

Country Report 9: Malawi

GRTI Activities in Malawi

Malawi participated in GRTI during Phases I and II. A gender sensitization workshop was held in Phase I and in Phase II, Malawi was funded for a baseline survey to determine the transport needs of men and women, followed by a pilot project involving the distribution of carts and bicycles, an identified need for men and women to enhance their micro enterprises.

Gender and Transport Workshop for Principal Secretaries

The RTTP in Malawi was awarded a grant to hold a 2 day gender sensitization workshop for Principal Secretaries and to formulate strategies and an Action Plan for addressing gender imbalances in the RTT sub-sector in Malawi. The workshop was jointly organized by the Department of District and Local Government Administration, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services and the Ministry of Transport and Public Works. The workshop took place August 10-11, 2000 at the Malawi Institute of Management, Lilongwe. It was well attended by 26 participants made up of Principal Secretaries and participants from other organizations.

Background to the Workshop: The existing official position on gender equity

The Principal Secretaries form an important sector of the society with significant impact on policy formation. In Malawi, an enabling environment for addressing gender meaningfully already existed to some extent before the workshop. The interest in gender issues for policy formation was clearly demonstrated by an earlier action of the Principal Secretaries as described in Box 9.1.

Box 9.1: The Makokola Declaration on Gender

On 8th April, 1999, the Principal Secretaries in Malawi signed “The Makokola Declaration on Gender” which essentially supported the need to integrate gender issues into all areas of development concern, committing themselves and their Ministries or Departments to the following actions:

- a) *Place gender firmly on the agenda of all development initiatives;*
- b) *Support all processes of amending the Constitution, repealing and reforming all laws and changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination;*
- c) *Enhance access to quality education by girls and boys and removing gender stereotyping in the curriculum, career choices and professions*
- d) *Promote women’s and men’s full access to and control over productive resources such as land, livestock, markets, credit, modern technology, formal employment and a good quality of life in order to reduce poverty among women and men;*
- e) *Make quality reproductive and other health services more accessible to both women and men, boys and girls;*
- f) *Protect and promote the reproductive and sexual rights of women, men, boys and girls;*

- g) *Take urgent measures to prevent and deal with increasing levels of gender based violence; and*
- h) *Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and materials in respect of the human rights of women, men, boys and girls.*

The significance of the Makokola Declaration on Gender was that gender was given a prominent place in policy formation in Malawi. This interest was crosscutting, but more emphasis was still placed upon the traditional sectors of health, education, income-generation and the legal framework.

While officially all sectors of government were represented in the Makokola Declaration on Gender, the application to non traditional areas such as transportation were implied, but not explicitly mentioned. The GRTI workshop was an opportunity to advance the gender-responsive position of the Government officials one step further by working out modalities for integrating gender concerns into the transport sector.

Focus of the Workshop

It is noted that political will is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for integrating gender into development interventions. There must also be information, skill and knowledge of ways to correct gender imbalances. The main objective of the workshop was to formulate strategies and an action plan for addressing gender imbalances in the RTT sub-sector in Malawi within the overall framework of poverty reduction.

While there have been moves to ensure gender-relevant policy making, yet there were still a number of identified challenges to address gender adequately. The challenges to meet these preconditions include:

- a) Limited resources for the implementation of interventions on gender,
- b) Lack of gender disaggregated data and limited capacity for mainstreaming gender, and
- c) Gender insensitive cultural values and perceptions.

The workshop focused attention not only on the need to integrate gender into government programs, but on how to accomplish it to ensure more effective rural transport for males and females. Gender mainstreaming in the transport sector means that the services provided have to be transformed and geared towards the equitable provision of basic necessities of life. Rural transport is one of the key areas in which gender has to be mainstreamed in order to promote a sustained improvement in the standards of living of rural communities through increased access to facilities and socio-economic services. The subsector is therefore dealing with gender as an integral part of the issues which have in the past been given insufficient attention because of the lack of a co-ordinated transport environment and weaknesses of the conventional approach to transport planning.

