



Mobility and Transport Connectivity Series

# She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport

## Chapter 3: Rural and Peri-urban Roads



**WORLD BANK GROUP**



QUALITY  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
INVESTMENT  
PARTNERSHIP



JAPANGOV  
THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN



## Chapter 3: Rural and Peri-urban Roads

© 2025. The World Bank  
1818 H Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20433, USA  
Telephone: +1-202-473-1000; Internet: [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

### **Some rights reserved.**

This work is a product of The World Bank. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of the Executive Directors of The World Bank or the governments they represent.

The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy, completeness, or currency of the data included in this work and does not assume responsibility for any errors, omissions, or discrepancies in the information, or liability with respect to the use of or failure to use the information, methods, processes, or conclusions set forth. The boundaries, colors, denominations, links/footnotes and other information shown in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of The World Bank concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries. The citation of works authored by others does not mean the World Bank endorses the views expressed by those authors or the content of their works.

Nothing herein shall constitute or be construed or considered to be a limitation upon or waiver of the privileges and immunities of The World Bank, all of which are specifically reserved.



### **Rights and Permissions**

The material in this work is subject to copyright. Because The World Bank encourages dissemination of its knowledge, this work may be reproduced, in whole or in part, for noncommercial purposes as long as full attribution to this work is given.

#### **Attribution**

Please cite the work as follows: Nato Kurshitashvili, Mitali Nikore, Ursula Casabonne and Brinda Juneja. 2025. She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport. Washington DC. World Bank.

Any queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to World Bank Publications, The World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20433, USA; fax: 202-522-2625; e mail: [pubrights@worldbank.org](mailto:pubrights@worldbank.org).

Cover pages photo credits: World Bank and Adobe Stock.

## Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Rural and Peri-Urban Roads</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Mobility.....	2
Employment.....	11
Entrepreneurship.....	22

## Preface

*She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport* is a comprehensive resource designed to empower transport sector professionals and policy makers to address disparities in mobility, employment, and entrepreneurship between women and men within the transport sector. The objective of this toolkit is to provide users with a structured approach to identifying and addressing gaps between men and women in various transport subsectors, including urban transport, rural and peri-urban roads, rail, aviation, maritime transport, and economic corridors and logistics. The toolkit presents specific interventions and indicators tailored to each subsector. The toolkit draws primarily from the World Bank's project experience and several other cases provided by other organizations.

The toolkit leverages practical insights from projects that tackle gender disparities in the transport sector, showcasing concrete examples and discussing common challenges and solutions. Projects were selected based on innovative approaches and a strong results chain, clearly articulating constraints, interventions, and indicators to measure progress. Examples span various subsectors and regions, ensuring diverse contexts and solutions, with preference for projects with several years of implementation to demonstrate tangible results. While some indicators may be challenging to adopt due to data limitations, the toolkit provides a comprehensive list of both tested and aspirational indicators for practitioners.

To enhance accessibility to the material, sector-specific interventions are detailed in separate chapters. This chapter addresses rural and peri-urban roads.

### Online Interactive Toolkit:

A digital version of this toolkit is available at [www.shedriveschange.org](http://www.shedriveschange.org) (as of July 2025). This online, interactive version serves as a dynamic and continuously evolving resource, ensuring that users have access to the most up-to-date and relevant examples. As a living document, the online toolkit will not be static; rather, it will be updated with new insights, best practices, and innovative approaches as they emerge, making it an indispensable resource for transport planners and gender specialists.

### Downloadable (PDF) Toolkit:

The entire toolkit, including this chapter and the sector-related chapters, is available at [She Drives Change: A Toolkit for Redefining Opportunities for Women in Transport](http://www.shedriveschange.org).

## Acknowledgments

This toolkit was prepared under the guidance of Nato Kurshitashvili (Senior Transport Specialist) from the World Bank's Transport Global Practice, with contributions from the following authors: Ursula Casabonne (Senior Gender Consultant), Mitali Nikore (Senior Gender Consultant), and Brinda Juneja (Gender Consultant).

The authors are grateful to the following peer reviewers from the World Bank for their feedback: Ana Waksberg Guerrini (Senior Urban Transport Specialist), Arturo Ardila Gomez (Lead Transport Economist), Karla Dominguez Gonzalez (Senior Transport Specialist), and Najibullah Ziar (Operations Officer).

We would also like to acknowledge Binyam Reja (Practice Manager, World Bank Transport Global Knowledge Unit) and Nicolas Peltier (Global Director for Transport, World Bank) for their support of this study.

