REALITY CHECK: HOW EFFECTIVE HAVE EFFORTS BEEN TO INTEGRATE GENDER INTO DONOR AGENCY TRANSPORT INTERVENTIONS?

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a considerable focus placed by donor agencies on the inclusion of gender issues into the development of transport aid intervention. It is necessary to assess how effective this effort has been and whether there is a gap between rhetoric and reality. This paper draws on the experience of the authors, undertaking for the World Bank and others, on the ineffectiveness of efforts to integrate and mainstream gender into donor transport projects. It will also review mechanisms that can be used to ensure the better integration of gender and transport research into policy and planning. In addition, the paper will explore the more effective use of such research in policy and planning.

Keywords: gender and transport, transport and development, integration of gender into transport interventions, donor agency transport interventions

INTRODUCTION

The World Bank's strategy on gender (World Bank, 2002) makes a strong case for integrating gender into its practices. The strategy starkly highlights that gender inequality retards economic growth and poverty reduction. This conclusion is supported by the World Development Report 2000/2001 (World Bank, 2001) and the policy research report Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice (King and Mason, 2001). Much of this analysis centres on the reduced effectiveness of aid programmes and policies, especially in reducing poverty, in which gender is not integrated into the World Bank's activities. The gender strategy highlights the argument that gender integration is heavily concerned with development

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effectiveness and should be driven by the less-than-systematic integration of
gender concerns into the World Bank’s work across all sectors to date (World
Bank, 2002).

To adequately integrate gender analysis into transport sector projects,
programmes and policies, Elson, Evers and Turner (1999) argue that one should
take a sectoral view and consider both the implications of transport sector
policies and projects for men and women and the implications of gender
relations for transport sector level analysis and policy options. Rather than
looking at women solely as targets or sector beneficiaries, it is important to
examine the ways in which gender relations, gendered norms and gender
imbalances affect the performance, priorities and impacts of the transport
sector. This involves recognizing that the transport needs of men and women
can be different that men and women have different capabilities concerning
participation in the design and delivery of services and that the institutions that
design, deliver and evaluate transport sector projects, programmes and policies
operate according to rules and norms that are themselves gendered (that
is, they normally function in ways that prioritize men’s needs and viewpoints
over those of women). Looking at a sector as a gendered structure highlights
the ways in which seemingly “gender neutral” institutions may in fact be
gender-biased and may unwittingly overburden the economy of social
reproduction. The negative feedback to social reproduction can have negative
implications for the commercially oriented market economy and, ultimately,
undermine the overall effectiveness of sectoral investment. Elson, Evers and
Turner argue that this analysis can be developed further by looking at the
macro-, meso- and microdimensions of the sector.

They argue that the macrodimension is the context provided by the
overall public sector budget and the gender biases within expenditure priorities.
It is also reasonable to argue that the macrodimension is provided by wider
governmental policies, and it is here also that a national Government’s own
policies on gender equality and poverty reduction provide a macrocontext
for the transport sector. The authors argue that the mesodimension of
the transport sector is set by the institutions that make up the sector and
their gendered practices. An analysis that shows how gender bias can operate
in institutions has been provided by Goetz (1995). This identifies (a) how
institutional rules and norms can fail to value, recognize or accommodate
unpaid reproductive work, (b) how they can show preference to men and
exclude and discriminate against women as clients, recipients, stakeholders,
participants, etc. and (c) how they can establish women’s roles in public
services and markets as secondary, supportive and dependent. This work also
points to the fact that institutions can treat the household as an undifferentiated
unit and women as dependants of men within the household, which has significant implications for how travel data are collected and analysed. The final level of analysis by Elson, Evers and Turner (1999) is the microdimension of households and individuals. Here they particularly highlight the impact of gender relations on how men and women travel and the implications this has for the design and impact of transport sector projects.