The major aspects considered in the group sessions can be broadly grouped into those related to social and official factors affecting the integration of gender into development generally and issues affecting gender and the transport sector specifically.

- a) General factors affecting the integration of gender:

- i. Lack of gender framework at district level,
- ii. Gender focal points in stakeholders not capacitated,
- iii. Lack of gender skills at district level,
- iv. Inadequate gender monitoring and evaluation,
- v. Attitudes and perceptions on gender,
- vi. National budget not gender sensitive,
- vii. Insufficient data differentiated by gender, and
- viii. Limited use of lessons learnt from past experiences.

b) Issues affecting gender and the transport sector:

- i. Insufficient appropriate IMTs,
- ii. Legal framework that constrains wider use of IMTs,
- iii. Available RTI constrains use of IMTs,
- iv. Gender insufficiently reflected in National Transport Policy,
- v. Inadequate recognition of multi-sectoral nature of RTI,
- vi. Lack of co-ordination on gender and RTT,
- vii. Poor transport infrastructure constrains use of IMTs, and
- viii. Labour-based technologies insufficiently used to address gender and transport issues.

Workshop Output

The workshop created a forum for high-ranking officials to deliberate on addressing gender imbalances specifically in the transport sector. In this way, they became sensitized to the issues and supportive of needed changes. The action plan resulting from the workshop highlighted the following steps to be taken:

- Ensure that the Transport Policy adequately addresses gender issues in the transport sector and RTT sub-sector;
- Build the capacity for gender analysis of Gender Focal Points in all ministries;
- Involve Gender Focal Points in decision making;
- Formulate an effective co-ordinating committee among ministries to ensure progress in gender mainstreaming; and
- Come up with a project to facilitate rural women's access to IMTs through, among others, the provision of credit facilities.

The strategies designed by the groups were presented to the Malawi RTTP which served as an input to the second phase of GRTI activities in Malawi.

Promotion, ownership and use of IMTs among rural women and men

Study on IMTs in Rural Malawi

The focus in Phase II of GRTI activities in Malawi was to undertake a study followed by a pilot project to promote greater use of IMTs and facilitate their ownership by rural women and men. The GRTI project had the following objectives:

- Assess gender relations in the access to goods and services and their influence on transport;
- Highlight constraints and opportunities of rural women and men; and
- Establish a revolving fund for purchase of IMTs which were to be distributed in four pilot areas.

The study on IMTs was carried out between July and October, 2001, in four selected rural areas of Malawi: Chingale area in Zomba District, Chiosha and Kazyozya areas in Mchinji District, Lobi area in Dedza District; and Embangweni area in Mzimba District. The study was conducted to obtain baseline data and information that could be used for designing, planning and implementing appropriate interventions in a practical and realistic way. The field study targeted three categories of respondents:

- a) Focus groups of women and men;
- b) individuals respondents; and
- c) key informants – particularly those that own some type of means of transport

The main transport activities that the rural people in Malawi perform relate to crop cultivation, movement of farm inputs, crop harvesting and crop marketing. Rural people also travel to access social services and facilities such as health centers, schools, shops and markets. Women continue to carry out much of the travel and transport work but have limited access to and control over the means of transport besides walking and head loading. Domestic activities like fetching of food, water and going to grinding mills consume the highest amount of household time and effort with women contributing significantly more than other household members.

Almost all means of rural transport were found to be owned and controlled by men and used mainly by boys and men. Women own virtually no means of transport, have limited access to them, yet they bear most of the transport burden. Head loading and walking are the most common means of transport. The main bottle necks and constraints militating against owning an IMT include the cost of buying and maintaining IMT, the strength that would be required to operate it, poor road infrastructure and lack of mechanical or technical back-up support to handle frequent breakdowns.