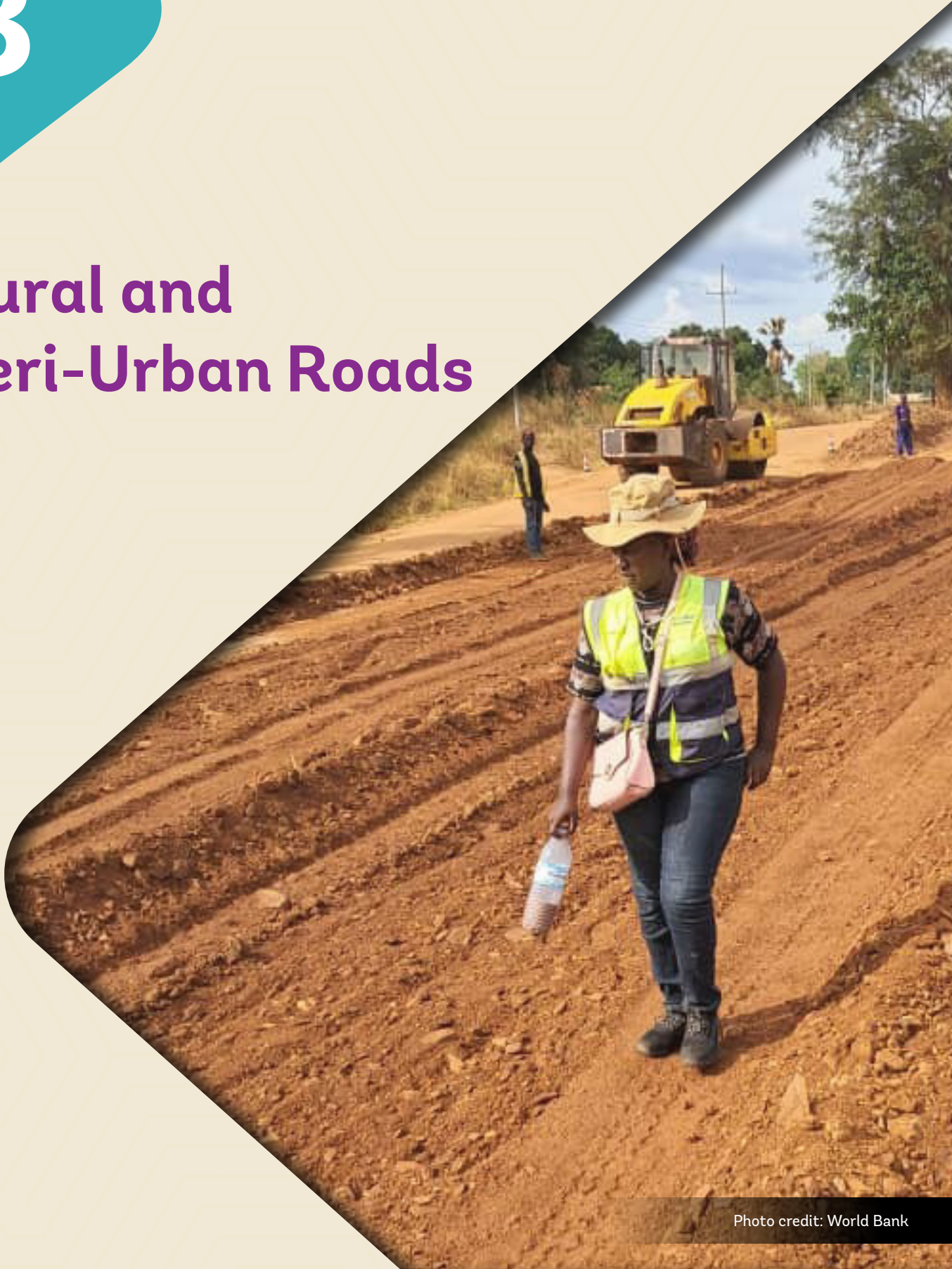
In addition, we would like to thank Benjamin Holzman and Jason Savino (Consultants, World Bank) for leading the development of the online version of the toolkit, Shamsiyya Mustafayeva (Consultant, World Bank) for splitting the toolkit into chapters, and RRD for the design of this toolkit.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the World Bank clients, project staff, and colleagues from development organizations whose insights and contributions enriched the project case studies.

Lastly, we thank the Government of Japan for its funding of the toolkit through the Quality Infrastructure Investment (QII) Partnership.

# 3

## Rural and Peri-Urban Roads



World Bank rural and peri-urban road projects typically focus on enhancing connectivity and accessibility, reducing transport costs, travel time, and improving road safety. They aim to support economic development by facilitating the movement of goods and people, particularly in rural and underserved regions, and strengthening the agricultural and tourism sectors. These projects also seek to build institutional capacity for road and bridge asset management, improve the climate resilience of road infrastructure, and ensure sustainable and durable transport networks. The rural and peri-urban road projects primarily focus on road infrastructure, including construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance. Transport fleets and their operations are typically addressed in urban transport projects, which are discussed in a separate chapter.

## Mobility

In rural and peri-urban road operations, disparities in mobility between men and women are closely linked to issues related to poor road conditions that make it difficult for women to access public transportation, especially in rural areas where transportation options are already scarce. This exacerbates gender disparities, as women often must rely on informal transport, which may not be accessible or affordable. Poor roads can increase travel time and the risk of accidents, making women more vulnerable to violence, harassment, and exploitation, especially when traveling alone or during off-peak hours. Availability, affordability, safety, accessibility, and social and cultural acceptability of road infrastructure and transport services restrict women's movements and limit their access to employment, markets, and social services.

## Availability

Availability is a critical issue, as transport infrastructure (roads) and services (such as public transportation) in rural and peri-urban areas are often infrequent, irregular, or absent. The scarcity of reliable public transportation and poor road conditions, especially the lack of all-weather roads that remain passable during wet and dry seasons, significantly contribute to the gap in human development indicators between women and men. Inadequate road infrastructure frequently fails to meet women's needs for safe and accessible routes, resulting in longer travel times, higher costs, and increased physical and economic burdens, which hinders their mobility and participation in community and economic activities. Furthermore, existing transport services, when available, may not align with women's schedules, which are shaped by household responsibilities such as childcare or agricultural work.

This scarcity of reliable and regular transport options exacerbates women's isolation. It limits their ability to travel for work, education, or personal needs, with many services catering primarily to male-dominated sectors like agriculture or trade, without considering women's specific needs. Incorporating women's needs into government plans for prioritizing roads for rehabilitation and construction is essential to ensure women's equitable access to vital services. Women, often primary caregivers and workers, rely heavily on accessible roads that lead to jobs, health facilities, and educational institutions. By prioritizing road infrastructure that connects women to these essential resources, governments can foster greater economic participation, improve health outcomes, and

increase educational opportunities for women. A thoughtful approach to road planning, one that considers the unique needs of women, will ultimately strengthen communities, promote gender equality, and enhance overall societal well-being. Table 3.1 highlights some of the key interventions to address these constraints and their corresponding indicators.

