FREEDOM TO MOVE

A WORKING PAPER ON WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE OF URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN BANGLADESH, BRAZIL AND NIGERIA, AND HOW LOST TAX REVENUES CAN PAY TO IMPROVE IT

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

If Bangladesh changed one clause in its tax treaties, it would gain US$85 million a year, funds that could go a long way towards paying for better street lighting and more buses in Dhaka.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In September 2015, leaders from around the world adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit. This new agenda includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. SDG 11, on sustainable cities and communities, places responsibility on UN member states to make cities and urban areas inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; in particular 11.2 emphasises the mandate of states to provide safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all. This includes expanding public transport while paying special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations – i.e. women, children, 15-year-old girl, Brazil
people with disabilities and older people.

Public transport is crucial for enabling the timely and efficient movement of people, merchandise and labour resources from and within cities. But this mobility is experienced differently by women and men, as they use different modes of transport for different purposes and in different ways, depending on their socially determined reproductive, productive and community-related gender roles. For example, women’s reproductive roles in terms of pregnancy, childbirth and nursing makes it crucial for them to be able to easily reach healthcare services. In addition, since women often carry the burden of unpaid care work such as taking care of children and the elderly; they play a role in supporting these- sometimes vulnerable – individuals around the transport network. They need to speedily negotiate transport systems in order to balance their economic and care work (for example, rushing home from work to pick up children). In order to break the cultural norms that reinforce gender inequality education and economic self-sustainability is crucial. Gender responsive transport systems are thus key, enabling women to access healthcare, education and employment opportunities.

Yet, as will be shown, women have been ignored in urban transport planning and design. Thus, women are more likely than men to: walk or use less expensive modes of transport; use off-peak and peripheral public transport routes (out of the city centre); and consequently feel unsafe and are at risk of violence while using urban public transport. When women cannot access public transport, or cannot access it safely, their rights to education, health, mobility, markets and employment are violated. This institutional sexism increases women’s inequality.

The need for urban public transport systems that serve the needs of women is clear, and this paper examines how the current means of public transport in three cities, Abuja in Nigeria, Dhaka in Bangladesh and São Paulo in Brazil, are falling far short of meeting women’s needs. The paper focuses on buses – the mode of transport women are most likely to use. It highlights some of the features that could make public transport more gender responsive, and estimates what such features would cost.

For many countries finding extra funding is not an easy task, however previous research shows that if tax loopholes were closed and tax was better used, countries such as Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria could easily afford to improve public transport. For example, in Brazil the recently approved law 12.587/2012 establishes that 100% of the tax on fuel should be invested in public transport. This would amount to around US$ 3 billion annually and would roughly correspond to 40% of the annual operation cost of public buses. In Nigeria, if lucrative tax breaks had not been given to three large oil and gas companies, the country would not have lost US$3.3 billion over ten years. This would have paid for 600 buses, enough to meet current demand in Abuja.

This paper is divided into five sections:

Section 1: what is gender responsive urban public transport?
Section 2: why is urban public transport non-responsive to the needs of women in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria?
Section 3: what is required to make urban public transport gender responsive? What would this cost in Brazil, Bangladesh and Nigeria?
Section 4: how tax revenues can cover the costs
Section 5: conclusions and recommendations
1.2. BACKGROUND

All states are obliged to provide public services as part of their duty to citizens. Freedom of movement and safety and security are human rights issues, and it is an obligation of the state to ensure that everyone can live a life of dignity and safety irrespective of gender or status. This paper will explore how the governments of Bangladesh, Nigeria and Brazil are meeting – or failing to meet – these obligations in one specific area: public transport. The lifeblood of big cities, millions of people use public transport every day. But as this paper will show, such systems rarely cater to the specific needs of women and girls, leaving them vulnerable to, for example, violence at badly lit bus stations.

A gender responsive public service is one that takes account of the practical and strategic needs of everyone, especially women and girls living in poverty and exclusion. That means providing the service itself (the practical need) – for example clean water or basic health care – as well as addressing long term, strategic goals such as promoting gender equality and advancing women’s social, economic and cultural rights.

According to the UN, public services include, “those conventionally regarded as basic services that support human rights, such as health and education services; those not conventionally regarded as basic services but that also support women’s human rights, such as employment and economic services; those that are fundamental components of governance itself, such as electoral and related political services, civil registration, and legal, justice and police services.” Action Aid also acknowledges that those services referred to as ‘infrastructure and utilities’ (including water, electricity, road, sewerage and telecommunications) play a crucial role in supporting women’s economic rights, because they enable women to spend more time outside the home in non-care activities. Limited access to and use of public services and facilities by women and girls in return deepens gender inequalities, gender-based violence and exclusion.

In order to reduce gender inequalities, gender-based violence and exclusion, governments must first fund quality public services that are available, accessible and safe for women and girls. For this to be realised, the needs and interests of women and girls from all backgrounds have to be taken into account in the design, delivery and monitoring of services. Women and girls must be empowered to challenge different gender inequalities and unequal power relations on issues that affect their lives.

Similarly achieving gender responsive public services calls for the elimination of institutional sexism, the removal of barriers to sustainable financing of public services, and effective use of public resources. While governments have the power to collect revenues in order to deliver public services, many developing countries encounter significant revenue losses due to tax incentives, both tax exemptions and cash incentives and deliberate tax avoidance by companies. If such tax legislation was changed and loopholes closed, governments could increase their revenue and have a bigger budget for gender responsive public services.

