

Country Report 16: Zimbabwe

GRTI Activities in Zimbabwe

GRTI Phase I supported a desk study on gender issues in Zimbabwe. A workshop was also held to gender sensitize policy makers and NGOs. In Phase II, Zimbabwe received funding under GRTI to conduct a baseline survey and to hold gender sensitisation workshops (one with policy makers and one with the communities) in the pilot programme district of Mwenezi in south-eastern Zimbabwe. The study was commissioned by the Gender Department in the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation.

Study on Gender and Rural Transport in Zimbabwe

The GRTI study during Phase I of project activities in Zimbabwe was designed to provide an overview of the gender issues in RTT in the country and to determine the extent to which current RTT interventions address those issues. Data collection for the report was carried out through the review of publications, reports and information brochures on gender in RTT and RTT interventions in Zimbabwe, and interviews with key informants particularly among the donor agencies supporting RTT interventions in Zimbabwe. Discussions of the first draft report were carried out with the Gender Forum co-ordinated by Unifem Harare. A stakeholders workshop on gender in RTT in Zimbabwe was also held to obtain additional inputs and insights for the report.

Selected Findings of the Study

The findings of the study presented the following main features of RTT in Zimbabwe.

- The bulk (86%) of rural travel and transport trips takes place within a radius of 4 km around the village.
- Walking and head loading are the predominant mode of travel and transport. Most of the travel and transport activities are centered around subsistence and meeting basic family welfare needs, such as fetching water and firewood and bringing in harvested produce as well as going to the grinding mill, school, clinic and the market.
- An average household carries out about 90% of their transporting activities by head loading.

Clearly there is a mismatch between this inward-looking pattern of RTT activities and the provision of formal roads for outward-bound movement of people/goods.

Women's share of the transport burden

The findings also clearly showed that women shoulder a disproportionately large share of the RTT burden:

- In an average rural household of six members, women account for 54 (77%) of the 70 hours spent per week on travel and transport.
- Women and girls are responsible for 95% of the transportation of water.

- About 85% of the people taking maize to the grinding mill are women.
- Women account for over 85% of the firewood collected.
- Women and men grow different crops on different fields. They differ in the crops they sell and in the markets that they serve. There are transport and marketing services for men's crops, but none for women's crops.
- The multiple roles of women curtail their mobility: that is, women spend a disproportionate amount of time doing chores in and around the home, leaving them with little opportunity to access social services.

Box 16.1: Rural Women's Transport Burden in Zimbabwe

The study on gender and rural transport in Zimbabwe clearly demonstrated that women carry a heavy transport burden. When all transportation activities and all modes of transport are considered:

- Women spend 2808 hours per year (54 hrs per week X 52 weeks) on RTT activities. In the formal employment sector, this would be equivalent to 63 working weeks of 44 hrs each, or 121% of the normal working year.
- The total load carried by the household is 64 tonne-km per year.
- Head loading, mostly by women, accounts for 54 tonne-km (84%) per household per year. At this rate, a rural woman walks 2260 km per year carrying a load of 20 kg on her head!

The unevenly shared RTT burden has negative consequences for women. The perennial problem of carrying heavy loads takes a serious toll on women's physical well-being and erodes their productive capacity. In addition, a large proportion of women's time is spent walking which represents opportunity costs in terms of economic production and income generation.

Agricultural production and marketing are largely dependent on women's labor inputs. The above trends in women's condition of life and time use erode their productivity and therefore reinforce rural poverty.

Gender and the use of IMTs

Although women carry out many of these activities, their use of IMTs is very low as shown in Table 16.1 with the case of fetching water. Gender issues in RTT are therefore both a human right and an economic development issue.

Table 16.1: Transport characteristics of visits to water sources, by sex and by district

Transport Characteristics	Chipinge		Rushinga		Zaka	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Total number of users	40	110	7	94	6	87
Wheelbarrow	11	5	2	3	2	3
Headloading	29	105	4	91	3	83
Cart	-	-	1	0	1	1
Average age of user	13	24	14	24	21	28

[Source: ILO (1997): *Rural transport study in three districts of Zimbabwe; Vol.2*]

There are identified constraints for women's ability to use IMTs. At community level, the main constraints are social restrictions:

- Certain social norms discourage the use of some IMTs, especially the bicycle, by women.
- IMTs such as the wheelbarrow and the ox-cart are used mainly in economic activities such as transporting produce, rather than in activities largely carried out by women, such as transporting water and firewood.
- Unequal gender relations of power mean that men's RTT needs take priority over women's RTT needs.
- In addition to gender inequalities, there are also class differences in access to and ownership of IMTs. Poor households, especially the female-headed seem to be the most disadvantaged.