**Table 3.1. Addressing Availability Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Data collection to construct baseline:</b> Collect data to identify sex-disaggregated mobility patterns among current road users and the mobility needs of potential users.</li> <li>• <b>Consultation and participation:</b> Organize consultations for road projects by engaging a broad range of community members, including women, to ensure that road selection and upgrade work address their specific needs.</li> <li>• <b>Road prioritization:</b> Select rural and peri-urban roads for upgrades to provide women with better access to essential services and markets, reduce isolation, and improve their overall mobility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A survey to collect and analyze data about the road usage and needs, travel patterns, frequency, modes of transportation, trip purposes, travel times, and distances, broken down by sex and other demographic and socio-economic factors.</li> <li>• Number or/percentage of roads selected for upgrades that incorporate women’s specific mobility needs.</li> <li>• Community consultations where women actively participate and contribute to the road selection and planning process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women reporting change in their access to income-generating opportunities (for example, agricultural production, businesses, trade, or formal jobs) because of their improved access to roads.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women who can access health services with obstetrical facilities within X minutes because of their improved access to roads.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women who can access education/skill training facilities within X minutes because of their improved access to roads.</li> </ul>

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Construction/rehabilitation of rural and peri-urban roads:</b> Build roads that connect women residing in rural and peri-urban areas to essential services, improving their access to health care, education, and employment and markets. These roads should incorporate accessible infrastructure (for example, lighting, higher visibility with few concrete walls, and other elements, as devised through participatory feedback from communities).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kilometers of roads constructed, rehabilitated, and maintained with accessible infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of women who can access banking facilities, government offices, and other citizen-focused services within X minutes because of their improved access to roads.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of girls (and boys) who can access schools within X minutes because of their improved access to roads.</li> </ul>

## Affordability

Affordability of transport remains a significant barrier for women, who often earn less than men and face limited financial resources. These constraints can restrict their ability to regularly access transport services, both for themselves and for their dependents. The lack of affordable and accessible transport limits women’s participation in the workforce and discourages families from sending children to school or seeking essential services such as healthcare—ultimately undermining human capital development for both current and future generations. As a result, many women rely on walking or low-cost alternatives that are often time-consuming and physically demanding, especially for those balancing household and caregiving responsibilities. In many households, boys are prioritized for schooling, while girls remain at home due to financial hardship, safety concerns—including transport-related risks—and entrenched social and cultural norms. Table 3.2 outlines key interventions to address these barriers and their associated indicators. Case Study 8 provides interventions from Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

**Table 3.2. Addressing Affordability Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>School transport subsidies:</b> Provide targeted transport subsidies for girls (and boys) from low-income communities to ensure their enrollment and retention in schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School attendance rates for girls (and boys) receiving subsidized transport or number of girls (and boys) attending school due to subsidized transport.</li> <li>• School retention rates for girls (and boys) receiving subsidized transport or number of girls (and boys) being retained in school due to subsidized transport.</li> <li>• Number or percentage of school-age girls (and boys) from low-income communities benefiting from subsidized school transport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of girls (and boys) reporting change in their school attendance/retention rates due to subsidized transport.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Healthcare transport subsidies:</b> Provide targeted transport subsidies to women from low-income communities for routine and critical health care visits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/frequency of healthcare visits (both routine and critical) attended by women from low-income communities who receive transport subsidies.</li> <li>• Change in number of missed healthcare visits due to transport subsidies.</li> <li>• The number/percentage of women from low-income communities receiving targeted transport subsidies for routine and critical health care visits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women reporting change in their health outcomes due to subsidized transport.</li> </ul>

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Reduced transport fares in low-income areas or location specific reduced fare system for underserved areas:</b> Introduce lower public transport fares for women (and their dependents) in low-income areas to improve their access to jobs, education, and health services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number/percentage of women eligible for reduced transport fares from low-income communities benefiting from the transport subsidy program.</li><li>• Number/proportion of subsidized public transportation tickets issued to women in low-income communities as the share/number of all eligible women.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number/percentage of women reporting improved access to jobs and markets due to subsidized transport.</li><li>• Number/percentage of women reporting improved access to essential services (health and education) as a result of subsidized transport.</li></ul>



## Case Study 08

### Safe and Affordable School Journeys for Girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

#### The Challenge

In Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and the Newly Merged Districts, decent roads can mean the difference between going to school or staying home, between seeing a health care provider or getting sicker, between selling wheat or vegetables for a healthy profit at market or selling too cheaply to neighbors.

Bad roads and long commutes keep girls out of school. In the Newly Merged Districts, approximately 70 percent of girls do not go to school, compared to 30 percent of boys. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, these numbers are slightly better—49 percent of girls are out of school, while only 21 percent of boys are. Girls' dropout rates are particularly high, especially at transition points such as the end of primary school and the end of secondary school. These dropout rates are linked to a lack of safe, affordable, and reliable ways to get to school, which disproportionately affects girls.

#### The Intervention

The World Bank–supported Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Accessibility Project<sup>1</sup> provides subsidized transport to girls from marginalized rural communities. The project's innovative ideas are designed to protect schoolgirls and ease parents' anxiety. Transport providers undergo a comprehensive selection process, including background and medical screenings, verification of vehicle permits and certifications, community reputation assessment, adherence to a strict code of conduct, and completing sensitization training on appropriate awareness and behavior toward women. These are new and notable parts of this project, which are helping to lower barriers to education while respecting local cultural norms.

The project is on course to provide safe transport for 30,000 girls cumulatively over the course of the project, with a specific target of bringing 2,400 out-of-school girls back into the education system. Since commencement, the program has been positively received by parents and local stakeholders alike, with several schools reporting the re-enrollment of students who had initially dropped out, to avail the subsidy. This project demonstrates the transformative potential of addressing disparities between women and men in education through infrastructure development. By tailoring transport services to local needs and norms, such projects can serve as a model for improving girls' access to education in conservative and rural settings. The project also highlights the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration, in this case—between transport and education.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Accessibility Project (P177069).

<sup>2</sup> This study was reviewed and confirmed with the World Bank project team members Mr. Muhammad Bilal Paracha, and Ms. Sara Zafar Cheema.

## Accessibility

Physical accessibility is a significant challenge for women in rural and peri-urban areas, particularly for those with limited mobility, the elderly, pregnant women, or those traveling with young children. Poor road access in rural areas often confines women to working close to their homes, such as on farms, unlike their male counterparts. Inadequate infrastructure and poorly maintained roads make it difficult for women to access transport services, especially in remote areas where distances between villages and transport hubs are long. Additionally, cultural constraints in many countries hinder women from cycling, despite it being a common mode of transport in rural and peri-urban areas. Women often face barriers such as a lack of cycling skills, the inability to afford a bike, or fear of cycling in traffic due to safety concerns. Table 3.3 highlights some of the interventions and their associated indicators.