“Once I was on the bus and felt something strange touching behind me. I turned to one side, turned to the other and it seemed that the person was following me, purposely staying close behind me. I tried to move away but the bus was crowded. I could not do anything because I have no way of proving that something was wrong. And it’s simple, right? I would say something and the person would say that didn’t do anything.”

Woman from São Paulo, Brazil

[36x28]6
[36x805]Freedom to move
[178x663]1.2. BACKGROUND

All states are obliged to provide public services as part of their duty to citizens. Freedom of movement and safety and security are human rights issues, and it is an obligation of the state to ensure that every person can live a life of dignity and safety irrespective of gender or status. This paper will explore how the governments of Bangladesh, Nigeria and Brazil are meeting – or failing to meet – these obligations in one specific area: public transport. The lifeblood of big cities, millions of people use public transport every day. But as this paper will show, such systems rarely cater to the specific needs of women and girls, leaving them vulnerable to, for example, violence at badly lit bus stations.

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Woman from São Paulo, Brazil
1.3. KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study was to analyse the gaps, and cost the delivery of gender responsive urban public transport in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria. Specifically, the working paper was intended to answer the following five key questions:

1. What elements make urban public transport non-responsive to the needs of women in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria?
2. What are the costs of delivering urban public transport in its current form?
3. What would it take and what would it cost to make urban public transport services in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria gender responsive?
4. What are the barriers (social, cultural, policy etc.) preventing the delivery of urban public transport services in a gender responsive way?
5. What are gender-blind urban public transport services? What are the economic and other costs of NOT making urban public transport services suitable for women?

1.4. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This working paper carried out a review of a set of existing documents on urban transport in the cities of Dhaka in Bangladesh, Abuja in Nigeria and São Paulo in Brazil. A key informant guide was shared with respective ActionAid country offices, and this guided them to collect relevant documents, information and data on urban transport. In addition, consultative and technical discussions via Skype were conducted with country teams, and these were critical in filling in information gaps that emerged from the literature review.

We focused on buses rather than other forms of transport such as ferries, trains and subways as first, it allowed comparison between countries with different contexts, public management systems and culture, and second because women commonly use buses. Our recommendations however suggest minimal standards for a gender responsive management of public transport as a whole.
1.5. OVERVIEW ON GENDER AND URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN BANGLADESH, BRAZIL AND NIGERIA

Table 1 presents a summary of the key features of gender and urban public transport in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria.8

Table 1: key features of urban public transport in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>BANGLADESH</th>
<th>BRAZIL</th>
<th>NIGERIA</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main mode of urban transport</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buses</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>Buses</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto rickshaw</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Motorcycle</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rickshaw</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership and control: private vs public</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector driven.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Both government and private sector driven.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both government and private sector driven.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Both government and private sector driven.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulatory authority and policy frameworks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Road Transport and Highways Division, under the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, plus several agencies such as the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation and Bangladesh Traffic Police, are mandated to regulate urban public transport in Bangladesh.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Ministry of Cities and several agencies are mandated to regulate urban transport. These include both state and city councils for public transport/urban mobility, and the National Council for Transport Policy Integration.</td>
<td>Urban public transport is regulated by the Transport Secretariat of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There is a policy on public transport in Nigeria and for FCT, however, the FCT transport policy is not publically available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITERIA</td>
<td>BANGLADESH</td>
<td>BRAZIL</td>
<td>NIGERIA</td>
<td>COMMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional mechanism for planning and coordination</td>
<td>Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority.</td>
<td>The constitution of 1988 delegated to states and municipalities to plan, implement and monitor public transport system. São Paulo Transport S.A. (SPTRans) is the body at São Paulo city level to manage the bus transport system.</td>
<td>The Transport Secretariat of the FCT Administration is the apex body responsible for the planning and coordination of transport services in FCT.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and security measures/rate of accidents/sexual violence/injuries</td>
<td>There are laws in place governing road safety i.e. laws banning drink-driving, wearing of helmets for riders, seat belts, speed limits.</td>
<td>There are laws in place governing road safety i.e. laws banning drink-driving, wearing of helmets for riders, seat belts, speed limits.</td>
<td>There are laws in place governing road safety i.e. laws banning drink-driving, wearing of helmets for riders, seat belts, speed limits. Vehcles owned by the Abuja Mass Urban Transport Company in 2014 were fitted with speed limits to guard against over speeding. Some vehicles are fitted with CCTV for safety purposes.</td>
<td>These laws do not take into account the forms of violence women and girls encounter in urban transport. There are also gaps in their enforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of motorisation (total number of registered vehicles to population)</td>
<td>One for every 75 citizens.</td>
<td>One for every 2.5 citizens.</td>
<td>One for every 3.3 citizens.</td>
<td>Brazil has the highest number of vehicles; 1:2.5 and Bangladesh has the lowest, 1:75 on average.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of women in transport agencies- top level leadership and decision-making</td>
<td>Currently there are no women in decision-making bodies or in leadership positions.</td>
<td>According to national data of 2014, 29.7% of women occupy leadership posts in private sectors of transport, storage and communications, and 39.6% of women on leadership and decision making positions in public administration sector.</td>
<td>The key transport agencies are male dominated. Women are not represented on top leadership of the Abuja Urban Mass Transport Company; one female serves on the Board of Directors as the Company Secretary.</td>
<td>Women are still under represented in the governance and management of urban public transport.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. ELEMENTS THAT MAKE URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT NON-GENDER RESPONSIVE

A review of the existing literature shows that there are several factors that make urban public transport non-gender responsive. This section highlights the key elements in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria. These are categorised under five broad areas: 1) inappropriate physical design and poor state of urban public transport; 2) insecurity and unsafe urban public transport; 3) affordability and inconsistencies in ticketing; 4) unreliable urban public transport; and 5) weak or absent legal and policy framework on the delivery of gender responsive urban public transport.