Men's investment in IMTs for subsistence activities is often prompted by perceived benefits that might accrue to themselves, as well as by the need to alleviate their own loads. For example, in some communities where the sources of firewood are now very far away, some men buy ox-carts or donkey-carts to transport firewood on hire or for sale, as well as for domestic needs. This opportunity for income generation is often not open to women. From the findings on that community level, two strategic gender needs can be identified: gender equality in access to and control over IMTs and gender equality in the division of labour and the share of the RTT burden. Success in these respects would promote a real and sustainable improvement to the conditions of life and well being of women.

At the level of the practitioner, the main accessibility constraints for women are that:

- IMTs are designed mainly for men's tasks. Even if they are women friendly, it would occur mainly by chance.
- Transport service providers do not see women producers and traders as a market for special services. Women have to hitchhike on buses and lorries.
- Planners and implementers of road and transport projects do not promote participatory planning. The opportunity is therefore lost to identify and facilitate planning inputs from special user-groups such as women producers, women traders and women travelers.

At the level of the policy-makers, one of the main constraints is that there is no national rural transport policy. The opportunity to identify and address gender issues in RTT therefore hardly arises. In addition, because there is no national gender policy, there is no motivation for RTT practitioners to identify and address gender issues in RTT. Similarly, development planning is not integrated into an overall gender policy. The opportunity to co-ordinate transport and non-transport solutions to RTT problems and needs, therefore, does not arise.

The important issue here is that without the appropriate national policies on gender, rural transport and the informal sector, there can be no consistency in addressing the gender issues in RTT and in the informal sector. Gender sensitivity in RTT projects consequently depends on the inclinations of the individual planners. More importantly,

the gender aspect remains a donor-driven component. This is not conducive to sustainable interventions since in principle donor support is largely ad hoc.

Gender Impact of Existing RTT Approaches

The current approaches to meet RTT needs can be delineated into two; that is, the formal approach with provision of roads and the informal approach concentrating on improvement of tracks and paths and provision of IMTs. This section presents findings of the study on the gender sensitivity of these approaches.

In terms of the formal sector, it was found that improved roads promoted an increase in the number of transport operators and in the number of trips, especially in the case of bus operators. Procurement of agricultural inputs from urban centers and marketing of produce in cities are now easier for those in close proximity to the roads. In addition, the employment of women and men in labor based and small-scale contractor based road construction, rehabilitation and maintenance has injected some cash into the local economy. This is an advantage especially to women in drought-prone areas. These wages are an important resource in their household survival strategy, and an important source of capital for income generating activities. However, whereas the formal roads facilitate outward-bound movement of goods and people, the bulk of village-level RTT activities are inward-bound, revolving around subsistence needs as water and firewood. This mismatch means that the formal roads do not provide an opportunity to alleviate the RTT burden at village level or to address gender inequalities in the share of the RTT burden.

On the other hand, improvement in the informal infrastructure facilities leads to smoother and quicker movement of people and transportation of goods. These facilities also encourage the use of IMTs such as wheelbarrows, carts and bicycles to enable women and men to transport bigger loads over a shorter time. One of the areas of concern is also the provision of a credit facility through a revolving loan fund (RLF) which should enable poor households to purchase IMTs. There are no special arrangements or enabling strategies to ensure that the poorer members of the community have access to the RLF, however. As an eligibility criterion, payment of the Development Levy to the Rural District Council might discriminate against the poor in the disbursement of the RLF. While the target is that 51% of the RLF beneficiaries are women, the project does not specifically address the issue of women's control over the IMTs they buy. It appears there is an assumption that at household level the women would enjoy sole control or joint and equal control with their spouses. This might be an erroneous assumption. In the labor based road construction projects, for example, some women lost part of their wages to their husbands. This can easily be the case with the IMTs also.

The assumption of transport sector activities is that improved footpaths and tracks and enhanced use of IMTs would enable the villagers to save time on RTT activities and invest the time in productive activities. While this would contribute significantly towards poverty reduction, improved productivity also means that the producers need to transport a greater load. Women are normally responsible for the greater part of the load if the gender division of labour and gender relations of power remain in favour of men. There

has also been some impact upon the traditional gender division of labor. In effect, the impact is in terms of ameliorating the RTT burden rather than redistributing the burden between women and men. Women still account for the bulk of the RTT burden.

The workshop on gender in RTT in Zimbabwe discussed the study findings. The participants at the workshop strongly recommended that funding be sought from the World Bank to facilitate the holding of gender awareness raising workshops for key stakeholders in the RTTP. This recommendations led to the GRTI Phase II activities.

Baseline Survey and Gender Sensitization in Mwenenzi District

In Phase II, Zimbabwe received funding under GRTI to conduct a baseline survey and to hold gender sensitisation workshops (one with policy makers and one with the communities) in the pilot programme district of Mwenenzi in south-eastern Zimbabwe. The study was commissioned by the Gender Department in the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation.

The objectives of the survey were to:

- Give an overview of the district including agricultural patterns, levels of income and demographic characteristics, disaggregated by gender;
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of men and women and their related transport needs;
- Determine the access to and control of resources and benefits related to rural transport;
- Find out existing gaps in rural transport and make recommendations on how they could be addressed; and
- Identify gender-related training needs for the community, rural district councils, district officers and policy-makers.

