



Fishbowl session: Innovation for gender equality: A user's perspective

This session has brought in speakers from different parts of the world and covered different perspectives on how to bridge the gender gaps in the transport and mobility sector, particularly in the period of recovering from the COVID-19 crisis.

Ms. Lisa Castillo, Co-founder of Women in Motion (WIM), introduced their effort of building up a network of women linked to transport and mobility industry that has allowed for research, training, and promotion of concrete actions to improve the women's experiences in the transport sector. She shared findings from a study jointly developed with HIVOS, highlighting the innovation of producing a checklist/set of indicators to evaluate quality and inclusion of public transport systems from the user's perspective. She also underlined two main challenges in bridging the gender gaps in the sector, finance and the increasing trend of private vehicle use aggravated by the COVID pandemic. She emphasised the importance of addressing the mobility of care, accessibility, and digital inclusion for women in the planning of future transport systems.

Ms. Naomi Mwaura, founder of the Flone Initiative, shared key findings from their survey of the impact of COVID-19 on female professionals in the Matatu (informal public transport) industry in Nairobi. She mentioned that despite the negative impacts of COVID-19 on public transport, there are positive sides, for example, female passengers in Kenya are more willing to use the public transport services, because of being less threatened by harassment due to social distancing and less overcrowding in buses. She emphasised at the same time that preventing harassment of female users and workers will require much more than just social distancing. She stressed that we should "never waste a crisis", and the sustainable transport community needs to advocate for more fundamental changes (culturally and institutionally) in the sector to ensure the accessibility and safety of female users and workers in the sector.

Ms. Rachel Cahill, Head of Executive Office at the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), shared insights from TII's recent Travelling in a Woman's Shoes report, particularly on the differences for female users of public transport and active modes. She highlighted that women's caring and household responsibilities heavily influence their travel patterns, and women's perception of safety for the public transport and active modes is a pressing issue that needs to be tackled. She also stressed that alternative modes need to get the basics right (by being reliable, accessible, convenient, safe) while also delivering on higher-level needs (e.g. comfort, inclusion, health, etc.). She pointed out the importance of developing a gender checklist, which encapsulates all the elements that designers and planners need to take into account while

develop future transport infrastructures. She underlined the importance of data and the narratives of data, and shared how TII has leveraged ethnographic research method to capture the real-life experiences of the participants to strengthen the quantitative data.

The importance of data was underlined by Ms. Sheila Watson, Deputy Director of FIA Foundation. Ms. Watson shared findings from FIA Foundation's research, and emphasised that data collection efforts should always include the gender dimension, and this needs to be enhanced with resources. She also stressed that all parties in the sector should share best practice and knowledge, in order to achieve gender balance.

Mr. Jiffry Zulfer, CEO of PickMe a platform that facilitates a real time connection between the taxi passenger and the taxi driver in Sri Lanka introduced the Lady Driver Unit at PickMe, which is dedicated to recruiting and supporting women drivers. The unit was set up to make sure that women are comfortable with working as a driver. The wider aim is to gradually eliminate the social norms that limit women's participation in ride-hailing as drivers. He emphasised the importance of introducing different measures in the ride-hailing services to ensure safety for women as a user, and shared some practices that PickMe has adopted, for example a strict screening process of drivers and an easy "call for help" function integrated in the ride-hailing app, connecting users with police and emergency services. For female drivers, PickMe also implemented different support mechanisms to make sure that proper justice is given to the women drivers in case of dispute or accident. He stressed that recruiting more women drivers into ride-hailing could create a virtuous cycle by attracting more women riders.

Issues of women in the ride-hailing industry was further addressed by Ms. Alexa Roscoe, Disruptive Technologies Lead at the International Finance Corporation. She highlighted some findings from a study that explores how women and men participate in ride-hailing, particularly in emerging markets. Their studies show that ride-hailing apps reduce barriers to entry for women to work as drivers in this traditionally male-dominated industry. From user's perspective, ride-hailing helps women meet complex travel needs driven by household responsibilities. She further reiterated that to attract women as riders and drivers, the ride-hailing industry needs to continue to enhance security features and minimize perceived threats. Barriers, such as financial and digital exclusion, need to be removed to facilitate women's participation in ride-hailing and in the sharing economy more broadly.