2.1. INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL DESIGN AND POOR STATE OF URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Good and gender responsive physical designs increase convenience and reduce risks for women and girls. Some of these include but are not limited to: wider and sealed road shoulders, speed bumps, bicycle lanes, trails, road signs, ramps, rails; separate toilets and rest areas within bus and railway stations and trains; improved lighting in streets/at bus stops/bus and train terminals; routes and timetables to meet women and children's needs; and storage space and priority seating for special groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant women and children.

However, in all three countries in this study, most forms of public transport are still lacking these designs for women and girls. In both Nigeria and Bangladesh the research revealed a lack of bus stops, limited lighting at stops and stations, passenger shades being occupied by unlicensed vendors, no sheltered waiting areas, and no toilets. In São Paulo in Brazil 58% of those who said they travelled at night reported an absence of lighting at bus and train stations.

“The buses will not always stop in bus stops. Also there are not enough bus stops, so women have to run up or down from a moving vehicle wearing their traditional clothes which often leads to accidents. Mobility at night for women is restricted as transport is unavailable and also unsafe. Narrow alleys and lack of street lights are also a common phenomenon in the cities of Bangladesh.”

One of the reasons behind this lack of gender responsiveness of public transport is male dominance of decision-making and planning in the transport sector. Thus there is an urgent need of affirmative action for women and girls in the transport sector. Having women join in decision-making processes (and not just on a token basis) would be a step in the right direction. Moreover, it is critical to conduct gender training for transport sector policy decision-makers and implementers to improve their gender awareness.

Whilst the size of the population in the cities examined is growing, the number of buses has not been growing to compensate. For
instance the number of buses in circulation in Brazil has not increased for over a decade; while in 2000 there was a bus for every 427 people\(^1\), in 2010 there was one bus for every 649 people. In Nigeria, the Abuja Urban Mass Transport Company had a total of 492 buses, out of these 100 buses were de-commis-sioned in 2015, leaving the company with 392 buses. There is a general lack of funding for public services around the world as a result of austerity in public sector spending. This impacts severely on the daily lives of women especially. Because of overcrowding due to the declining number of buses, travellers have to struggle while boarding and disembarking. Cases of overloading, lack of easy transfers and long walking distances from home or work to bus stops are common challenges users of urban public transport in Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria face daily.

2.2. INSECURITY AND UNSAFE URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Women are frequently subject to unwanted sexual contact and violence both on-board, and on their journey to and from, public transport. For instance, women and girls in Bangladesh are subjected to different forms of sexual harassment or violence while on the street. In a baseline survey on safe cities conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh in 2014, 57% of women reported sexual advances/physical contact/deliberate pushing; 48% dirty language from unknown persons; and 84% said they experienced derogatory com-ments/sexually coloured abusive language.

In average 6 million people use the transport system manage by SPTrans in São Paulo, 51% of them are women. According to research from IPEA - the Institute of Applied Economic Research - 152 thousand women are victims of rape in Brazil per year. Figure 1 highlights the growing reporting cases of sexual assault in trains and subway in São Paulo. Table 2 shows poor women’s most frequent concerns in using public transportation to cross the city alone in the night.

“The rain had made my clothes cling to my body, which made me give a little entertain-ment to the mundane life of the men of all ages waiting with me at the bus stop.”

Hawanur, Bangladesh

Figure 1: Cases of sexual abuse in subways and trains in São Paulo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deplom (Delegade de Policia do Metropolitano)
Table 2: Reasons to be afraid of waiting for public transportation alone in the perception of poor women living in the Heliópolis favela of in the outskirts of São Paulo city

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I’m afraid</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m afraid of being robbed</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is little or no policing</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transport takes a long time to arrive</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m afraid of being raped</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s poor lighting at the bus stop</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m afraid of catcalling</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I catch the bus too late at night</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ActionAid, Brazil, 2014

Personal safety and harassment on public transport are significant concerns for women; perceptions of safe travel go beyond physical road safety to include risk of harassment, stalking, sexual assault or rape. Whereas men prioritise transport efficiency, women prioritise safety and security in their respective travel decisions, and that fear of violence is a very real barrier to mobility and public transport access for women. Some short-term features that could promote the safety of women in public transport would be separate public transport vehicles, carriages and queues, panic buttons, security cameras or improved lighting.