This paper sets out a study that sought to use the theoretical approach described above to understand of about the gendered nature of the transport sector in order to assess the effectiveness of efforts to integrate gender into donors’ attempts to support transport within developing countries. Taking the analytical form of macro-, meso- and microdimensions to gendered actions within the transport sector, a series of case studies was undertaken to explore the gendered nature of transport sector investments made by donor agencies, such as the World Bank, and the effectiveness of recent efforts to enhance the gender equality of these investments. A total of 10 case studies in 9 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America (Bangladesh, China, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Peru, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Viet Nam) were carried out in collaboration with specialists from the countries in which the case studies were located. The case studies were conducted between March and August 2003 and explored in detail a series of aid-funded projects and initiatives supported by the World Bank and other donors, and one project supported by national resources alone. The case studies looked at the implementation history of projects, their gender policy environment, the gendered nature of the sector in which they were located and the gender impacts and outcomes attributable to them. The countries in which the case studies were carried out were selected in order to capture the range of gender issues in the transport sector and the contextual factors that affect both the outcomes and the ways in which transport interventions are conceptualized, designed and implemented. Differences in the nature of national gender policies were also considered in the selection of different case study projects, programmes and policies. Different types and scales of transport projects were also sought to be reflected in the choice of case study. As a result, the case studies included national or sectoral policies designed to promote women’s mobility and access to transport, large-scale urban projects that potentially benefit large numbers of women, rural transport projects that could potentially benefit large numbers of women, and small-scale urban and rural transport projects.
I. THE ROLE OF THE GENDER-POSITIVE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

If one is to view change in the transport sector in a holistic manner as a gendered structure, then an enabling policy environment at the macrolevel that promotes gender equality is a crucial element for the integration of gender into this sector. Without such an enabling environment, it is likely to be very difficult to integrate gender effectively into the transport sector. Conversely, however, a macroconstitutional, legal and social environment that promotes and enables gender equality is not alone sufficient to integrate gender into the transport sector.

The case studies report a number of examples, such as in Uganda, Senegal and South Africa, where an enabling gender equality environment is being created and where positive initiatives are being developed to promote gender equality in the national policy framework. These have influence at the macropolicy development level and at a decentralized level. However, the case studies highlight the inadequacy of merely having an enabling environment for the integration of gender into the transport sector. For, while it is clear that these national-level initiatives are not always successful, it appears that there is consistently a gap between the developing gender policy of a nation and that policy’s influence on the nation’s transport policy. There is a consistent failing within the transport sector to translate or incorporate changes in the policy dialogue around gender equality into dialogue within the sector.

Perhaps as significant as explicit national gender policy are the changes to decentralized local government structures as outlined in several case studies (in Bangladesh, China, Senegal and South Africa). These changes are designed to increase the relative gender balance of men and women in local government decision-making and may eventually have the effect of raising the profile of gender issues in transport and many other sectors from the bottom up.

II. A GAP BETWEEN MACROGENDER POLICY AND THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

In many countries, there thus appears to be a gap in the process of policy development between the developing gender policy framework and the transport sector policy. In Uganda, for example, an enlightened gender environment at the constitutional level does not transfer to roads policy. Roads policy fails to explicitly include gender in its objectives and strategies and thus
does not reflect the national commitment to gender-responsive development (Tanzarn, 2003, p. 14).

Even more remarkable is the case of South Africa, where a substantial gap is reported between the enabling macroenvironment and transport policy. Despite the fact that the country has a gender-sensitive constitution and is in the vanguard of efforts to develop gender-sensitive macrobudget processes, this has not been translated into a gender-sensitive national transport policy. The planning guidelines set out in the National Land Transport Transition Act, 2000 do not articulate the main objectives of the Constitution. The case study reports that the only example of the rhetoric of the constitution being accommodated is the inclusion in the national transport policy of some women being termed “special categories” or “vulnerable and disadvantaged” and passengers with physical disabilities. The South African case study argues that discussing gender needs is not the same as coming up with strategies to address those gender needs. The South African constitution has good intentions that do not filter down to the national transport policy. As a result of this gap between the macropolicy environment and the national transport policy, gender needs are not adequately addressed (Mahapa, 2003, p. 10).

China also exhibits a gap between its national transport policy and its gender policy. The case study argues that this is due to the perception of the transport sector as being economically and technologically driven and having addressed social impacts insufficiently. Another reason is that gender policy is implemented not through the integration of gender across all policy areas but through women-centred organizations by individuals who may not have the technical capacity to engage with the transport sector (Jie and Kurz, 2003, p. 12).

