

Assessing Gender Inclusion in Cameroon's Rural Transport

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Abstract

This paper assesses gendered specific needs and proposes policy responses to reduce gendered rural transport related burdens in Cameroon. Using an illustrative approach based on good practices, the paper presents (1) an assessment of gender disparities in Cameroon's rural transport strategy based on market distribution of foodstuffs as well as child and maternal health care services and (2) different actions needed that ensure the inclusion of gender issues in establishing Cameroon's rural transport strategy. Specific transport facilities by and for "Bayam-sellam", training rural women on mastering road construction materials and putting in place a community transport system for emergencies in maternal and child health care are the main proposals voiced to ensure that rural transport policy is more gender inclusive.

Keyword: Transport, gender, welfare, rural areas.

JEL: R40; J16

Résumé

La présente étude évalue les besoins particuliers en matière d'intégration des questions liées au genre dans le secteur des transports en milieu rural au Cameroun et propose des stratégies visant à réduire les coûts s'y rapportant. En adoptant une approche illustrative fondée sur les pratiques performantes dans ce domaine, l'étude présente: 1) une évaluation des disparités entre les sexes dans la stratégie relative aux transports en milieu rural au Cameroun, basée sur un examen de la distribution

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de denrées alimentaires sur les marchés et des services de soins de santé maternelle et infantile ; et 2) diverses mesures nécessaires pour prendre en considération les questions liées au genre dans l'élaboration de la stratégie relative aux transports en milieu rural au Cameroun. Les principales propositions avancées pour assurer une meilleure intégration des questions liées au genre dans la politique relative aux transports en milieu rural sont les suivantes: la mise en place de moyens de transport spécifiques par et pour les « bayam-sellam » (vendeuses de denrées alimentaires), la formation des femmes rurales sur les matériaux de construction des routes, et la mise en place d'un système de transport communautaire pour les situations d'urgence liées aux soins de santé maternelle et infantile.

Introduction

Since 2009, Cameroon adopted a strategy towards being an emerging country by 2035. This strategy addresses the issue of growth and poverty reduction through employment, with infrastructure and rural development being two key considerations (see 2009 Growth and Employment Strategy document). Policies and strategies that resolve concerns linked to rural development within this strategy were deduced from the third Cameroon household consumption survey (CHCS) produced by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) in 2007. This survey indicates that in 2007 the incidence of rural poverty stood at 56%. Poor people in rural areas asked for better communication infrastructures, education and healthcare, access to portable water and credit, and good roads as necessary inputs to consolidate development (NIS, 2007).

Over the same period, several studies using the 2007 CHCS have attempted to shade light on issues of gender inequality in Cameroon. In this regard, Baye and Fambon (2010) then Epo, Baye and Manga (2013) found that gender disparities in endowments like education and health exist between men and women-headed households. Rural transport is important for economic development and poverty alleviation in Africa because good transport roads increase agricultural productivity and improve access to basic education as well as health services (Gallup, Sachs & Mellinger, 1999; Banister & Berechman, 2000). Women in rural areas in Cameroun spend on average 89 US dollars per year on transport (CHCS, 2007), and do not benefit from labour-and time-saving activities that are likely to reduce their time burden. Furthermore,

women in rural areas do not have sufficient income to pay for modern transport services which are often infrequent and expensive and where sometimes, harassment and safety are also a major concern for women travelling long distances alone (World Bank, FAO & IFAD, 2008). The subsequent outcome is a limitation of mobility of women, especially in rural areas where culture, customs and traditions play a crucial role in dictating how the people live.

In Cameroon, studies on the gendered effects of transport services have not been undertaken. Furthermore, studies on how access to transport services affect gender disparities in urban and rural areas are under researched in Cameroon. Both remarks seem to explain in part the difficulty Cameroon faced in its attempt to meet the Millennium Development Goal objectives because, rural transport is crucial in instigating development. Rural transport supplies urban areas with food, largely produced by women, from rural areas harbouring food production basins. Consequently, not adequately shading light on rural transport issues and how it relates to gender, may contradict the objectives of poverty alleviation and gender equality.

To carry out our study, we adopt an illustrative approach which consist: (1) of illustrating the current situation of gender transport disparities in Cameroon and (2) identifying from the literature and some transport projects, solutions from best practices elsewhere or benchmarks that could act as indicators or reference points. We then suggest feasible approaches or practices as potential way forward for the government to put in place cost effective responses to tackling gendered transport inequality in Cameroon. However, other quantitative methods could be used to complement or evaluate the effects of these policies unlike a more descriptive approach adopted in this paper. Nonetheless, it's important to question the extent of gender considerations in rural transport services in Cameroon while a national policy on rural mobility is currently being considered by the government of Cameroon.