On top of the issues raised above, this study shows that while there are laws on women’s safety and security in place in the three cities, they are weakly enacted. This is partly due to the negative attitude of police. For instance, the vast majority of women and girls surveyed (95%) in Bangladesh encountered several challenges in seeking help from the police. Some of these include police blaming the victim for being responsible instead of taking action against the perpetrator (65%); police taking the complaint lightly and not prosecuting the perpetrator (57%); police recording the incident without taking further action (37%); women being intimidated and therefore fear going to the police (28%), or women risking further harassment by police when they reported cases of violence (12%). Making urban public transport safe and secure calls for deliberate interventions on enforcement of existing laws on violence against women and girls in public spaces; positive social values and practices that deal with the perpetrators instead of blaming victims; and allocating resources to deal with the financial and social obstacles of women seeking justice.
2.3. AFFORDABILITY AND INCONSISTENCIES IN TICKETING

Women and girls have daily mobility patterns that are more complex than men, owing to their gender roles, which combine domestic and care-giving tasks with paid employment, income-earning activities, and community and social obligations. As primary family caregivers, women are more responsible for accompanying children to school and medical services, and purchasing fresh produce and groceries from markets; hence, their daily mobility will involve travel to and from these services and locations, often with purchases in hand. Hence, women’s urban mobility often depends on service scheduling and affordability.

As women generally have lower cash incomes and may have less decision-making control over household financial resources, they have limited money available for public transport. In Abuja, Nigeria, local buses cost approximately US$0.5 per journey; in Bangladesh local bus transport costs less than US$0.5 per trip, while a journey by rickshaw will cost between US$1-2.5. In Brazil, specifically in São Paulo, it costs approximately US$3 for a return journey to the city centre, and yet the minimum wage in Brazil is around US$200 per month.

Given women’s gender roles and associated travel patterns that require them to make shorter, more frequent journeys with multiple stops (often with accompanying dependants and other family members), they are more disadvantaged and face higher costs on public transport with ticketing systems that charge fares on a per journey and per person basis. In Brazil, it is reported that the price of public transport rose beyond inflation in recent years, with an average impact of 13% on average household income. Although the authorities have introduced several strategies to curb the situation, including making people working in formal jobs entitled to a single ticket, this does not extend to informal workers, the majority of whom are women. This makes public transport unaffordable and inconvenient for most women and girls.

Another example is in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where 80% of low-income female production workers cannot afford public transport and have to walk to work, against 61% of low-income male production workers. This situation calls for the establishment of public transport schedules and pricing systems that respond to the needs of women users, including affordable off-peak, multiple trip and group traveller ticketing.

2.4. UNRELIABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Due to unreliable and poor scheduling of buses, women spend more time waiting at bus stations and stops than men do, and the heavy traffic found in big cities does not favour women’s multiple roles and travel patterns. Although in Abuja, Nigeria, for example, bus schedules are clearly stated at bus stops, heavy traffic means buses often take much longer, with one bus taking over an hour for a route that would ordinarily take 20 minutes. Figure 3 below highlights the time taken to travel on public transport in Brazil compared to the time taken in individual cars, which men are more likely to own or have access to.

Women may turn down employment opportu-
nities further away from home if the transport system does not allow them to travel to and from work in time to also meet their domestic care obligations. Instead, they may have little choice but to accept lower-paid local job opportunities or informal income sources closer to or at home, so they can combine their dual responsibilities of managing household and productive activities.

2.5. WEAK OR ABSENT LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ON THE DELIVERY OF GENDER Responsive URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The three countries studied have the necessary laws on road safety already in place, and in some cases laws that regulate the issue of urban mobility, however, there are challenges in their enforcement. There are also gaps in laws regarding the elimination of the specific challenges women and girls encounter on urban public transport, in particular violence, gender discrimination and marginalisation of women and girls in decision-making. The existing laws do not make provisions for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Therefore, there is a need to review the existing laws and policies in order to develop accountability frameworks that conform to the respective international and regional instruments on gender equality.

The above elements show a general lack of accountability regarding the delivery of women and girls’ rights in the three countries. Although Bangladesh, Brazil and Nigeria are all signatories to international and regional commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment, there is limited state accountability in comprehensively promoting gender equality. This is reflected through a generalised acceptance of violence against women, lack of political will, inadequate legal protection and enforcement, insufficient resources (including human, technical and
financial investments), and allocation and/or poor implementation of national commitments. Governments have to make deliberate efforts to promote women and girls’ access to formal justice, equal opportunities to participation and representation in governance bodies and management of public transport, and training and skills development opportunities. Moreover, delivering gender responsive urban public transport requires a multi-sectoral approach involving the transport sector, legal and security sectors, urban planning, women’s organisations and the private sector, as well as user feedback. In all three countries reviewed this is not the case.

2.6. CASE STUDIES FROM DHAKA, ABUJA AND SÃO PAULO

Dhaka accommodates more than one-third of Bangladesh’s total urban population and about nine per cent of the total population of the country in an area of 797 square kilometres. Population density, therefore, is extremely high with 27,700 people per square kilometre. According to the Dhaka Urban Transport Network Development Study 2010, 47% of women used rickshaws, 21% used buses, 19% walked and 4.4% used private cars for daily trips.

DHAKA, BANGLADESH: HAWANUR KHANTUN’S STORY

“It was unpleasant weather, and the poor drainage systems had created water logs even on the main roads of Dhaka city. The umbrella I had with me could only protect my head but the rest of the body remained open to the rain. I did not pull my trousers up even though the water came crushing on my feet every time a vehicle passed by, as I would rather avoid the unnecessary attention.