The case studies did find some examples of national transport policies including the integration of gender issues, although it was not clear to what extent these are anything more than rhetoric. For example, according to the Senegal case study, the National Strategy for Rural Transport will be “implemented following a global, integrated and participative process, that takes gender issues, local contexts, capacities of groups and individuals into consideration.” (Bop, 2003, p. 9).

The Senegalese rural transport strategies identified the stakeholders whose involvement was necessary in order to promote gender equality in the transport policy through representation in different bodies in charge of planning and implementation. These include the Ministry of Family, Social Action and National Solidarity and the Federation of Senegalese Women’s Associations. In
addition, women and vulnerable groups were part of the task forces set up by the Government to oversee policy coordination (Bop, 2003, p. 9). However, the Senegalese case study argues that some of these policy statements may be paying little more than lip service to the idea of integrating gender, as what is written in policy documents may not be acted upon. Some policy statements may also be seen as necessary for external audiences, such as donor agencies, as evidence suggests that ministries that should be included in this process have not been involved (Bop, 2003, p. 20).

Furthermore, institutional structures may already be gender biased, in that such policy statements will not lead to concrete measures to address gender inequalities. In the Senegalese National Strategy for Rural Transport, it is suggested that the State does not allocate resources to fund community roads, which, in practice, are used more by women than by men. Instead, the funding of the community roads is left to the rural communities, whose budget, the case study argues, clearly cannot afford it (Bop, 2003, p. 12). In China, the case study found that the opinions and norms among transport sector professionals act as a barrier. It was found that, among senior transport sector professionals, many more men than women saw no gender issues in transport in China. Of those who did, more men than women saw women's role in the sector as wives and mothers who could teach their children and husbands road safety, and as a potential workforce (Bop, 2003, p. 15). Furthermore, as shown in the case study from the Lao People's Democratic Republic, gender considerations may be integrated into policy, but without robust auditing procedures, such as mechanisms for setting targets, there may be no robust mechanisms to ensure that policy is put into practice. The Strategic Directions for the Development of the Road Sector, issued by the Ministry of Communication, Transport, Post and Construction of the Lao People's Democratic Republic do acknowledge the importance of gender issues with respect to improving rural road access. The directions include goals and objectives to support the wider national policy objectives of food security and poverty alleviation and even include those related to establishing more accountable management through the measurement and reporting of output-based key performance indicators. However, there are no key performance indicators for the integration of gender into the transport sector, which may undermine the efforts to promote gender integration, and such activities could become of secondary importance compared with those that have performance indicators to meet (Phengkhay, 2003, p.13).
III. LABOUR-BASED ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE: A COMMUNITY OF GOOD PRACTICE?

While the inclusion of gender in sector-wide transport policy was not found to be widespread and did not often lead to clear action, it is perhaps of equal interest that there were certain subsector areas of transport policy, such as rural roads maintenance and construction, where it was more prevalent. In particular, the awareness of gender issues is becoming more widespread in labour-based construction methods. It is an area in which the choice of technology is seen as providing a space to promote the participation of, and benefits to, women. It is also an area in which government departments are clearly addressing internal and external factors that have a bearing on women’s lives. These factors include redressing the imbalances in staffing, maintaining an equitable representation of women at all levels, looking at procurement policies and promoting construction methods that target the employment and training of women.

In Uganda, for example, the district, urban, and community roads policy appears to be in contrast with the wider policy described earlier. Here the White Paper on Sustainable Maintenance of District, Urban and Community Access Roads could be seen as a watershed in an otherwise male-dominated transport sector. The Paper allows for gender- and women-specific provisions to be implemented to ensure, as well as to strengthen, women’s participation in decision-making regarding district, urban and community roads. It is all the more significant as that the Paper deals with those secondary roads that are largely used by the majority of poor people, including women, to secure their livelihoods. Also, in South Africa, in contrast to a lack of gender issues in the mainstream of South African transport policy, the case study highlights the fact that policy statements issued by a subsidiary ministry connected to rural road management appear to be more enlightened. The agency responsible, the Department of Public Works, acknowledges in its policy documents that there are a number of internal and external efforts that have a bearing on women’s lives. These include redressing the imbalances in staffing and maintaining an equitable representation of women at all levels within the organization. External environmental efforts include the application of measures and policies that promote the optimal distribution of benefits to women, for example through procurement reform policies. In addition, the Department cites the promotion of utilizing labour intensive construction methods that target the employment and training of women. In addition, the Department has translated such policies into action in community-based public works programmes. The Department has introduced the Emerging Female Contractors Development Programme, which
identifies women with potential and then encourages them, through training workshops and networking, to establish businesses within the construction industry. (Mahapa, 2003, p. 14).