In addition to an introduction and conclusion, this paper is structured as follows: section one provides a conceptual framework linking gender and rural transport; section two reviews gendered differences in Cameroon's rural transport and section three assesses how sensitive is rural transport policy to women needs in Cameroon.

Conceptual Framework linking Gender and Rural Transport

The 1994 SSATP case study by Calvo brought to the forefront the relationship between rural transport and the well-being of women by indicating that improving women access to transport could potentially free up more resources for productive and welfare enhancing activities. In what follows, we review (1) the linkage between gender and transport and (2) specific approaches of gender analyses in rural transport literature.

Gender and Transport

Literature on gender and transport can be identified on developed and developing countries. For developed countries, the main concern is most often associated to urban or suburban daily trips. Since the paper by Turner and Grieco (2000) suggesting a range of information technology based solutions (real time transport information, internet reservations or working at home) to reduce gender gap related to time allocation and labour supply for single low income mothers in UK, the interest for the topic is ongoing (Kenyon, Glenn & Rafferty, 2002; Schneider & Holz-Rau, 2012).

The economic oriented link between gender and transport in developing countries is of interest to international institutions dealing with transport planning (World Bank, African Development Bank). The paper by Bamberger, Lebo, Gwilliam and Gannon (1999) looks for new modes of analysing gender and transport services that can help reduce women's transport-related burden in terms of time poverty. Time poverty is considered as the main constraint for women in reducing their paucity and vulnerability (Fernando & Porter, 2002; Porter, 2008).

Regarding infrastructures, a working paper by the African Development Bank (2009) adopted a checklist approach for gender mainstreaming in different stages of infrastructure projects (identification, preparation, appraisal and implementation). The paper identifies that indicators related to differences in time and cost needed to transport goods to the markets, increased income for men and women, improved maternal and child health, increased number of women entrepreneurs as necessary in rendering infrastructural projects more gender sensitive.

Specific approaches to Gender in Rural Transport

In this section we review specific approaches of gender in the literature on rural transport. As the first step of gender mainstream, gender analysis assesses the position of men and women through responsibilities, availability of resources and services, and how benefits are shared. The paper by Bryceson and Howe (1993) is the reference on gender analysis in rural transport. The authors show that men rather than women are the main beneficiaries of appropriate rural transport technology. In the context of developing countries, this is likely to affect access to basic health and educational facilities.

Access to education, health services and market are often used to show evidence on how gender issues relate to transport (see Porter, 2008). Regarding education, in rural area with poor roads and transport services, girls involved in household chores to help their mothers (farming, fetching water and seeking for wood) face difficulties to attend school due to distance and travel time.

Concerning access to health services, differences in transport by gender in rural area are related to demand frequency and scarcity in obtaining emergency in obstetrical and child health care treatment. For the Ashanty region in Ghana, Buor (2004) shows for example that females have a great need for health services than males, but do not adequately utilise these services because of distance and income. Similar analysis by Ensor and Cooper (2004) as well as Begum and Sen (2000) reveal the importance of influencing the demand side to overcome barriers to health services access for vulnerable groups (poor, women, and girls). Unfortunately, the cost associated to distance and locations in rural area negatively impact how they utilise health care services.

Regarding access to market, food security and time allocations are the most relevant reasons linking gender and rural transport (see Gittinger, Chernick, Horenstein & Saito, 1990). Viewing transport infrastructures and services as a vector for market integration, and considering that women are responsible of most of household food production in rural area, there is still debate as to whether better transport infrastructure will increase women agricultural productivity. The common knowledge identifying relations between accessibility, marketing and agricultural development has been criticised vis-à-vis food security. Tembo and Simtowe (2009) using data from Malawi identify

differences in daily per capita calorie consumption between household that have access to the market and household not having access to the market.

Commenting on gender equality through the absence of discrimination in resources allocation, opportunities or benefits and guarantees of equal rights and access to resources, Fernando (1998) illustrates gender inequality in the distribution of the transport burden among women and men in rural area. For the author, the disparity between men and women is made evident when looking at the demand for transport because women spend more time and energy on the transport tasks. On the supply side, women participate less in labour activities associated to road construction and maintenance.

To reduce such disparities, policy makers should look for new planning methods, practical examples and innovative projects in rural transport that positively impact on women. This includes involving women in rural transport planning, promoting female transporters (owning and managing of transport enterprises) or intermediate means of transport.

