the strain</td>
<td>on currently overburdened transport offerings</td>
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<td>Increase women’s presence in public areas, leading to their greater inclusion and normalization</td>
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<td>Increase women’s access to higher education and vocational courses, which can lead to their greater participation in the workforce</td>
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<td>Male relatives would not have to serve as women’s chaperones (mahrams)</td>
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**Opportunities and ‘Pockets of Hope’ in Afghanistan**

1. Our research found that men are also supportive of the provision of women-only transport, provided this occurs under safe conditions. Given the FCS lens, safety is a paramount condition for everyone in Afghanistan.

2. Survey results showed that increased family support and women’s self-confidence could result in higher female labor force participation in Afghanistan.

3. In Herat, taxi services with women drivers is an accepted practice. 88% percent of women said they had seen women driving taxis, and more than half said they would feel safer with a woman driver than a man.

4. In Mazar-i-sharif, women shared a high demand for female drivers and referred to a woman named Sara, the only female taxi driver in Mazar-i-Sharif. Sara was described as a strong role model whom women in the city respect and admire.

5. Other examples of women-friendly transportation were found in Kabul. Online and app-based taxi services, though not specifically made for women, are disproportionally used by them thanks to the security provided by taxi companies. These include BBR Taxi (also known as Buber) and Kaweyan Cabs (also a woman-owned business).
**Private Sector**

- The private sector has the potential to meet most of the transportation demand, but needs government support for better enabling conditions.
- The private sector could invest in minibuses to provide services for women, and increase profitability by designing services to match women’s needs (e.g. safety infrastructure, timings).

**Donor Community**

- Support the delivery of services by the Afghan government on routes which may not be financially feasible for the private sector alone.
- Facilitate access to capital and support capacity-building efforts for entrepreneurs, particularly women entrepreneurs interested in establishing women-run transportation services.
- Explore providing technical assistance and funding opportunities to facilitate cross-sector collaboration.

**Public Sector**

- Facilitate and strengthen commercial viability.
- Develop a regulatory framework for online transportation services.
- Provide a centralized channel for women to report cases of harassment by co-passengers or drivers.
- Bring donors onboard to provide financial support for private-sector efforts and create new mass-transit services.

**Cross-sector collaboration**

- Set up collaboration mechanisms among all the stakeholders involved in regulation and delivery. This could take the form of a public transport committee at the national and at city levels.
"Every day, I stand and wait for a taxi. When they come, they are full; there is no empty seat for me in the vehicle. Sometimes there are empty taxis, but I don’t want to ride in them because I am afraid of [being alone with the taxi driver]"
Female FGD participant, Mazar-i-Sharif

"The streets of Chahar Paya [area in Mazar-i-Sharif] are very good, therefore the cost of traveling on this line is inexpensive. But the streets of Sajadia are terrible, and so the cost of traveling on this line is higher"
Female FGD participant, Mazar-i-Sharif

"When women use taxis, everyone talks about them. They say, “Where does she want to go?” Women are afraid of taxi drivers and they don’t feel secure in taxis"
Female FGD participant, Mazar-i-Sharif

Q: “If there was women-only transport, do you think this would enhance your capacity to travel?”
A: “Oh yes, of course. It would be a great thing. There are some girls who don’t go to school, and that’s because of those mixed Millie buses. So, if there were a segregated bus, those girls would go to school.”
FGD facilitator speaking to a female participant

"My wife wanted to go to the bazaar, but I knew that it was dangerous [on that specific day]. Sometimes there is a rumor that there will be an explosion or a high-profile politician coming here from Kabul, which means that the city will be on high alert and the roads will be shut down. In such cases, I ask her not to go to the bazaar and to postpone it to the next day”
Male FGD participant, Herat