



Keke in Abuja

## **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND SKILLS ACQUISITION WITHIN AFRICA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR: PROMOTING A GENDER AGENDA TOWARDS TRANSITIONS INTO MEANINGFUL WORK**

### **PROGRAMME SUMMARY**

The project "Youth engagement and skills acquisition within Africa's transport sector: promoting a gender agenda towards transitions into meaningful work", supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, commenced in 2019 and sought to broaden our understanding of the challenges faced by women as users of public transport, as well as employees within the public transport sector. The project conducted in-depth participatory research targeting young women of low socio-economic status in peripheral locations in three city regions Abuja, Cape Town and Tunis, to investigate transport-seeking behaviours with a view to developing responsive pilot interventions.

### **OVERVIEW**

Public transport in sub-Saharan Africa provides an essential means for young women to access education and employment opportunities.

However, the sector is highly gendered, and results in limiting access to women both as users, and as workers within the sector. Research reveals frequent discrimination and harassment targeting women, and a lack of influence from women as to how public transport is provided, both of which are constraints to young women's ability to travel.

Abuja, Cape Town, and Tunis were selected based on their differing cultural, socio-economic and political environments. Two research sites in each city region were selected, one site located just within the city boundaries and one site just beyond the city boundaries but that is linked to the city for reasons of employment and daily travel.

### **APPROACH**

The pilot interventions targeting female users focused on addressing the primary concerns of women as revealed by the research, and sought to provide the opportunity for women to input



Okada, Abuja



Bellville Taxi Rank, Cape Town

their concerns as part of an exercise to develop a customer service charter for public transport providers. A user-skills workshop was held at each location, two in each city region, with activities and outputs designed according to the research findings.

For female employees within the public transport sector, employment skills training was delivered to facilitate the advancement of individual participants to more senior roles within their respective organisations or companies.

Both user and employee focused activities required the support of strong local partners in each of the three city regions.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### *Abuja*

Abuja differs from the other study sites in that female participants in the research and the user skills workshops are dependent on informal modes of transport such as two and three-wheelers (Okadas and Kekes) almost exclusively to meet their public transportation needs.

Despite controls imposed on their movements in central Abuja, these informal modes have experienced a rapid growth in recent years, which has outpaced government's ability to regulate the industry.

Two and three-wheeler operators are predominantly young men and the perception from workshop participants is that they are 'rough, reckless and rude'. A lack of regulation has led to some concerns over the safety record of Okadas. Helmet prevalence is low for riders, and lower still for passengers with estimates of up to 80% of motorcycle related deaths being caused by head injuries. This being the case, workshop participants' primary concern was related to personal safety.

Women are largely excluded from working in this industry due to cultural constraints. Employment, in what could be considered to be more formal public transport provision, medium and large buses, is not uncommon but is largely limited to more junior positions such as conductors, and administrative roles. Senior management is overwhelmingly dominated by men.

### *Cape Town*

The majority of people living in peripheral areas in Cape Town use minibus taxis as a means of public transport. In recent years, this industry has become associated with violence linked to competition for routes between rival minibus taxi associations. In 2021, a reported 123 minibus taxi operators lost their lives in Western Cape

Province alone.

Commuters are invariably caught up in the middle of these violent scenes and therefore it was no surprise that female commuters pointed to their personal safety as a priority concern. Women accessing public transport also feel disconnected from public transport providers with a lack of opportunities to have their concerns listened to and addressed.

This violence is inadvertently leading to an influx of women working in the sector, it being the case that when a minibus operator dies, their licence to operate is passed to their spouse. As a result an increasing number of women are entering what has historically been a male dominated workforce with little support or guidance. In recent years, the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) has set up a women's desk to try to address this issue, and

support the delivery of training for women entering this profession.

Tunis

Tunisia is widely regarded as having the most progressive legislation protecting the rights of women, in the Arab world. Despite this, the research revealed that female commuters have a limited understanding of the law, and continue to be subjected to daily incidents of verbal, physical and sexual harassment when using public transport.

The level of harassment was the priority concern when using public transport and is a key factor in women deciding whether or not to travel. Staff responsible for responding to safety incidents or for collecting and processing complaints are either not sufficiently aware of the legislation which protects the rights of women in Tunisia or how to respond to

Employment Skills Training, SANTACO





Tunis User Skills Workshop



Motorcycle Safety Filming

infringements. Their concerns are exacerbated by infrastructural challenges such as lack of lighting and security cameras, as well as shortfalls in the quality of service such as poor scheduling and timeliness of transport. Under-investment in public transport has led to a deficit in enough functional vehicles to meet passenger demand.

Women were unaware of the channels available for passengers to submit complaints, which do exist, and those that were aware did not have confidence in the system's responsiveness. Complaints mechanisms were tested during the workshop, the web link and telephone number were not operational. The submission of complaints was also limited due to a fear for their own safety, cultural constraints, and a lack of success following a previous complaint.