I reached the crowded bus stop and bought the ticket, only to find out that the bus would be late. I patiently waited in the queue and realised that I would not be able to reach my university before 11:00am. I had to miss my accounting classes for that day, my third class in a row I am missing out on. The rain had made my clothes cling to my body, which made me give a little entertainment to the mundane life of the men of all ages waiting with me at the bus stop. They were staring at parts of my body and that hurt me more than the dripping dress. I looked around to find a washroom or toilet in the bus stop so that I could change into the dry clothes I was carrying in my plastic bag, not only to avoid unwanted attention but mainly because I couldn’t afford to fall sick. Even this expectation was wrong, as there was not a washroom I could use at that particular moment. I later found out that there are only 67 public toilets for over 15 million residents in Dhaka.

As I was still contemplating how to change to my dry clothes, the bus arrived. Everyone rushed towards the gate, without bothering about the queue. They will use all the physical strength in their body from pushing, pulling and elbowing, in the process I felt a pinch on my bottom, I turned around to scream but there were so many people behind me that I couldn’t say anything. The man behind me was instead screaming at me for pausing and looking behind, ‘Why did you stop? Don’t you want to get on the bus? Oh! Look how slow she moves!’

By the time I reached the gate, the bus conductor pushed me aside and was shouting that the nine seats allocated for women are taken. I was screaming and indicating to him that the other seats are general seats for both men and women, but he wouldn’t let me enter the bus and men behind pushed me away from the gate and boarded. I saw the bus leaving the stop and I stayed with a lot of anger and pain. I had to wait for the next bus. This is a regular event that bus helpers do not take women as they say no women’s seats are vacant, also they regularly make women sit on the heated engine. The bright side of the whole event was that I was now in the front of the queue and was very positive that the next bus would definitely have a women seat this time.”
ABUJA, NIGERIA: FARIDA’S STORY

Farida is pregnant and a mother of two – a boy and a girl aged five and three. She lives with her family in Nyanya, a satellite town in Nigeria’s Federal Capital Territory. During her last pregnancy, Farida had to commute daily to Abuja to her work at the Heartland Construction Company. In order to meet a strict 7am check-in time, she needs to wake up as early as 4am; bathe and prepare her child for school; and cook for the family. With her toddler in one hand, she joins a long queue of passengers waiting to board a vehicle of the Abuja Urban Mass Transport Company (popularly called “El-Rufai” after the former Minister that introduced the service). The El-Rufai buses charge the sum of NGN100 (0.5 Euros) per passenger, per trip and is the cheapest transport service within Abuja.

Due to its relatively cheap cost, it is very popular and used by the majority of commuters from the suburbs. The routes have neither designated waiting areas nor shelter spaces for commuters. Farida, like other women, the elderly and physically challenged persons, has no choice but to stand in queues for over 30 minutes daily. Farida has to stand this long with her toddler, amidst the shoving and cursing from desperate co-passengers. Sometimes she’s lucky enough to find a seat on the bus. Other times she competes with men for seating space and could end up standing in what is known as ‘the attachment’.

The absence of basic gender sensitive facilities and infrastructure such as toilets and rubbish bins in El-Rufai parking lots discourages most women from accessing this transport service. While security checkpoints are found in roads leading into the city, the absence of security personnel at El-Rufai parks generates a level of risk for commuters, as evidenced with the Nyanya bomb blasts in the 2014 by the insurgent Boko Haram group.

Due to the limited number of buses plying Farida’s route in comparison to the number of users and the traffic gridlock, going home is always a challenge. She has to leave work early to be able to catch the last bus. On occasions when Farida runs late, she walks down the unlit parking lot for these buses with her toddler close to her bosom, and without any visible security, with the fear of rape and/or assault dwelling in the shadows.

At some point in this daily scrum, Farida nearly suffered a miscarriage, but when she couldn’t get a leave permit from her employer, she decided to quit her job.

She has since drifted between jobs and has given up hope of holding a job in the city, given her last experiences. Now that she is out of a job again, her husband is left as the sole breadwinner and they struggle to pay their children’s school fees or meet the basic needs of the family.

São Paulo is the biggest city in Brazil with almost 12 million inhabitants with additional 20 million inhabitants living in the big metropolitan area. Despite being a well-structured city, São Paulo struggles with a crowded transport system. As happens all over Brazil, women are vulnerable to violence and harassment in public spaces, with recent research showing that 36% of women in São Paulo have experienced violence and harassment on public transport. The state bus company SPTrans registered 36 cases of sexual harassment from January to October 2015, against 38 similar cases in 2014.²⁰ There is also a growing number of cases of rape in the subway of São Paulo. Between 2014 and 2015 the police registered 123 denounces of rape – a growth in 28% (from 96 in 2014 to 123 in 2015).²¹ Assaults and robberies are also a major concern for women. In the first four months of 2016 São Paulo city registered 544 assaults and robberies, most of them happening during the evening period (63%) and affecting women more than men (almost 60% of victims were female).²²

Such an unsafe environment has a big impact on women’s lives, and provokes changes in their behaviour. Most women report having already given up leaving home at certain hours for fear of some sort of harassment or violence. The scarcity of buses at night forces them to wait long hours at bus stops in the dark, increasing their vulnerability to violence and assault.²³
SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL: NINIVE AND KEILA’S STORIES

It’s almost 6 pm and Ninive Ferreira Nascimento, 26, is packing her things to take a bus that will lead her to university. She is majoring in marketing at a private university in the centre of São Paulo, almost 20 kilometres away from her home in the favela of Heliópolis. Ninive will take two buses to get there. She is about to start the second part of her day. From 9am to 5pm she runs a project funded by Facebook in the favela that teaches local street vendors and small businessmen and women to use social media to improve their marketing and increase selling.