**Table 3.3. Address Accessibility Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-urban Road**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Pedestrian infrastructure:</b> Improve pedestrian infrastructure around rural and peri-urban roads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and maintain pedestrian sidewalks that are free from obstructions, such as potholes.</li> <li>• Provide clear, visible pedestrian crossings at intersections with sufficient time for crossing, particularly at busy peri-urban roads, and use traffic-calming measures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of kilometers of pedestrian sidewalks constructed or upgraded in rural and peri-urban areas.</li> <li>• Pedestrian crossings installed or improved at key intersections.</li> <li>• Intersections with clearly marked and visible pedestrian crossings.</li> <li>• Traffic-calming measures (e.g., speed bumps, signage, raised crossings).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women reporting improvement in their access to key destinations (for example, markets, jobs, schools, and health facilities) due to enhanced pedestrian and/or cycling infrastructure.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women reporting change in their usage of nonmotorized transport (walking, cycling) as a mode of transport due to enhanced pedestrian and/or cycling infrastructure.</li> </ul>

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Cycling Infrastructure:</b> Improve cycling infrastructure around rural and peri-urban roads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop separate cycling lanes or marked roads to safely separate cyclists from motor traffic; where not feasible, provide wide road shoulders.</li> <li>• Design routes that connect rural communities to essential services like health centers, schools, markets, and transport hubs, improving women’s mobility.</li> <li>• Install bike racks at key locations to allow safe parking for cyclists.</li> <li>• Offer cycling safety training for women to build confidence and reduce accident risks on mixed-traffic roads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of bike parking racks or secured areas installed at key locations such as markets, bus stations, schools, and health care centers.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women participating in cycling safety training, with subsequent improvements in their cycling skills and confidence.</li> <li>• Kilometers of dedicated cycling lanes or wide shoulder areas constructed, rehabilitated, and maintained.</li> </ul>	

## Safety and Personal Security

Personal security and safety concerns are another significant barrier to women’s mobility in rural and peri-urban areas. Transport systems in these regions are often poorly monitored, with inadequate lighting, security, and female-friendly infrastructure, such as safe waiting areas or designated spaces for women. This lack of personal security creates a climate of fear where women worry that they are at a higher risk of harassment, violence, and exploitation, particularly in isolated or poorly connected areas.

In addition to personal security, road safety also poses a disproportionate challenge to women. Poor road conditions, such as potholes, uneven surfaces, and a lack of proper signage, make travel hazardous for all users, but women (and children) are particularly vulnerable, as they are more likely to walk because of limited access to personal vehicles. These poor conditions increase the risk of accidents. Inadequate pedestrian facilities, such as sidewalks, crossings, and footpaths, force women to share the road with motor vehicles, putting them at greater risk. This problem is even more pronounced in rural areas, where infrastructure is often limited. Table 3.4 highlights some of the interventions and the associated interventions that address these barriers.

**Table 3.4. Addressing Safety and Personal Security Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Safe infrastructure:</b> install street lighting, closed circuit television (CCTV), well-lit rest stops, sanitation infrastructure, and emergency call points to enhance safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of surveillance cameras in pedestrian zones installed, especially in places where women report feeling unsafe.</li> <li>• Number of emergency call boxes operationalized in pedestrian-heavy areas and along isolated walkways.</li> <li>• Number of rest stops with sufficient lighting.</li> <li>• Number of public restrooms (with both male/female options) that are clean, safe (with locks), with running water and soap in project intervention area.</li> <li>• Number of well-lit streets and transit areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women who report improved access to jobs/markets and essential services as a result of safer road infrastructure.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women from local communities who use the upgraded roads.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Road safety education and awareness:</b> Develop and implement road safety education and awareness programs that address both men’s and women’s perspectives.</p> <p><b>Child-friendly road safety measures:</b> Implement child-specific road safety features, such as speed limits around schools, school-zone road signs, and pedestrian crossings that are easily visible to both children and drivers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road safety awareness that addresses both men’s and women’s perspectives and needs undertaken.</li> <li>• Number of women and men reporting better road safety awareness following the implementation of road safety education program that addresses both men’s and women’s perspectives and needs.</li> <li>• Percentage of school zones and child-frequented areas where child-specific road safety measures are implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in the number/percentage of road accidents, disaggregated by sex and age.</li> </ul>

## Employment

It is crucial to recognize that rural and peri-urban projects involve two distinct types of employers: road contractors (private sector), who execute construction work through project bids, and the road agency or any other state entity responsible for setting the bidding terms<sup>3</sup> and for oversight functions. This distinction is critical when designing interventions, as the applicability of measures varies. For example, facilities that cater to the needs of women, such as providing changing rooms and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), are more relevant to private contractors managing on-site personnel. Conversely, road agencies focus more on policy, monitoring, and ensuring compliance with safety and labor standards. Understanding these differences is essential when deciding on appropriate interventions, ensuring they are tailored to the relevant type of employer.

## Outreach and Recruitment

Women face significant barriers to entry in road works due to societal expectations and a lack of targeted recruitment efforts, resulting in a predominantly male workforce. The absence of training and certification programs for technical jobs restricts women's ability to gain the skills needed to compete effectively for specialized jobs such as equipment operator or in project management. Personal security concerns, such as risks of harassment or violence, particularly in remote rural construction sites, discourage women from pursuing careers in this sector. Table 3.5 outlines key activities that road companies can undertake to enhance women's recruitment, as well as measures that road authorities can implement through public procurement to promote women in the sector. Case study 9 brings an example from North Macedonia.

<sup>3</sup> Many contracting agencies are leveraging public procurement to train and hire local women for transport sector roles. This is typically achieved by amending bidding documents to require bidders to commit to training and employing women. A new rated criterion, introduced in September 2023 for all international procurements under World Bank-supported projects, offers an opportunity for contracting agencies to evaluate the quality of bidders' plans for promoting women in their workforce and providing safe work environment.