Distribution of bicycles and carts to Rural Men and Women

There are a number of transport means available for rural communities besides walking, including bicycles, pick-ups, ox-carts, wheelbarrows, trains and sledges. The bicycle is the most common IMT in Malawi, and the encouragement of its use was proposed in the project so that its use among women could be studied in different areas. As a result of the findings of the study, carts and bicycles were distributed because both men and women had expressed these as needs in their micro enterprises. The two types of IMTs which were proposed for the project were a bicycle and the Malawi Hand Cart. More detailed information about the cart is provided in Box 9.2.

Box 9.2: The Malawi Hand Cart

The Malawi Hand Cart is a new cart which was designed by Dr. Arnold Wendroff, an American who had worked in the rural areas of Malawi for more than 20 years. The cart is able to carry a maximum capacity of 100 kg and it is also diverse in its use. This was developed to relieve the head and shoulder loading and also as an alternative to the bicycle which is often loaded beyond its capacity.

One problem with the hand cart was found to be with the strength of the wheels. The rim of the tire easily flattened if the cart was overloaded. Some experimentation had devised a stronger, locally fabricated – though more expensive – type of wheel for the cart. Another problem was related to the fabricated hubs resulting in wheels sometimes not properly fixed and thereby likely to wobble. It was also discovered that there was a need for local fabrication. The hand carts were made in Livingstonia which is 480km away from Lilongwe. It was expensive to transport these carts to Lilongwe and then to the various districts for distribution. The carts were later manufactured at Chitedze Research Institute, Lilongwe.

After using the cart for 3 months, the bicycle was still the most preferred means of transport though the requests for the hand cart had increased. The hand cart was mainly used for heavy carriage such as carrying manure and garden produce, and going to the grinding mill. One female reported using the cart to transport manure a total of 27 times to her garden located 500 m away. Another group was using the hand cart to carry horticulture produce and manure. One woman stated that she had used it to carry 30-50 heads of cabbage from her garden to the market – a distance of 3 km. The cart was also used to transport two cartons of school books over a distance of 6 km.

Provision of Loans to Promote IMT Ownership

From the previous initiatives to improve the transport problems through the provision of loans, women have been found to be much better at repaying the loans than their male counterparts. This is because they bear most of the transport burden and would not want to disappoint those that relieve their burden. In the case of group loans, the performance of a group did not depend on the number of people in the group, but the activeness of the group.

For the GRTI project, the payback period of the loan was put at 6 months with a minimal interest of 5% (while the commercial bank interest rate in Malawi is about 50%). Lending institutions for micro businesses range from 14-25% interest rates. Groups with more women were better at paying back the loan. Such groups showed a repayment rate of about 100% in the three months of servicing the loan. In two other groups which had almost equal number of women and men, the IMTs were returned after 1 ½ months since they had other loans they were failing to service. The IMTs were then distributed to other groups.

Lessons learned from the project:

Improvement of the rural travel and transport situation calls for an improvement of the rural transport infrastructure and economic empowerment of the rural people to enable them own and maintain means of transport. In addition, there is a need for sensitization

on gender issues relating to rural travel and transport, a mechanism that would minimize numerous breakdowns of the means of transport. Institutional frameworks to coordinate implementation of rural travel and transport also need to be strategized.

The GRTI activities in Malawi took on an innovative approach in several ways. The workshop built upon the existing conducive position of the Government to gender equity. It was clearly focused on the way forward to apply the experience of correcting gender imbalances in traditional sectors to the transport sector. The first phase workshop thereby led to a more conducive policy framework for the later program development and implementation. This is also important for the sustainability of gender mainstreaming in the transport sector.

The study provided information to facilitate the pilot project to promote the ownership and use of appropriate IMTs to meet the identified transport needs of the rural women and men. Provision of credit removed a major constraint to achieve this goal. Although the GRTI activities had essentially three components, they were effectively interrelated and progressively improved the gender-responsiveness of the RTT program.