Ninive is tired but what really upsets her is the feeling of being unsafe along this journey to go, and to come back later at 11pm to her home. “There is no bus stop inside Heliópolis. So I have to walk all my way from home to the main street to get to the bus stop. The bus stop is dark and with no protection. Buses are crowded all the time, but in rush hour it becomes impossible. Workers who live here must wake up much earlier or leave work later to avoid extremely crowded buses at rush hour.”

Women’s strategies to avoid violence from overcrowded and unsafe transport can also become an economic burden for them. Keila Maria Ribeiro Barbosa, 28, pays twice the price of the cheapest possible fare just to make sure she gets home safely. “I live far from my work. I have to take a different bus that goes the long route around the city because I am afraid of getting off at my usual stop once it is dark. There is no lighting and it is next to wasteland. I’ve heard several stories of violence and assault around there. Women are considered easy prey because they are less strong than men.”

The fear of violence also affects Keila’s family budget: “If my usual bus is delayed, to avoid waiting at the bus stop I pay more to catch the intercity bus and then change again to finally reach my destination. If I am late, the lady who looks after my two children charges me for extra hours. They should put lighting at bus stops close to such places.”

3. MAKING URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT GENDER RESPONSIVE AND THE COSTS OF DELIVERY

This section will take a closer look at what is required to make urban public transport gender responsive, and what it would cost in Brazil, Bangladesh and Nigeria. Although there is a growing body of research on gender and urban transport, statistical data on gender issues and concerns in urban transport is still limited and data is not disaggregated by gender. Hence, it has been very difficult to estimate how much it would cost to make public transport in the three countries gender responsive. Progress or non-progress must be periodically monitored, and the results utilised in informing programmes and policy commitments and investments. Therefore, there is a need for more focused and comprehensive research on gender and public transport in the future to fill the existing gaps.

Some of the elements needed to design gender responsive public transport would be: physical designs, vehicle design, review/development of responsive urban transport policies and strategies, police training and increased presence in dangerous locations, public awareness and advocacy for safety and security on public transport, training workshops for top managers and policymakers on women’s rights, and developing strategies to encourage more women into the urban transport workforce. Below, we have costed the more tangible of these elements for Dhaka, São Paulo and Abuja.
In Dhaka there is a severe need for better lighting in public spaces to increase women’s safety, and thus their ability to access public transport. An electricity pole for street lights costs US$300-1,300. Currently there is a total of 71,276 street lights in Dhaka. They are all ESL (electron-stimulated luminescence) bulbs, which means the lights are dim, but there is a plan in place to convert all street lighting to LED (light-emitting diode). Moreover, public transport is often unavailable to women due to its scarcity and overcrowding, especially when it comes to buses. There are currently 9,311 registered buses (above 32 seats) and 8,459 registered minibuses (below 32 seats) in Dhaka city. It is estimated that an additional 3,000 buses are needed to meet current demand. The cost of purchasing these extra buses would add up to approximately US$207 million (with one bus costing on average US$69,000). On top of this would be the cost of running the buses. These cost calculations are for buses with priority seats for women but without ramps for people with disabilities, since in Bangladesh there are no buses with ramps, and so the Bus Owners’ Association could not give an estimate of how much this may cost. As per the law of Bangladesh, nine seats out of 53 should be reserved for women and people with disabilities. The rest are supposedly general seats for everyone, but in practice they are frequently taken by men. Installation of security cameras on buses would cost about US$500 for two cameras per bus. Regarding help buttons, this is a concept not familiar to the Bus Owners’ Association, so it has not been possible to estimate the cost of installing these in buses in Dhaka. Finally, there is also a lack of public toilets connected to public transport, making it difficult for women to move around freely. In Bangladesh it would cost around US$2,000 to construct facilities with separate toilets for women, men and people with disabilities.

In São Paulo the need for improved lighting of public spaces is equally important. It is estimated that one unit would cost about US$670 and thus 1,300 LED light lamps covering 24 kilometres of streets in a community of 200,000 people would cost around US$870,000. In São Paulo, the issue around access to public transport is less about quantity, and more about bus routes and how the fleet is placed throughout the city. São Paulo has 1,310 bus lines, with 115,000 vehicles attending to 15.6 million passengers per day. However, as shown in the case studies, the bus
routes do not cater to the transport needs of women, and it especially difficult for women living in poverty to get access to buses. Regarding help buttons, it will cost around US$145 per button. In many cases, this amount is already included in concession contracts. So the company that wins the concession will need to implement both cameras and help buttons. The problem here is how this is integrated to other systems and how transparent the concession is. As with Dhaka, there is a lack of public toilets in São Paulo. In Brazil it would cost around US$8,700 to construct facilities with separate toilets for women, men and people with disabilities.

### 3.3. COSTING GENDER RESPONSIVE URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN NIGERIA: ABUJA

In Abuja, public transport is also very crowded. The Abuja Urban Mass Transport Company estimates that 350 additional buses are currently needed, based on a calculation of its routes in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), though ActionAid Nigeria estimates suggest that the number would have to be quite a lot greater; maybe about 600. The costs of purchasing these extra buses would add up to approximately US$54 million (one 53 seat bus would cost approximately US$90,000). On top of this would be the cost of running the buses.