**Table 3.5. Addressing Outreach and Recruitment Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-Urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Procurement measures:</b> Reserve a minimum portion or number of contracted labor opportunities for women in road work roles in project bidding documents; specify job categories to be awarded to women with a focus on mid- and high-skilled technical jobs where women tend to be the most underrepresented and require bidders to demonstrate commitment to employing women and creating supportive workplace through an action plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action plans submitted by the bidders (road companies) demonstrating their commitment to employ women and to create a safe and supportive working environment.</li> <li>• Bidding documents amended by relevant contracting authorities incorporating women’s employment targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number or percentage of local women employed in low-, mid- and high-skilled technical roles by road transport companies.</li> <li>• Number of women managing community-based road maintenance groups out of all the groups operating.</li> <li>• Number or percentage of women reporting improvement in their incomes or livelihoods as a result of their participation in road maintenance programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outreach campaigns:</b> Raise awareness of road sector opportunities for women through local radio, short message service (SMS) blasts, and women-focused job fairs in rural and peri-urban areas, and collaborate with community groups, vocational centers, and NGOs to promote road careers and support recruitment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of female applicants for technical, operations, and managerial positions in road companies.</li> </ul>	

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Technical certification and apprenticeship programs:</b> Offer technical certification programs for women in mid-skilled roles such as construction, road maintenance, machinery operation, and project management, complemented by structured apprenticeships for practical experience. Provide scholarships or subsidies to support women from rural and peri-urban areas in accessing these opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of women obtaining skill certifications through targeted programs.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Internship programs:</b> Provide paid internships to build a pipeline of women in high-skilled technical occupations in the road contractor workforce and in the road agencies (for example, engineers, road safety specialists, geodesists, and so on).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of paid internships completed, with women making at least X percent.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Community-based Road maintenance programs<sup>4</sup>:</b> Promote women’s employment in local road maintenance contracts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and percentage of women involved in road maintenance groups (as opposed to an overall number of members).</li> <li>• Number and percentage of women in leadership roles in road maintenance groups, such as project manager, team leader, or decision-maker.</li> </ul>	

<sup>4</sup> Community-Based Road Maintenance Programs are initiatives that involve local communities, including both men and women, in the maintenance, repair, and improvement of roads, particularly in rural or peri-urban areas. These programs are designed to empower local populations, create job opportunities, and improve infrastructure in a sustainable and cost-effective way.

## Case Study 09

# Using Public Procurement to Promote Employment of Ethnic Minorities in North Macedonia<sup>5</sup>

## The Challenge

Public procurement accounts for around 12 percent of GDP<sup>6</sup> in many economies. Partly because of the money involved and the scale of many projects, procurement can be a powerful tool to promote female entrepreneurship, improve working conditions for women, and get them jobs in traditionally male-dominated industries like transport. Transport projects can integrate women into employment and supply chains through public procurement, as evidenced by several World Bank-supported initiatives.

## The Intervention

The Roma, Europe's largest ethnic minority, faces significant challenges, including limited access to transportation and jobs, along with other minority ethnicities in the country. Recognizing this, the World Bank supported the North Macedonia Local Roads Connectivity Project,<sup>7</sup> which promotes employment for Roma men and women in public works.

During the preparation, the project began with a detailed assessment of the needs of Roma women, Roma men, and non-Roma women regarding road infrastructure, public transport, and employment in transport.<sup>8</sup> Findings revealed that poor infrastructure disproportionately impacts Roma communities and that entrenched social norms, combined with welfare disincentives, keep Roma women away from jobs on road works.

In response to these challenges, the project's bidding documents were revised to include a requirement for road construction companies to hire women (both Roma and non-Roma) as well as Roma men. While the targets were not ambitious, they were designed to raise awareness and encourage the private sector to engage with and employ ethnic minorities.

Between 2021 and 2024, the project hired 271 Roma men for public works projects, but it faced some challenges in providing similar opportunities for Roma women, with only 17 women being recruited. Social norms and expectations presented a significant barrier; construction jobs are traditionally considered to be for men only. Another barrier was the country's social welfare policy, which discourages disadvantaged groups from seeking short-term employment because of the potential loss of their government stipends.

<sup>5</sup> The team is grateful to Maja Lazarevska, Director of the Project Implementation Unit for clearing the case.

<sup>6</sup> Erica Bosio and Simeon Djankov. 2020. "How large is public procurement?" World Bank Blog: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/developmenttalk/how-large-public-procurement>.

<sup>7</sup> North Macedonia Local Roads Connectivity Project P170267 (2019–2026).

<sup>8</sup> Kurshitashvili, N., Hadži-Vasileva, Kristina., Bekim, I., Vukanovic, S., 2020. Assessment of Barriers and Opportunities Using Gender and Roma Lens in North Macedonia: Case of Transport. World Bank.

Besides the efforts to include women and ethnic minorities in road works, the project has recently launched a Call for Proposals to provide grants to municipalities for implementing small community-driven infrastructure projects. Community participation, including those of ethnic minorities, will be a required condition for receiving the grants. The grant will fund activities such as the improvement of bus stops, children's playgrounds, and urban equipment for small squares in villages and cities.

### Lessons Learned

The project highlighted the importance of aligning public procurement changes with broader social policies and cultural norms. It also demonstrated that while there is some support for using procurement to promote women and minority ethnicities, practical tools and guidance remain scarce. There is a need to record and share successful approaches for incorporating social considerations into procurement processes. Lastly, the project showed the importance of flexibility in adapting strategies to overcome challenges identified during implementation.

## Human Resources Policies and Practices

One of the main challenges related to company HR policies and practices in rural and peri-urban transport is the limited implementation of gender-sensitive measures that ensure safety for female workers. Despite the growing presence of women in transport-related roles, many road companies still lack sexual harassment policies and complaint mechanisms that are accessible and well-communicated to all employees. Additionally, workplace infrastructure often fails to meet the basic safety needs of women, such as separate restrooms, changing areas, and adequate lighting, particularly in remote or male-dominated work sites. PPE is not always available in appropriate sizes or designs for women, which can hinder their comfort and safety on the job. These gaps in HR practices contribute to lower job satisfaction, reduced retention, and underrepresentation of women at all levels within the rural and peri-urban transport sector. Table 3.6 outlines some policies and practices that road companies can undertake, as well as the policies that road agencies implement through public procurement. Case studies 10 and 11 present interventions from Samoa and Tonga, and Uganda, respectively.