It appears that some of this policy development may be happening in areas in which transport sector policy is not as well integrated as is desirable, or in which responsibility for the implementation of transport policy is spread across several ministries. This lack of integration may present an opportunity for policies that support of gender integration; it may be easier to support gender integration without the outright opposition often faced in the male-dominated spaces traditionally associated with mainstream transport policy. In addition, the role of a well-established international discussion (see, for example, the ILO-Advisory Support, Information Services and Training Programme) around the involvement of women in labour-based construction methods may also mean national policymakers in this area (who are likely to interact with donor agencies) are used to using donors’ language in policy statements. Much of the discussion connected with the incorporation of women into road maintenance focuses on an easily measurable target of participation. The fact that there is an auditable yardstick of achievement must have an impact on how readily this approach can be adopted as policy. However, all of this does not necessarily translate into action. Furthermore, this fragmented transport policy landscape means that a policy discussion incorporating gender in one subsector will not transfer to action connected with the integration of gender in other transport subsectors, such as road safety, public transport or freight transport.

At other subsector levels outside the area of labour-based construction, few examples of gender-aware transport policies were found the case studies. One notable exception, perhaps, is the policy of the “feminization” of the traffic police in Peru. Due to high levels of corruption in the traditionally male-dominated traffic police force, many male officers were replaced by female officers. This was received with high levels of acceptance (about 70 per cent in one survey) and gives a different image of the police. Through a series of interviews, the Peru case study shows that the inclusion of women on the traffic police force appears to have had a significant social and cultural impact on the Peruvian transport sector (Guiterrez, 2003, p. 16). It appears to have changed overnight the public image of the traffic police and restored some of its credibility and the public’s confidence in their work.
IV. GENDER PRACTICE IN PROJECT PREPARATION AND DESIGN

In the design of transport projects in rural Bangladesh, communities appear to be clearly involved in the local priority-setting stage as well as in road construction and maintenance. As a result, the Rural Infrastructure Development Project included building women-only sections in local markets and involving community organizers in forming labour contracting associations with landless or destitute women for the routine maintenance of, and tree plantation along, the project roads. In addition, the implementation process was also influenced by donors, resulting in the appointment of a project sociologist to supervise and monitor all gender-related activities (Khatun, 2003, p. 5). The various elements included also lent themselves to be easily measured and checked to ensure that implementation had been achieved. In Lesotho, the Government encouraged local councils to participate in the identification of access needs and constraints. However, in practice, the technical design of microlevel projects does not include local communities. Thus, there appears to be an obvious gap between community representatives identifying access problems and the Department of Rural Roads prioritizing and designing interventions without their consultation, which may lead to projects that become “white elephants” and are ineffective in meeting community needs (Ntho and Tsikoane, 2003).

It is noteworthy to see what agencies were responsible for the design and implementation of these good practice projects. In some cases, it was the responsibility of a public works department or a local government ministry, often with remote assistance (financial and monitoring and evaluation) from an external funding agency. In Lesotho, the demand for a road development programme came from the Department of Rural Roads, which was under a ministry other than the one responsible for transport policy. The Department actively requests the district secretaries (of which there are 10) to compile and prioritize requests to fund infrastructure projects in the district, drawing on local councils comprising male and female village representatives. Subsequently, the Department requests funding from a variety of donors for particular interventions. Rarely is a mainstream transport ministry the responsible agency. It is perhaps reasonable to expect more gender-integrated projects to be more prevalent in subsidiary areas of a bureaucracy, where such projects may present less of a challenge to institutionalized gender bias (Ntho and Tsikoane, 2003).