Regarding other public transport related costs, a staff member from the FCT Transport Secretariat estimated the cost for the construction of the Abuja permanent bus terminal in Nyanya (including provision of infrastructure) at US$15 million.

There is a clear need for improved public transport with regards to safety, accessibility and availability. But the question is, where does the money for these vital improvements come from when government budgets are already stretched? The answer for many developing countries, is from tax.
4. HOW TAX REVENUES CAN COVER THE COSTS

Developing countries lose billions of dollars every year through companies dodging taxes by using tax loopholes. Tax havens play a central part in the business of dodging taxes, which the most recent leak known as the Panama Papers showed yet again. But huge sums are also lost when the right to tax multinational corporations is limited by tax treaties, or when corporations are provided with tax breaks, relieving them of their tax obligations.

In order to make transport truly public and gender responsive it is crucial to review the collection of taxes and re-investment in the sector. In Brazil the recently approved law 12.587/2012 sets the guidelines for a National Policy on Urban Mobility. It establishes that 100% of the tax on fuel (CIDE combustivel) should be invested in public transport. An estimate of the national consumption of gas, oil, diesel, ethanol shows that this tax would amount to around US$ 3 billion annually with an addition of US$0.03 per each litre consumed. The amount would roughly correspond to 40% of the annual operation cost of public buses.34

4.1 TAX FOREGONE DUE TO TAX TREATIES

A tax treaty is an agreement between two countries on how to divide up taxing rights. Among the things tax treaties regulate is when a country can or cannot tax foreign-owned companies. The idea behind the tax treaties is to avoid double taxation – the same income or transaction being taxed twice. They provide certainty to international business by indicating which taxes will be limited when making money overseas. This certainty is often provided through restrictions on the rights of lower income countries to tax different types of income. It is the nature of tax treaties that they limit the taxing rights of countries, and in most cases tax treaties override national law. So, if a tax treaty rate is lower than the rate set in national law, companies that are able to use the tax treaty route will often pay less tax than similar local companies. As a result, vital tax revenue in lower income countries is lost.35

Recent research carried out by ActionAid shows that Bangladesh is losing approximately US$85 million a year from just one clause in its tax treaties that severely restricts the rights of Bangladesh to tax dividends of overseas companies.29 The findings in the previous chapter stated that in Dhaka alone another 3,000 buses are necessary to meet the huge needs of the city population, as well as better street lighting. The purchase alone of these would cost approximately US$207 million. Of course the running and servicing of buses would need to be covered too, but even so, with a change in just one clause in its tax treaties Bangladesh could take important steps meet the huge demand for better more available public transport. US$85 million a year could go a long way to improving the availability of e.g. buses and thereby improving the lives of millions of women commuting on a daily basis.
4.2. TAX FOREGONE DUE TO TAX INCENTIVES

A similar calculation can be made for Nigeria. Research produced for ActionAid shows that, because of an extraordinary 10-year tax break granted by the Nigerian government to some of the world’s biggest oil and gas companies, namely Shell, Total and ENI, Nigeria has lost out on approximately US$3.3 billion. Nigeria is Africa’s largest economy, the continent’s largest oil producer, and it has the continent’s largest reserves of natural gas. It is also Africa’s most populous country and it is marked by big inequalities, with more than 60% of the population living on less than one dollar a day. It is obvious that US$3.3 billion would have gone a very long way in improving public transport in Nigeria. It is estimated that, an additional 600 buses would be needed to meet current demand. Purchasing a bus in Abuja costs somewhere around US$90,000. Multiplied by 600 this amounts to US$54 million. Of course costs around running the buses need to be factored in too. But it is clear that if Nigeria had not given such lucrative tax breaks to three of the world’s biggest oil and gas companies, the purchase of sufficient buses and the cost of running them could have been paid for many times over, allowing women the freedom to move and obtain their rights to employment, education and health.

It is clear from the three country studies that, even with rough estimates, there is money to fund gender responsive public services such as transport if only it were prioritised, and governments in the three countries are attentive to closing tax loopholes and ensuring they do not give away unnecessary taxing rights.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“After completing overtime at the factory we were going home in a local minibus and as there was no space in the back one of us had to sit with the driver,” she said. “After a few minutes the driver started groping the girl sitting in the front... she got nervous and did not utter a word... when the minibus came to a halt she immediately got out of the bus and slapped the driver with her shoes in front of everyone...”

Female factory worker, Bangladesh

This paper set out to show how gender responsive public services are vital to reduce violence and to reduce inequalities for women and girls. The report looked at bus services, as a form of public transport, to show how a lack of gender responsive public services in major urban areas leads to increased inequality and is a major barrier to poor and excluded women enjoying their rights. We also showed how closing tax loopholes would
significantly increase countries’ spending potential, and would enable greater spending on gender responsive public services such as public transport. Critics might ask why we looked at public transport rather than education or health – services perceived to be more key, and more likely to transform people’s lives. However, our aim was to show that all public services can either exacerbate or reduce women’s inequality. Public transport is not a neutral space, and gender blind policies restrict women’s opportunities and exacerbate inequalities.