**Table 3.6. Addressing HR Policies and Practices Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-Urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Policies and practices related to safety and personal security:</b> Integrate contractual requirements in procurement for road companies to adopt a sexual harassment policy, establish a confidential complaint mechanism, and provide safe facilities (e.g., separate toilets and changing rooms, adequate lighting), along with appropriate PPE for all employees, as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual harassment policy adopted and communicated organization-wide.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of workplace facilities with safety features (e.g., separate toilets for men and women, changing rooms and lighting).</li> <li>• Number/percentage of contracted female and male employees reporting feeling safe and supported in the workplace.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women retained with the organization, in total and by different job levels, including low-, mid-, and high-skilled technical roles.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of staff reporting improved job satisfaction, after the introduction and/or improvement of HR policies and practices; disaggregated by sex and other key organizational metrics.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Commuting options:</b> provide safe commuting options for road workers, especially for women, to address their safety concerns, especially when roadwork involves early starts, remote sites, and male-dominated environments. The interventions could potentially include company arranged transportation, safe pick up drop off points, and carpooling options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe commuting options for road workers provided.</li> </ul>	

## Case Study 10

# Using Driver's Licenses to Improve Women's Lives in Samoa and Tonga<sup>9</sup>

## The Challenge

Women in Samoa hold under 30 percent of private and only 2 percent of commercial driver's licenses. In Tonga, just 15 percent of commercial licenses are held by women. These low numbers stop women from getting higher-paying jobs driving buses, taxis, or heavy vehicles. Cultural norms, financial constraints, and logistical challenges exacerbate these barriers, particularly in male-dominated transport industries. Addressing these challenges is a critical step in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

## The Intervention

To address these barriers, the World Bank's Climate Resilient Transport Projects<sup>10</sup> are helping women get driver's licenses in Samoa and Tonga. The projects are informed by surveys in each country, which revealed that cultural attitudes, affordability, and limited access to training are the key obstacles facing women drivers. To tackle these issues, driver education and safety programs were specifically designed for women and, in Samoa, the fees for such classes and the licensing fees were waived. In Tonga, the costs were subsidized. National media campaigns aimed to normalize the idea of women behind the wheel were conducted.

Cultural norms in Samoa and Tonga traditionally discouraged women from applying for licenses, especially for commercial vehicles, but outreach campaigns helped shift perceptions. Fee waivers in Samoa and subsidized costs in Tonga made participation more affordable, while institutional support meant the driving program would continue. By overcoming cultural, financial, and institutional barriers, these projects not only empowered women economically but also promoted resilient transport systems.

By the end of the pilot phase, over 120 Samoan women earned private driving licenses, narrowing the gender gap. In Tonga, 15 women completed a three-week commercial driver training program and learned to operate heavy vehicles like loaders and forklifts. Plans are underway to repeat this program in the coming year.

<sup>9</sup> A World Bank video on "Building roads and bridging gender gaps in Samoa" <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/11/17/building-roads-and-bridging-gender-gaps-in-samoa>.

<sup>10</sup> The Samoa Climate Resilient Transport Project (P165782) and Tonga Climate Resilient Transport Project II (P176208). This case study was based on a desk review of project documents and an interview with Sean Michaels, Senior Infrastructure Specialist, and documents provided by Satoshi Ogita, Senior Transport Specialist, World Bank.

### Lessons Learned

- **Institutional support:** Licensing training was supported by recognized institutions like Samoa's Land Transport Authority and, in Tonga, a collaboration with a training and licensing outfit from New Zealand. These organizations gave the program credibility.
- **Logistical challenges:** Access to vehicles for practice is still a constraint. Future projects could explore partnerships with transport providers to address this gap.
- **Scalability:** These programs' success in Samoa and Tonga offers a replicable model for other Pacific Island nations.

## Case Study 11

### Creating Opportunities for Women Refugees in Uganda<sup>11</sup>

#### The Challenge

Uganda hosts Africa's largest refugee population, with most refugees living in the impoverished West Nile region, which lacks adequate infrastructure. Women and children make up 82 percent of the refugee population, with many girls facing early marriages, pregnancies, and limited education. Although Uganda's economic policies aim to help refugees and host communities, remote locations, few jobs, and limited market access create significant struggles.

#### The Intervention

The Uganda: Roads and Bridges in the Refugee Hosting Districts and Koboko-Yumbe-Moyo Road Corridor Project<sup>12</sup> aims to upgrade 105 kilometers of road, connecting refugees and host communities to markets and jobs. The project addresses employment and mobility barriers for women, with key activities including:

- **Employment:** Creating job opportunities for women in road construction and maintenance through quotas in bidding documents.
- **Infrastructure:** Improving roadside vending areas, bus bays, lighting, and safety features based on consultations with local women.

<sup>11</sup> The case study was prepared based on a desk review of project documents and an interview with Ivan Emmanuel Mwondha, World Bank TTL for the Uganda: Roads and Bridges in the Refugee Hosting Districts/Koboko-Yumbe-Moyo Road Corridor Project.

<sup>12</sup> The Uganda: Roads and Bridges in the Refugee Hosting Districts/Koboko-Yumbe-Moyo Road Corridor Project (P171339) (2021-2026).

- **Capacity Building:** Strengthening the Uganda National Roads Authority's ability to address women's needs in infrastructure planning.
- **Data Management:** Sorting the Road Accident Database by male and female refugee and host community status to inform policies.

### Progress

The goal of the project is to increase female representation in road construction, including administrative roles, to 30 percent. The project is on track to meet this target, having already employed 100 women in roadworks. Community consultations are conducted to ensure women's voices are heard, address employment barriers, and gather feedback on workforce participation. Training programs are also in place to equip women with necessary skills. Additionally, the project aligns with other World Bank initiatives supporting women's cooperatives and market access. While the lack of baseline data has made it challenging to measure progress accurately, efforts are underway to address this issue.

### Lessons Learned

- **Community engagement:** Local women's consultations helped ensure that infrastructure designs met their needs, especially for safety and economic empowerment.
- **Collaboration:** Leveraging existing programs addressing women's employment maximized resources.
- **Data:** Baseline data are crucial for setting realistic targets and tracking progress.
- **Monitoring:** Ongoing monitoring of key metrics, with a dedicated M&E consultant, provides valuable insights and guides adjustments.

These lessons will inform future infrastructure projects, especially in refugee-hosting areas with unique challenges.