Concerning gender inequity in rural transport, identifying the linkage seems complex. By advocating for fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective need, entails being able to carefully identify similarities and differences in rural transport needs for men and women. A realistic approach will be to analyse such inequality in the use of transport services to indicate differences on how both men and women access and use the services differently. Since woman have less access to transport services, the World Bank note by Bamberger et al. (1999) developed a structured approach to make transport policy more responsive to the needs of women by avoiding trade-offs in addressing gender relative disadvantages or bias. Likewise, the paper by Porter (2002) adopted the equity approach while identifying “Tarmac bias” and potential interventions to reduced gender inequality on issues of rural transport. The next section attempts to explain gendered rural transport needs in Cameroon.

Gender issues in Cameroon’s Rural Transport

In this section, we review women roles and activities in rural household structure and how rural transport policy can be acted upon to reduce gendered differences in Cameroon. These two aspects will be used to assess gendered

similarities and differences in mobility behaviours. We then attempt to deduce specific needs by women for better transport access and utilisation.

Rural Household structure, Women roles and Activities

In Cameroon about 48% of the total population live in rural areas (UN-World Statistics Pocket Book 2013). In 2007, 64.2% of the active population worked in the agricultural sector (CHCS, 2007). A review to the Second Survey on Employment and the Informal Sector in Cameroon (NIS, 2010) indicates that in rural areas, about 76.8% of women carry out activities linked to agriculture. Of this population, less than one percent of women are in the transport sector.

Generally, large shares of women carrying out agricultural activities are found in the informal sector. The Second Survey on Employment and the Informal Sector in Cameroon indicates that about 95% of women carryout activities in the informal sector (NIS, 2010). Such activities include selling food stuff in local, suburban and urban markets. These women face difficulties in transporting their goods from their farms to rural, suburban and urban markets. Questioning households on governmental priorities, both households headed by women in rural areas and nationally identify the necessity for tarred roads as one of the top five government priorities (CHCS, 2007).

From the 2007 CHCS survey, women in rural areas in their majority go to health district services on foot (39%). About 30% of women in rural areas indicate that their choice to choose the type of consultation is influenced by their proximity to health centres. Despite some women indicating that the go to health district services using motorcycles (25%) or cars (32%), it is worth observing that cars in rural are generally outdated and do not go for technical visits. This entails some risk for individuals using these cars for movements, particularly women who face social and cultural prejudices.

Few houses in rural areas are situated close to tarred roads, with about seven percent of women headed households indicating that their households are situated close to a tarred road (CHCS, 2007). These observations mask glaring differences because these roads are generally main road that go across these villages. Most rural roads are not tarred and local communities argue

that they do not have sufficient funds to maintain these local roads (Baye, Epo & Dama, 2013).

The main observation from the above statistics indicate that linking rural to urban areas affects the former through market access and income generation as well as access to basic services. In rural areas, social and cultural norms influence the roles of both women and men concerning the production and selling activities, non-tradable activities and individual responsibility. These differences in roles in terms of family (cooking, looking for potable water and firewood, education and maternal health care) and non-family activities (farming, hawking, cash and non-cash crop production, and so on) influence time allocation. For instance, whereas most households (both men and women) gain their livelihood by producing both cash and food crops, they also engage in seasonal or intermittent non-farming activities such as owning small shops, cooking food to sell and salary employment. For farming activities, whereas men farm and sell cash crops and large livestock, women deal with foodstuff, horticultural crops and small livestock. This implies women are more engaged in regular farming activities and spends more time on farming. They also spend more time and risks on commercializing foodstuffs, unlike men who sell cash crops once or twice per year. This specific division of labour generates gendered differences in rural mobility. It also influences specific transport needs for women (frequency, dependence, safety, timeless). In the next section, we assess the relationship between rural transport gendered differences in terms of accessibility and mobility.

Rural Transport and Gendered differences in Cameroon

In this section, we examine how gendered differences are made evident in rural transport in Cameroon in terms of rural sector development strategy and projects related to activities undertaken by rural women.

In Cameroon, rural transport involves public and private interventions. Public interventions are through infrastructure development and private interventions through the liberalization of private services. The 2009 National Growth and Employment strategy by the Government of Cameroon did not consider rural transport as a major issue. In addition, rural transport characterised by the absence of policy and strategy is still officially viewed within the context of rural and agricultural development. Some pilot projects without great success have been launched within the scope of SSATP program to reduce gender dif-

ferences in rural transport services (women's use of bicycles in the North-West and community transport pilot project by Horse/Donkey-Drawn Cart managed by women in the North).