Other case studies present a more varied analysis. The inclusion of gender in these projects is largely characterized by its failure to influence implementation. In particular, gender “goes missing” between the initial project
idea and the project planning documents, and between the project planning documents and actual implementation. This occurred in an urban Bangladesh case. The development of the World Bank implementation project DUTP emerged as a result of recommendations from studies conducted under the Planning Commission and UNDP Greater Dhaka Integrated Transport Study (DITS, 1994). The Study included a working paper on the mobility of women of which gender was an important component. There was also a series of World Bank-funded preparation studies, including the Gender Dimensions in Transport in the Dhaka Metropolitan Area (Shefali, 2000). However, when DUTP was established, even though it was a direct result of recommendations from the Study, there was no gender component within it. Despite the identification of gender as an issue in the project preparation stages within the Study, it reports that the implementation measures that were funded completely failed to address any gender issues identified during project preparation. Instead, they concentrated on the traditional elements of urban transport planning, including developing road infrastructure, constructing flyovers, developing bus terminals and bus routes, and improving traffic flow management across the road network. Despite the loss of gender issues from the project, DUTP was funded and is ongoing. This is probably a good example of a project funded on gender rationales but from which gender as an issue disappears during implementation (Zohir, 2003).

The Lima Urban Transport Project, is a similar case, in which gender issues were lost between the stages of the project’s design. The Peru case study concludes that gender issues were not explicit in the Transport Rehabilitation Project, despite gender clearly being part of other World Bank projects in the same country. From looking at only these two cases, it is not clear how widespread the loss of gender issues is in transport investment programmes between initial project preparation and approval, but more systematic mapping of such a gap is clearly required if one is not to conclude that it is widespread (Guiterrez, 2003).

The roles (both positive and negative) of external agencies in the promotion of gender integration are keys in all projects. The Viet Nam case study describes the “ownership” of a project’s gender component as originating from external actor rather than from national agencies. It highlights the fact that the first attempt to mainstream gender in the Viet Nam waterways authority came from external donors and consultants through the Inland Waterways Project which was funded by CIDA. It was clear that, while gender equality was not explicitly included in the objectives of the Project, gender was addressed as a cross-cutting issue throughout the project design, implementation and evaluation phases in keeping with CIDA policy on gender equality. In addition,
international gender specialists and trainers were assigned to the project, and mainstreaming gender was made an explicit function of the project manager (Vu, 2003, p. 7). CIDA projects in China have also made gender a cross-cutting issue. These projects have sought to build capacity to develop the transport sector, and have included quotas and targets for the training of women within the projects. It was found that such approaches to redress gender balances within the institutions have been met with mixed results. Attitudes among Chinese project staff have been mixed, and the case study concludes that a quota system may have a limited effect on gender equality in the short term. Without the constant “driving” of gender integration by external agencies, which is ultimately unsustainable, it appears that there need to be clear mechanisms in place to ensure that gender integration is carried out by the implementing bodies (Jie and Kurz, 2003, p. 30).

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

Monitoring and evaluation are the keys to the development of project knowledge. They ensure that projects follow their objectives, that the lessons from a project are learned, and that best practices are fostered across the development sector as a whole. Monitoring and evaluation were also clearly highlighted in the case study reports as an area in which gaps appeared. There appeared to be a mismatch between the desire to show a project had met its planned gender-focused outcomes and, through a lack of gender-sensitive monitoring indicators, the ability to do so or to rectify any divergence from the desired outcomes before the project’s completion. Several case study reports cite examples in which monitoring and evaluation appeared not to find the gender priorities set out in the project design. In Viet Nam, for example, the case study reports that there were several levels of monitoring during the project implementation, and the higher the level of monitoring the more powerful it was (both in terms of decision-making and funds control. Conversely, the local voice was less important, and women’s participation was almost unnecessary. Furthermore, the project fund management and the provincial officials had much better technical expertise than commune staff. As a result, albeit with some variation, the projects often achieved a very high quality of construction and contract management. This was what the monitoring team thought important and it was allied with the technical skills available, at the expense of its achievement in building beneficiaries management capacity and communication between waterway inspectors and population (Vu, 2003, p. 14).
In the project-level analysis, some case study reports show that, through effective monitoring and auditing progress, disparities and shortfalls within the projects had become evident, but they were able to be rectified either during the project or in subsequent projects. For example, with the benefit of hindsight, the latest version of the Ugandan Road Sector Project has introduced “gender capacity development plans”, which have very specific gendered actions for each component of the project (these being road sector institutions, labour-based training, national gravel roads, district roads and community access). Similarly, the Bangladesh Rural Integrated Development Plan is the third to take place since the ADB financed the first project in 1988. The Local Government Engineering Department has paid special attention to gender issues in the latest version of the project. It has put in place a sociologist to supervise gender issues from headquarters and a Gender Action Plan to address gender issues, highlighting objectives, target groups, indicators, activities and targets (Khatun, 2003). However, the degree to which the other projects explored by the case studies were able to rectify the gaps and inconsistencies is a potential cause for concern. As a result, thought should be given to ways in which the projects could be “retrofitted” with good gender practice.