## Career Progression

Women in the government agencies involved in rural roads face significant challenges in advancing their careers. In road agencies often characterized by informal management systems, women, even if technically qualified, encounter limited opportunities for growth. To address these barriers, targeted interventions are essential. These include, amongst others, implementing training programs, establishing mentorship initiatives, and promoting awareness of unconscious biases in hiring and promotion to ensure that hiring is done solely based on meritocracy. Table 3.7 highlights some activities that road agencies can implement related to women's career progression and retention, and the associated indicators.

**Table 3.7. Addressing Career Progression Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-Urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>A performance review system:</b> Develop a performance review system for staff with a standardized framework linking performance reviews to workforce competencies, skills development, and promotions.</p> <p>A range of actions can achieve this objective, such as: establishing a promotion committee comprised of both women and men, adopting a blind selection process where candidates' resumes do not include personal details, and testing participants without revealing their personal details so as to eliminate potential conscious or unconscious gender bias in promotion decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of promotion committee members completing training on unconscious bias and gender equality.</li> <li>• Gender balance in decision-making processes, ensuring a fairer and more diverse representation in promotion decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women promoted within X months/years after the introduction of the formal performance review system.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women promoted within X months/years after the introduction of the mentorship/networking programs.</li> <li>• Change in employee perceptions of organizational culture related to equal employment opportunities (measured through regular staff satisfaction surveys).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Certification and technical training:</b> Provide specialized education and skill-building programs to women and men aimed at equipping them with the knowledge and expertise needed to perform specific tasks related to road construction, maintenance, and management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of women enrolled, completed, and certified through certification and training programs.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Women's mentorship program:</b> Implement a mentorship program pairing women with senior female and male professionals, focusing on various issues such as career development skills and addressing specific workplace challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women participating in the mentorship program.</li> <li>• Employer introducing the women's mentorship program.</li> </ul>	

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Women’s networking program:</b> Create a forum for women within the road sector to connect, share experiences, and seek support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of women participating in networking platforms.</li> </ul>	

## Leadership

Women also face significant challenges in attaining managerial and leadership positions within the roads sector. It is important to note that the interventions, such as promoting women to managerial and leadership positions, are more relevant to road agencies (state entities) than to private road contractors bound by short operating timelines, who have a predominantly low-to-mid-level workforce. Road agencies tend to have fairly static organizational structures and stable career pathways to leadership and decision-making jobs. In contrast, road contractors typically operate for shorter durations, ranging from six months to a few years, focusing on project execution rather than long-term employee development. For private contractors, interventions may need to prioritize recruitment, skill-building, and workplace policies and practices, rather than investing in leadership development. Table 3.8 presents some of the activities and the corresponding indicators to promote women’s leadership in the road sector.

**Table 3.8. Addressing Women’s Leadership Barriers in Rural and Peri-urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Women’s Leadership program:</b> Establish a targeted leadership training program for women in the road transport sector, focusing on strategic planning, financial management, and team leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number/percentage of enrolled participants who successfully complete the training program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number/percentage of women promoted to leadership roles within X months/years after the introduction of the women’s leadership training program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Annual review process:</b> Implement an annual review to track progress in women’s representation in managerial and senior roles, using specific metrics to measure effectiveness and adjust initiatives as needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employer introducing annual review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change in employee perceptions of organizational culture related to equal employment opportunities (measured through regular staff satisfaction surveys).</li> </ul>

## Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurs in the road sector face several critical challenges in starting and operating their businesses. Limited access to business skills training, technical knowledge, and advisory services specific to transport and infrastructure-related sectors hinders their ability to compete effectively. Social norms and unpaid domestic responsibilities further restrict their time and mobility, making it difficult to pursue entrepreneurial activities in road construction and maintenance. Financial barriers, such as lack of access to credit or collateral—especially for bidding on road sector procurement contracts—also limit their ability to scale operations. Additionally, poor road connectivity and lack of safe transport reduce their market access, particularly in rural areas where roadside marketplaces and mobility infrastructure are underdeveloped. Addressing these challenges through targeted skills training, financial inclusion strategies, and improved infrastructure is essential to unlocking women’s potential in the road sector.

### Business Skills Training and Advisory Services

While women are actively engaged in sectors critical to rural economies—such as agriculture and construction—their participation is often concentrated in low-paid or informal roles. This is largely due to limited access to skills development, technical training, and opportunities for income diversification. Social norms that confine women to traditional roles, along with the burden of unpaid domestic responsibilities, further limit their time and ability to pursue entrepreneurial or income-generating activities. Targeted business skills training and advisory services are essential to address these barriers. Such interventions can empower women with the knowledge and tools needed to start and manage businesses, improve productivity, and transition into higher-value roles. By equipping women with relevant skills, confidence, and support networks, these programs can enhance their economic agency and reduce vulnerability. Moreover, transport projects have a unique opportunity to support women entrepreneurs—not only within the transport sector but also across related sectors—by improving access to markets through rehabilitated roadside marketplaces and enhanced mobility infrastructure. Table 3.9 outlines some interventions designed to support women entrepreneurs, along with the results indicators.



**Table 3.9. Addressing Business Skills Training and Advisory Services Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
Provide business skills training with personalized advisory services for women involved in rural road construction and related livelihoods. Consider offering training on essential skills such as financial management, project planning, marketing, and procurement, and tailored business guidance from experienced business advisors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number/percentage of women participants reporting improved business skills and increased confidence in starting or managing their enterprises in or associated with the road sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number/percent of women entrepreneurs who start or grow their businesses in or associated with the road sector, following the receipt of the training, or business advice.</li> <li>Number/percentage of local female entrepreneurs benefiting from the business skills training and advisory services reporting improvement in their income, work orders, or in market access.</li> </ul>

## Access to Finance

Limited access to financial services—such as credit, savings, and insurance—poses a major barrier to women’s economic empowerment. Without adequate financial support, women struggle to start or scale businesses, invest in their skills, or respond to new market opportunities. Discriminatory practices in land ownership and inheritance rights further hinder their ability to secure collateral for loans, particularly in agriculture or other capital-intensive sectors.

Women-owned businesses in the road sector are especially disadvantaged in accessing financial resources needed to compete in procurement processes or expand operations. Addressing these gaps requires targeted financial inclusion strategies, including tailored loan products, savings schemes, and financial literacy programs designed with women’s specific needs in mind. Table 3.10 outlines a set of interventions aimed at addressing the barriers women entrepreneurs face in accessing finance within the road sector, along with corresponding results indicators.