Modernising rural and agricultural infrastructures as well as women empowerment are two pillars of the rural sector development strategy. In the action matrix, the Ministry of Transport is in charge of facilitating access to basic services in rural areas. High transport costs between the rural agricultural production basins and urban consumption zones in agricultural marketing are addressed by ameliorating accessibility to local resources through control and maintenance of rural roads. In the current decentralization processes, communities should be trained and used for regular maintenance of rural roads. To do so, the national rural road strategy should adopt a labour intensive based approach which considers the participation of rural women in road maintenance activities, through employment opportunities. However, differences in skills, labour technical constraints and time horizon of road maintenance make it difficult to actively include rural women.

Since the official launching of the National Program for Rehabilitation of Rural Roads in 2009, the usage of women labour force in road maintenance has been largely insufficient. Generally, by empowering women to participate in lucrative rural road rehabilitation jobs, they may be able to move away from less income generating tasks. Furthermore, despite the observation that women may empower themselves by selling products they farm on highways in Cameroun, pineapple in the Mbankomo area, tomatoes and water melons in the villages of Bangangté, pineapples and sweet potatoes in the villages of Ombessa, there is need to note that they are exposed to road accidents. In this regard, the construction of specialized markets along these high ways should reduce potential road accidents and act as clusters for women to sell their goods or come together in creating local NGOs.

Concerning transport services, it relates to gender issues in two ways. Concerning the first relationship between transport services and gender issues, we indicate that rehabilitating rural roads reduces the cost of transport and transactions, thereby reducing the vulnerability women face against urban actors when they sell their food stuffs. By improving rural roads, women access comfortable buses and vehicles which are cheaper and safer than old trucks or motorcycles. This enables women buying foodstuffs from rural

market to sell in nearest urban markets, termed “Bayam-sellam”, to reach rural areas to collect foodstuffs. Moreover, rural women are not obliged to carry back their foodstuffs to different seasonal market of the area. The high frequency of selling activities increases women income and time for unpaid tasks (for the southern Region in Cameroon, see Kemtsop in Starkey, 2007).

The term “Bayam-sellam” is a local term used to describe women that buy perishable food crops in rural areas situated at the peripheries or sometimes in the agricultural production basins in rural areas and sell them in local urban markets. These groups of women have seen their role gain importance since the economic crisis witnessed by Cameroon in the mid-1980s (Epo, Baye & Manga, 2013). Some main characteristics of these groups of women are (1) they are mainly in the informal sector; (2) they face difficulties in accessing credit due to inadequate borrowing collaterals; (3) they sell mainly perishable food crops and spend the whole day in the market; (4) the perishable food items they sell vary with the agricultural seasons and (5) a significant share of their running cost is on transporting these perishable food crops to urban markets.

Concerning the second relationship between transport services and gender, we examine how rural life styles and mobility are influenced by transport infrastructures. More precisely, it is important to consider that rural way of life and transport are influenced by trade facilitation projects on main transit corridors (Douala-Ngaoundere-Ndjama and Baugui). In this regards, ameliorating transport infrastructures and traffic on highways and transit corridors increases the exposure of rural inhabitants to accidents and diseases like HIV/AIDS. In the World Bank Transport Paper (2009), vulnerability of rural women to HIV/AIDS and other sexual diseases are positively linked to road transit traffic. In Cameroon, a country report by the African Development Bank linked the high HIV prevalence of women in the Adamaoua and East regions to the existence of main corridor hotspots.

Example highlighted put to the forefront the need for gender considerations in terms Cameroon’s current rural transport policy concerning infrastructures and services. In this view, bringing out some specific needs for women on which a gender sensitive rural transport strategy should focus could enable us perceive the extent to which the current rural transport policy is gender inclusive.

How sensitive is Cameroon's Rural Transport Policy to Women Needs: The way forward

Ragassa (2012) indicates that across regions, gender-specific needs are very rarely considered when developing transport infrastructure or networks especially in rural areas (Carr & Hartl, 2010). Most transport projects stress on building major roads to promote connectivity of rural areas, while women often access the smaller local roads which are often not part of project considerations (World Bank, 2004). This situation is verified in Cameroon.

Table 1 explores gendered specific needs according to the following welfare objectives: time allocation, income generating activities, better access to basic services and being vulnerable to diseases. These specific needs will help explore requirements for gender sensitive rural transport strategy.