The report has found that there is a range of elements linked to the availability, accessibility and safety of public transport for women that limits their ability to move freely.

**AVAILABILITY:** The report looked at buses, which women commonly used across the countries studied. There are simply not enough buses or other relevant collective public vehicles, to meet women’s needs and the needs of a growing population. Even where buses are present, they are not affordable. In addition, ticketing systems in the three countries studied disadvantaged poor women, and those who make multiple smaller journeys.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Public transport is often not physically accessible to women who have to walk a long way, on dangerous routes – sometimes with their children or elderly relatives, from their homes or workplace to a bus stop. Furthermore, the case studies show that buses may be physically difficult to board because they don’t stop properly and don’t accommodate the restrictions that women’s clothing sometimes impose on them.

**SAFETY:** Women feel unsafe on public transport. Women often experience sexual harassment and even violence on their way to bus stops, while waiting for buses, and on the bus itself. This leads to women shying away from using public transport, which in turn limits their choices in life.

Based on an analysis of the non-gender responsive features of present public transport systems, this report examined some of the costs associated with making public transport available, accessible and safe for women in Bangladesh, Nigeria and Brazil.

These costs should be covered by governments. Governments claim that they cannot afford quality public services. However, when examining the tax foregone figures for two of the three countries it is clear, even looking at a very limited number of features, that closing tax loopholes can lead to substantial increases in revenue. This clearly shows that corporate tax dodging undermines the efforts of governments to ensure resources to cover the costs of gender responsive public services.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Progressive taxation

If multinational corporations don’t pay their fair share of taxes governments aren’t able to pay for the vital public services that protect women’s rights and reduce inequalities. It costs comparatively little to properly fund gender responsive public services. Therefore, we recommend that:

The governments of developed countries should:
Support the creation of an international body for tax cooperation at the United Nations, with a broad mandate and sufficient resources.
Review their own tax rules and treaties and revise them where they are harming poorer countries.
Ensure their anti-tax haven (Controlled Foreign Company) rules are effective and apply to profits shifted by multinationals out of third countries, not just the developed country itself.
Require multinationals to publish country-by-country reports on their turnover, profits, taxes and key economic data such as numbers of employees and tangible assets.

All governments should:
Stop trying to undercut each other’s tax revenues by lowering effective tax rates for multinationals, through whatever means.
Work in the longer term towards a global agreement to curb corporate tax competition, which would probably require a minimum effective tax rate and common tax base, and consider a shift to unitary taxation.

Progressive spending;
In order to respect, protect and fulfil women’s rights, governments should ensure that public transport is:

PUBLICLY DELIVERED
In the three countries examined, the private sector plays a huge role in urban transport. When looking at how current transport systems discriminate against women, it is clear that the state should play a bigger role in regulating, subsidising and even providing public services in order to make it available, accessible and safe for women to reduce women’s inequalities.

The government needs to regulate public transport so that schedules, routes and pricing systems respond to the needs of women, including affordable off-peak, multiple trip, and group traveller ticketing. And overall the state should make sure an appropriate quantity of public transport is available to meet the needs of its population. These measures will address women’s strategic needs, reducing inequalities. Also, the
government should meet the practical needs of women by providing safe spaces when using public transport e.g. separate toilets and rest areas within bus and railway stations and panic buttons, security cameras and improved lighting in streets/at bus stops/bus and train terminals.

PUBLICLY FUNDED
As is apparent from the report there is a clear need for better, safer and increased transport, but not just any form of transport. For strategic sustainability, public transport must be publicly funded or at least subsidised. The private sector tends to service popular and main routes where companies are sure to make a profit. However, governments have an obligation to ensure the freedom of women to move in order for them to attain their rights. As the private sector will only cover what it deems profitable and does not generally concern itself with whether or not its service is gender responsive, governments need to ensure availability in areas in which women live and need transport to and from, which are more likely to be in the margins of big cities. The funding for this could be found through better tax practices and by closing tax loopholes.

PARTICIPATORY
Governments should make sure that women participate in design of cities including the physical planning of cities and public transport, e.g. safety designs, ticketing systems or route selection. This will help ensure transport is increasingly available and accessible to them in the areas in which they need it. This would call for women’s participation in needs assessment, prioritisation, planning, budgetary allocations, design, implementation and monitoring of public transport.

ACCOUNTABLE
Governments should make public transport providers and their staff live up to agreed standards, and give rewards or sanctions resulting from their performance. Transport providers should be held accountable by elected officials, by other government units or directly by people who use the service, especially women (e.g. using complaint boxes, public audits and community scorecards).

EFFECTIVELY MANAGED
Governments should make sure transport systems are effectively managed, i.e. good financial management, proper procurement, results-based management, gender responsive human resource management. On the latter point, governments should employ affirmative action policies to include women staff e.g. female bus drivers, since public transport systems are highly male dominated. Also, capacity building on women’s rights for all levels of staff at transport authorities and public transport providers should be carried out.

Governments should also ensure coordination with other public services, for instance in relation to violence against women. Government action in this area should include police training and increased presence in dangerous locations, public awareness campaigns to prevent violence against women and specific services to respond to violence when it happens – including crisis centres and counselling.

In order to reduce inequalities and improve women’s rights, governments must meet women’s practical and strategic needs through their a gender responsive public transport system. This progressive spending can be funded through closing tax loopholes and better tax practices.
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Freedom to move
ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities.

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