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### User Skills

#### *Road Safety Awareness*

In consultation with the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), a short film was developed and disseminated to workshop participants in Abuja. The film was developed as a tool to equip women with the knowledge to make informed decisions as to which vehicle to select when travelling by okada.

This decision was based on the passenger's rapid assessment of the condition of the motorcycle and the rider to optimise the chances of a safe ride.

Elements included the use of drugs and alcohol, rider behaviour, operational aspects of the motorcycle such as lights and tyre quality, and helmet safety. It emphasised the importance of women being empowered as passengers to communicate concerns to the rider at any point during the journey.

The film was premiered in Abuja in February 2021 and shared with the FRSC to be used as a tool for future training.

#### *Active Bystander Training*

Active bystander training supports the prevention of violence and harassment in a transport context through the promotion of positive interactions amongst commuters, imparting lessons on standard strategies for bystander intervention and promoting greater solidarity and cohesion amongst commuters and was delivered as part of the user skills workshops.

This activity was designed in response to a lack of confidence in existing reporting mechanisms with a view to intervening to prevent harassment, or in applying other



strategies where it is unsafe for an individual to intervene.

#### *Protection of Women's Rights*

As well as a lack of information about the protection given to women by law, there was a lack of clarity from participants in terms of their understanding of the organisational structure within the public transport sector and which organisation is assigned which responsibility.

Presentations were designed and delivered by a female ministry official to clarify roles and responsibilities to equip women with the knowledge necessary to better negotiate the transport sector, particularly where complaints and feedback to providers were concerned.

#### *Customer Service Charter*

Customer service charters were developed as a core activity in each of the user skills workshops to address concerns from women about the lack of influence they felt they had on the way public transport services were provided. The charters are effectively a

commitment from transport providers to deliver a defined level of service.

The text differs between countries, reflecting differing concerns in different locations and were developed by participants of each of the workshops in parallel. Once developed, roundtable discussions were held with transport providers to discuss piloting the customer service charters on public transport vehicles. Given the nature of these pilot interventions, the aim was to trial the charters on a proportion of selected vehicles only with the Abuja Urban Mass Transit Company, the South Africa National Taxi Council and Transtu.

#### Employment Skills

##### *Transport Management Training*

The way transport is managed can have a direct impact on the safety of female users, and this training sought to place existing female employees at the forefront of positive change within their respective employers. In addition, this training can be adapted to gives



Tunis Roundtable

participants a strong all-round knowledge of working in the transport sector, hence facilitating their advancement within to more senior positions.

In Abuja, training was designed in line with existing job descriptions for lower and middle management roles in response to a desire by the Abuja Urban Mass Transport Company to increase the proportion of women employed in more senior roles.

A total of 39 women, holding positions such as conductors, drivers, and administrative workers, were trained for future advancement. Women were also trained together to facilitate strong mutual support mechanisms within the organisation.

In Cape Town the training needs were defined by a diverse group of women working as owners and operators within the minibus taxi industry, linked to several different associations, all under the umbrella of SANTACO. A series of training were delivered to 25 women including safe vehicle operation, vehicle walk-around checks, basic mechanical principle and customer care.

#### *Gender Based Violence Discussions*

Also in Cape Town, a series of meetings were held at off peak times each week over a



period of three months reaching 45 male minibus taxi drivers operating at Bellville minibus taxi rank. Discussions explored the treatment of women by men by exploring their relationships with female family members.

### **CHALLENGES**

The COVID-19 Pandemic was disruptive to the delivery of these interventions, ultimately not allowing sufficient time to accurately ascertain the impact of the activities implemented, due to restrictions on travel and the size of gatherings in-country.

Similarly, competing priorities for transport providers during the pandemic limited the project team's ability to build strong and effective working relationships with transport providers particularly where the aforementioned relationships were essential in building a case for the adoption of customer service charters.

Senior management continues to be dominated by men and decision-making hence a male bias in how transport is provided. Support to women in the sector to advance to more senior roles will contribute to correcting this gender imbalance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of customer service charters has the potential to ensure that public transport provision addresses the concerns of all of its passengers equally. However in a context where the charter is a secondary consideration, transport providers need support to implement charters to ensure that they have a genuine impact on transport provision.

Despite some of the aforementioned challenges, there is appetite amongst transport providers to improve inclusivity. With greater long-term support from civil society organisations and donors to groups such as the SANTACO Women's Desk there is the potential for transformational change within the sector.

The legislative framework is often an obstacle to more women entering the transport sector,

particularly as professional drivers. Greater consideration should be given when amending legislation and ministries of transport should be open to issuing waivers where needed to facilitate women's entry into employment.

These pilot interventions are scaleable and with more investment from donors could have considerable impact, most notably, long-term support to SANTACO Women's Desk to support them to implement their short and medium term strategic objectives.

Informal modes of transport in Abuja require additional specialist training provision to riders of two and three wheelers. A number of women own fleets of two and three-wheelers and there is scope to support them to better integrate their enterprises and build the capacity of associations to better support female owned transport enterprises.

