



## Sophia Yusuf's story

### Boda boda (motorcycle taxi) rider in Nairobi, Kenya

Sophia Yusuf has two sons aged four and 11 years. Sophia is a matatu (minibus taxi) tout in Nairobi; a matatu tout is someone who is stationed at a bus stage (an informal bus stop/rank) responsible for filling up the matatu with passengers.

The job demands that touts are at their stages very early in the morning and sometimes late into the evening. Sadly, Sophia's husband viewed her job as a threat to his role as a provider. He left Sophia, married another woman, and took their two sons away from her on the basis that she was unable to provide proper care due to the nature of her work. Her two sons now live in Uganda with her ex-husband.

Sophia came to boda boda riding by accident. She was taught to ride a motorcycle by people at her stage when working as a tout, and in a bid to bring more stability to her daily life, she left her job as a tout in 2019, used her savings to buy a shop selling sweets and basic groceries, and to supplement her income, became a boda boda rider.

She has been able to carve out a niche for herself within the boda boda industry by only offering boda boda services in the morning and afternoon, having developed a loyal clientele of regular customers who ask her specifically to take their children to and from school.

She does not own her own motorcycle, neither does she have a formal arrangement to rent one. Instead, she uses what Kenyans call a 'squad' system, which means she informally borrows a motorcycle for one or two hours from people she knows, whenever she needs it. In return, that person will get a cut of the money she earns.

By becoming her own boss, Sophia now generates a regular wage and has the flexibility in her daily life to choose her hours. She is now working towards regaining custody of her two sons.

The National Helmet Wearing Coalition, funded by the FIA Foundation, is now in its third phase. 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 has been working to improve commercial motorcycle rider safety in sub-Saharan Africa for more than a decade.

In that time, we have met courageous women carving out a space for themselves and challenging gender bias in the transport sector. The boda boda industry is no different; it is dominated by young men, but despite the many challenges that women face, numbers of women becoming boda boda riders are growing.

Visit [www.transaid.org](http://www.transaid.org) to find out more about the Kenyan National Helmet Wearing Coalition and other programmes.



Sophia as a pillion passenger (blue helmet)