Considering women specific needs that the Cameroon rural transport policy should consider, as indicated in Table 1, and some successful rural transport strategy (Ghana, Uganda and Ethiopia) that factor in gender considerations, we discuss some potential recommendations that should render future rural transport programs in Cameroon, within a decentralization framework, gender sensitive. To improve gender considerations government could capitalise on (1) women employment opportunities in rural road maintenance, (2) improve the skill of women on road maintenance activities and reduce labour technical constraints associated to road activities, and (3) reduce risks associated to road safety as well as diseases and HIV/AIDS prevalence. This entails impacting on the capabilities of rural women by targeting the four main strategic axes.

First, government should improve the capabilities of women in rural road maintenance activities. By enhancing women participation in rural road maintenance and training unskilled rural women to acquire skills associated to road construction, government will contribute in reducing gender disparities in activities linked to rural road transportation. Training may focus on building capacities in mastering materials for road construction (blocks, sand and gravel, kerb-stones, among others). Women could be organised to undertake part time rural road maintenance jobs compatible with their daily task as rural women.

Table 1: Women specific needs that could be incorporated in Cameroon's rural transport policy

	Rural Transport Policy objectives	Generate income from non-farming activities	Generate income from selling foodstuffs	Provide access to basic services (school, child and maternal healthcare)	Reduce the prevalence of sexual diseases	Provide road safety measures
Rehabilitation of road infrastructures	Incorporate gender activities in rehabilitating rural roads and constructing road infrastructures.	Enhance the professional competences and knowledge of women on road maintenance. Identify specific tasks women could undertake in rural road maintenance activities (maintenance of gutters, transporting ground, conserving and managing road construction materials).	Construct specific selling areas along highways and transit corridors.	--	Construct resting areas with essential schemes and services that include sanitary units to sensitise truck drivers and care for women.	1) Create pedestrian crossing zones between transit corridors; 2) Construct safe selling points with parking spaces on highways and corridors; 3) Develop signboards that indicate market and school locations along the rural roads and main highways.
Transport services	Develop transport services that support activities undertaken taken by women.	Create lending program that support activities aimed at offering rural transport services.	Develop conditions for affordable transport prices and services towards urban areas. Increase the frequency and regularity of transporting food crop to urban markets.	Create specific emergency service for maternal and child healthcare.	Train and sensitise drivers and rural women on HIV/AIDS and other sexual diseases prevalence in the villages along transit corridors.	Train and sensitize rural women and children on road safety.

Source: Constructed by the authors

Second, by using safety market facilities in road projects to increase farm-income, reduce sexual diseases and road accidents on transit corridors or highways in rural areas, government will be ameliorating the welfare rural inhabitants and enabling women gain from road projects. For instance, highway projects can be used to ameliorate the commercialization of food stuffs in pedestrian crossing zones. New road construction projects could build resting zones with specialised regional market infrastructures to help women selling food stuffs along roads. These markets could act as clusters to help bring together rural women to exchange and share ideas. These market areas could be used to sensitise vulnerable the rural population like women and girls on HIV/AIDS.

Third, by developing community transport for maternal and child health care, government could respond to the neglect of the role of transport in national rural health policy. Some women do not access health services in rural areas because of inadequate transport access to these facilities. Thus, rural transport strategy could enhance access to rural health centres by creating community transport systems for emergencies in maternal and child health care with village safe committees using mobile phones, as implemented by the UK-aid funded Mobilising Access to Maternal Health Services in Zambia.

Fourth, by developing a “Bayam-sellam” transport facility system, government would respond to resolving a major constraint voiced by women selling farm products in urban markets. In this regards, the rural transport strategy could develop a micro credit system that target “Bayam-sellam” associations. This micro credit scheme may have as main goal financing the creation of transport companies along important farm-to-market routes to transport foodstuffs from the rural areas to urban markets. These specific services could be defined in the Communal Development Plan of Cameroon, which is the main planning instrument in the ongoing decentralization process supported by development partners.

Conclusion

This paper assessed gendered specific needs and proposed policy responses to reduce gendered rural transport related burdens in Cameroon. Using illustrative approaches, the paper identifies four policy orientations as necessary in attenuating gender differences and responding to women needs in rural

transport in Cameroon. These involve (a) improving capabilities of women in rural road maintenance activities; (b) developing safety market facilities in road projects to increase farm-income, reduce sexual diseases and road accidents between transit corridors or highways in rural areas; (c) developing community transport for maternal and child health care and (d) creating a “Bayam-sellam” transport facility system.

Note

1. Sub-Saharan African Transport Policy Programme.

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