The justification for the project was that there is need to produce gender disaggregated data on rural transport problems. These data would then form the basis for the gender sensitization programs. There was also a perceived need to sensitize policy makers to ensure mainstreaming of gender in all transport policies and programs. The program would make tools available to the policy makers which can be used in addressing gender issues in a systematic manner. Sensitization of communities was also considered necessary in order to raise awareness and understanding of the gender imbalances that exist in society, avoid imposition of programs and interventions that may be contrary to cultural beliefs and practices and create a sense of ownership thereby promoting sustainability of the program. It was considered important to involve the community as a whole to minimize the risk of men perceiving the efforts of addressing gender as an attempt to deprive them of their benefits or status.

Selected Findings of the Survey

Mwenenzi is a district located in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. It is generally a drought-prone area and is ranked as one of the poorest districts in the country. It has an

average household size of 6. According to the baseline survey conducted in two wards of the district, about 65% of households are male-headed, 31% female-headed and 5% boy-child headed.

Among the key findings of the baseline survey were the following:

- Almost 100% of the households indicated that head-loading is the main means of transporting water. Collection of water is the primary responsibility of women and girls. However, on occasions men and boys fetch water using donkey/ox carts or wheelbarrows. About 65% of the dams/weirs dry up in the dry season. People living further away from water points need up to 60 minutes to get to the water sources.
- In Ward 2, people take an average of 4 to 6 hours to and from Neshuro Hospital on foot during the wet season. In Ward 12, no hospital is accessible on foot or by bicycle. Women undertake most of the trips to health institutions.
- All primary school children walk to school.
- It takes between one-and-a-half to three hours using ox/donkey carts, wheelbarrows and head-loading to go to the grinding mill and come back. About 80% of the trips to mills are made by women and girls through head-loading.
- All households use firewood for cooking and heating. Women and girls are the main firewood transporters by head-loading.
- There are no women with artisan skills.

Recommendations from the Survey

The following recommendations were made from the survey with a view to reduce the travel and transport burden at the village level. The recommendations are both non-transport and transport related, but both types of interventions would relieve the transport burdens particularly for women and girls.

- In terms of improving health care, additional healthcare centers close to the people should be constructed in order to reduce the incidence of crowding at the few existing facilities. Preventive health care services should be expanded. The quality of services should also be improved through adequate staffing levels, equipment and drugs at all existing centers.
- More boreholes and deep wells should be sunk near homesteads, where possible, to enable easier access to water throughout the year.
- Labor based road repair and maintenance as well as rehabilitation of damaged roads and bridges should be encouraged to ensure that roads remain in usable conditions to attract transport service providers. In addition, community based construction, operation and maintenance of informal infrastructure, including paths, tracks and footbridges would keep feeder roads in better condition.
- IMTs should be encouraged with donkey rearing projects to increase availability of donkeys as pack animals and sources of draught power. There should also be training of local artisans in production or repair of means of transport including oxen or donkey carts, hand carts, wheelbarrows and water carts.

According to the report of the survey, the communities see the need to combine transport-related solutions, including effective road maintenance and bridge construction, with non-transport interventions such as increasing the number of social services facilities to reduce walking distance.

Gender Awareness Training Workshops

Gender awareness training workshops were held in two communities in two wards of Mwenezi. Another gender sensitization workshop was held for policy-makers. The main objective of the workshops was to introduce gender issues as they relate to rural transport and travel for the participants to have an understanding of the concept of gender, gender roles, division of labor, stereotypes and access to or control over resources. Specifically, the workshop was designed to achieve the following:

- Sensitise the communities on gender and its dynamics in our society;
- Identify strategies for promoting the participation of men and women in development projects;
- Introduce the implications of the gender division of labor for development and illustrate how it can be changed to promote equal participation of men and women in development;
- Introduce the concept of ownership of resources and benefits in order to show how changes to it can bring development for the benefit of women and men;
- Find out ways of reducing the time spent in accessing basic facilities such as health, education, water and grinding mills; and
- Use the findings of the workshop to review the recommendations made in the survey in an effort to find out ways of enhancing the participation of women in the recommendation of projects.

The workshop was conducted in a fully participative manner and using the local language (*Shona*) to ensure everyone could be involved.

Key Conclusions of the Workshop

The key workshops outputs were that:

- Participants generally agreed that men's and women's access to or control over resources differ with men having a more advantageous position.
- Identification of property ownership at household level was clearly understood to mean that men own carts, wheelbarrows, donkeys and cattle, while women only usually have access to IMTs but do not own them.
- Gender sensitization programs (such as these workshops) were appreciated as a strategy to challenge stereotypes and perceptions.
- Gender sensitization activities should continue and the GRTI program should urgently introduce community projects such as rehabilitation of roads, footpaths and construction of bridges.