**Table 3.10. Addressing Access to Finance Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Access to finance:</b> Provide women entrepreneurs in road transport—particularly those in road construction, maintenance, and related services with tailored financing through joint access to finance programs developed by transport sector stakeholders and finance institutions. The program could offer loans with flexible repayment terms, risk guarantees, and business development support. It could also include a simplified application process and financial literacy workshops to enhance the applicants’ financial management and business skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of women entrepreneurs securing loans through the initiative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percent of women entrepreneurs who start or grow their businesses in or associated with the road sector, following the receipt of the financial support.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of local female beneficiaries of the access to finance programs reporting improvement in their income, work orders, or in market access.</li> </ul>

## Market Access and Linkages

Even when women are economically active, they often face significant barriers to accessing markets—especially in rural areas with poor road connectivity and limited safe transport options. This is particularly challenging for women producing goods such as textiles, handicrafts, or food products, who often depend on intermediaries to reach customers. This dependency reduces their earnings and limits control over pricing and profits. Strengthening market linkages involves improving transportation infrastructure, ensuring safe and affordable mobility, and supporting women in establishing direct connections with buyers, cooperatives, or procurement platforms. Table 3.11. outlines some interventions designed to support women entrepreneurs with access to markets, along with associated indicators. Case study 12 highlights interventions from Azerbaijan illustrating how targeted efforts can positively impact women’s economic participation in infrastructure-related sectors.

**Table 3.11. Addressing Market Access and Linkages Barriers for Women in Rural and Peri-urban Roads**

Interventions	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
<p><b>Market access and linkages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop forums for women entrepreneurs in road transport to connect, share experiences, and collaborate through regular events and conferences.</li> <li>• Earmark contracts and subcontracts to women-owned and managed businesses in the road sector (by contracting authorities in the bidding documents for potential buyers).</li> <li>• Provide information sessions for the bidders and for women to help the latter navigate procurement processes, develop competitive proposals, and connect with opportunities to supply goods and services for road projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of contracts and subcontracts earmarked for women-owned and managed businesses.</li> <li>• Bidder awareness sessions and capacity building workshops for women entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percent of women entrepreneurs who start or grow their businesses in or associated with the road sector, following the receipt of the advice on market access.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women-owned and managed businesses being awarded contracts or purchase orders in or related to the road sector.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to marketplaces:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish designated roadside marketplaces near rural production centers—such as those for textiles, handicrafts, and food products—along key road corridors.</li> <li>• Reserve trade stalls for women entrepreneurs to enhance their access to local and regional markets. Provide training on marketing strategies, logistics, and customer engagement to help women maximize their income.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number/percentage of roadside marketplaces established with reserved stalls for women.</li> <li>• Number/percentage of women entrepreneurs using reserved trade stalls.</li> </ul>	

## Case Study 12

### Empowering Rural Economies in Azerbaijan

#### The Challenge

Nearly one-half of Azerbaijan's population lives in the countryside and works on farms. Agriculture, however, contributes only 7 percent to the country's GDP, because most farms are small and do not have access to big markets. Bad roads and logistics challenges drive up transportation costs, limit access to markets, and inflate expenses for small family farms. Without modern transportation, processing and refrigeration food spoils quickly, and farmers can be forced to sell cheaply. Women, who make up a significant portion of Azerbaijan's farmers, often struggle with business resources and need training opportunities. Women's jobs are concentrated in low-paying industries, and women often do not have the help they need to grow their businesses.

#### The Intervention

The World Bank's Regional Connectivity and Development Project<sup>13</sup> is designed to promote growth and development in Azerbaijan, with a particular emphasis on rural areas such as the Salyan and Bilasuvar districts. The project is rehabilitating 71.2 kilometers of road, enhancing access to markets, and benefiting approximately 250,000 residents. Improved roads will also extend to neighboring regions like Jalilabad, Masalli, and Lankaran. In addition, the project will construct warehouses, cold storage units, and small markets, while ensuring that both women and men can sell their products in the markets by earmarking spaces for them.

Importantly, the project aims to support small-scale roadside businesses, agricultural, and agri-logistics producers by providing training and business advisory services to help them start and expand their activities. A key focus is ensuring that at least 50 percent of beneficiaries are women, including those from single-headed female households, who are often among the most vulnerable.

#### The Progress

Women played an active role in designing logistics and market centers. These centers will include "community rooms," providing accessible spaces for gatherings—an important feature in rural Azerbaijan, where such facilities are scarce.

Training and business advisory services in areas prioritized by the communities, such as modern production and service techniques, business development, and e-commerce, are underway. Over 300 people have received training, and approximately 70 individuals have benefited from business advice.

<sup>13</sup> Azerbaijan Regional Connectivity and Development Project (P174379). The team thanks Nijat Valiyev (World Bank's TTL) and Elnur Abbaszade (Social and Community Relations Specialist at the Project Implementation Unit) for their input.

Women have been sharing innovative ideas, such as opening packaging centers, offering printing services, and selling tea, coffee, sweets, preserves, and bakery products. Some are aiming to expand their businesses online.

### Lessons Learned

- **Community mobilization and engagement:** Getting early buy-in from local authorities and leaders was critical for project implementation. The more the project team talked to community leaders about the project's potential benefits, the more people trusted them.
- **Community mobilization engaging both women and men:** Hiring women community mobilizers proved essential in reaching rural women, especially in conservative areas where women might otherwise be reluctant to interact with men.
- **Facilities:** Involving community members early in the design process led to better roadside facilities. Both men and women gave valuable input, which influenced lighting, seating arrangements, and dedicated areas for women.
- **Business training:** A survey found that women in business were most concerned about time limitations, their own lack of confidence, and location-related obstacles. To address that, training sessions were tailored, some were shortened, and venues were safe and culturally appropriate.
- **Local partners:** Local partners with prior experience in community mobilization and engagement with women brought useful insights into cultural norms and helped navigate social dynamics.

This case study underscores the importance of equality-driven infrastructure development as a way to promote inclusive growth. The Azerbaijan project is improving logistics and transportation while taking account of women's needs and perspectives. This intervention underscores the importance of working with community members as early as possible and adapting to local needs, be they cultural or business related.