The case studies conducted under this research project also highlight a variety of individual and community experiences resulting from efforts to integrate gender into transport investments. This section does not begin to do justice to the richness of data presented in the case study reports. However, key issues are highlighted, including a range of positive outcomes from the projects. In particular, a number of labour-based construction projects (in Uganda and Lesotho) and rural infrastructure projects (in Bangladesh) appear to have noticeable positive impacts on the gendered outcomes of opportunity and empowerment. However, here again gaps and inconsistencies appear. Many of the case studies report negative impacts on gendered outcomes around personal security. It appears that very few of the case studies are explicitly designed for the impact that projects may have on gendered security. Furthermore, there appear to be inconsistencies in the understanding of the effect that project activities will have on outcomes. A number of projects, which were examined by reviewers, sought to improve infrastructure, yet communities were often clear that the positive outcomes from such activities would be greatly reduced unless enhanced transport services followed such infrastructure improvements.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The gender-enabling environment found in many of the case study countries is not often translated into practice across the transport sector. Even in Uganda, the best gender practice case study identified in this paper, the research reveals a gap between the national gender framework and the consistent inclusion of gender in the transport sector. The bulk of the other cases reveal substantial gaps. Given the strength and explicitness of the commitment to gender in the national frameworks, its absence as a measurable aspect of transport policy can be viewed as a deficit. This deficit is currently visible across the board.

Thus, although the international policy discourse environment is likely to result in developing countries including gender in their policy frameworks, it does not necessarily lead to the systematic integration of gender into the transport sector. Some countries were found to incorporate general statements on the consideration of gender in transport policy frameworks or project planning documents. However, in many cases, the use of gendered language is likely to be a result of the interaction with international donor agencies and is perhaps done in order to receive funding. Rarely were these statements translated into action.

Auditing is therefore necessary to ensure the integration of gender at the mesolevel. For example, national and regional transport policy institutions have no clear process to identify (a) the gendered nature of the transport sector, (b) how many men and women are working in the transport sector, (c) who is planning the transport sector or (d) what women’s and men’s transport needs are or how they are met. That there was little understanding demonstrated of the role of transport in maternal mortality, water management or household survival strategies, for example, is an obvious and visible failure. In addition, there were no clear examples of the processes by which the needs of women and men were incorporated into project design. It should also be borne in mind that auditing is a revenue expenditure item rather than a capital expenditure item. The bias towards capital expenditure items rather than revenue items favours external actors in the policy discourse and the share of development resources: one-off construction contracts for roads on the basis of gender rationales with no follow-up evaluation of actual beneficiaries is not an uncommon experience within the field of gender and transport.

The importance of auditing to the lowest levels of the implementation hierarchy is clearly seen in the examples of projects that are funded on gender rationales but from which gender disappears as an issue or the purpose for the
action during the implementation of the project. Such factors as a lack of capacity to implement gender actions, a lack of monitoring indicators and a resistance to change all feature in this disappearance. The case studies report such disappearances to be commonplace. There is no systematic database available on how often gender is “lost” in this way, but it is something that requires further research, and there is a need to fund a pilot project for this purpose.

This paper recommends that “retrofitting” be required to promote the integration of gender into transport policy in order to overcome institutional resistance to change within transport organizations. Externally funded “retrofitting” is necessary in order to identify gendered transport needs, audit policies and projects and develop gender policy into transport action.

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