



Veronica
Wanjira
Mwangi



Women boda boda riders in Nairobi

Veronica Wanjira Mwangi: her story

Boda boda (motorcycle taxi) rider in Nairobi, Kenya

Veronica Wanjira Mwangi is 42 years old, has seven children and four grandchildren, and is separated from her husband. She works as a boda boda (motorcycle taxi) rider, and her eldest son and daughter, both of whom are university educated, are also boda boda riders.

Veronica is one of 13 members of Kawangware stage – a boda boda rank in Nairobi – and the only woman. Standing at four feet and eight inches tall, she uses a stone to step onto her motorcycle. Veronica soon got a reputation for being relentless, gaining the respect of her male counterparts.

"When I fall down, I get back up."

Having experienced harassment on numerous occasions from other male riders and pillion passengers, Veronica is proud that she has never retaliated.

Keeping a 'cool head' means that she is often asked by other riders to arbitrate during frequent conflicts between young and older riders.

Veronica was nominated by her 12 male peers to be the chairperson of Kawangware stage. She is strictly against the use of drugs and alcohol by riders on her stage and believes that her leadership has brought unity amongst the group. Her name, 'Rasta', contributes to people's perception that she is a no-nonsense chairperson.

She has retained her leadership of the stage despite having to sell her motorcycle due to "hard times at home". She is currently paying off the purchase of a scooter which she now uses to deliver packages, and which she says is better paid than transporting passengers.

As an indication of her wider support, 400 riders in her sub-County nominated Veronica to be their boda boda registrar,

a role which makes her responsible for registering all new boda boda riders in the sub-County, a measure which has been introduced by government and supported by riders as a means of protecting riders enabling the authorities to distinguish between 'genuine' and 'scam' riders.

Veronicah's story is one of perseverance in the face of hardship. After 24 years of marriage, her husband left her soon after she became a boda boda rider three years ago, unhappy with her association with men in her chosen profession. After the separation, Veronicah became the primary breadwinner for her children and grandchildren.

Despite the numerous challenges women face in the boda boda industry in Kenya, Veronicah says that women should not be afraid to become riders:

"If you want to do something, then do it, as long as you're not hurting anyone."



The National Helmet Wearing Coalition, funded by the FIA Foundation, is now in its third phase. Following the publication of a report by the Coalition detailing the health costs of motorcycle taxi crashes in Kenya in 2024, the Coalition is now looking to establish one of the first helmet testing laboratories in East Africa, strengthen enforcement of helmet wearing, and advocate for a regional focus on motorcycle safety in East Africa.

To make the boda boda industry more inclusive, Transaid is also working with women to ensure that they are supported to gain the skills they need to become commercial motorcycle taxi riders. Transaid works with the Kenya Riders and Owners (KRO) Boda Boda SACCO, a cooperative of over 3000 riders in Kibera, Nairobi, to engage with women riders to better understand the challenges that women face working in this industry.

Visit www.transaid.org to find out more about the Kenyan National Helmet Wearing Coalition and other programmes.

