

The Economic and Social Commission for  
Western Asia (ESCWA)

# Regional Meeting to Strengthen the Sub-Committee's Capacity on Gender Equality

## "Women's Economic Empowerment and Access to Decent Work

"Safe and efficient transportation systems as key factors in promoting women's economic empowerment."

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Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



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# Introduction

- **Transportation systems are a key pillar of a healthy urban living experience.** When these systems are multimodal, smart, sustainable, efficient and safe, they not only empower individuals but also accelerate progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Numerous international conventions and action plans emphasize **the pivotal role of enhancing women's access to safe and efficient public transportation.**



# Sustainable Transport, Mobility and Accessibility: International Conventions and Action Plans

## Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

- It emphasizes the importance of transport, housing, water supply, and other essential resources in addressing gender-based discrimination.

## Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

- It emphasizes the importance of empowering women in all aspects of life, including access to public services and opportunities for economic growth.

## Sustainable Development Goal 11:

- It emphasizes the importance of addressing issues related to access to sustainable transportation systems and expanding safe, efficient public transportation.

## New Urban Plan

- It advocates for gender equality and specifically addresses the dimensions of safety, inclusion in transportation, and economic empowerment.

# Sustainable Transport, Mobility, and Accessibility - Definitions

The Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport defines **sustainable transport** as the provision of services and infrastructure for the mobility of people and goods, advancing economic and social development to benefit both current and future generations in a safe, efficient, affordable, accessible, resilient, and sustainable manner, while minimizing carbon emissions and environmental impacts.

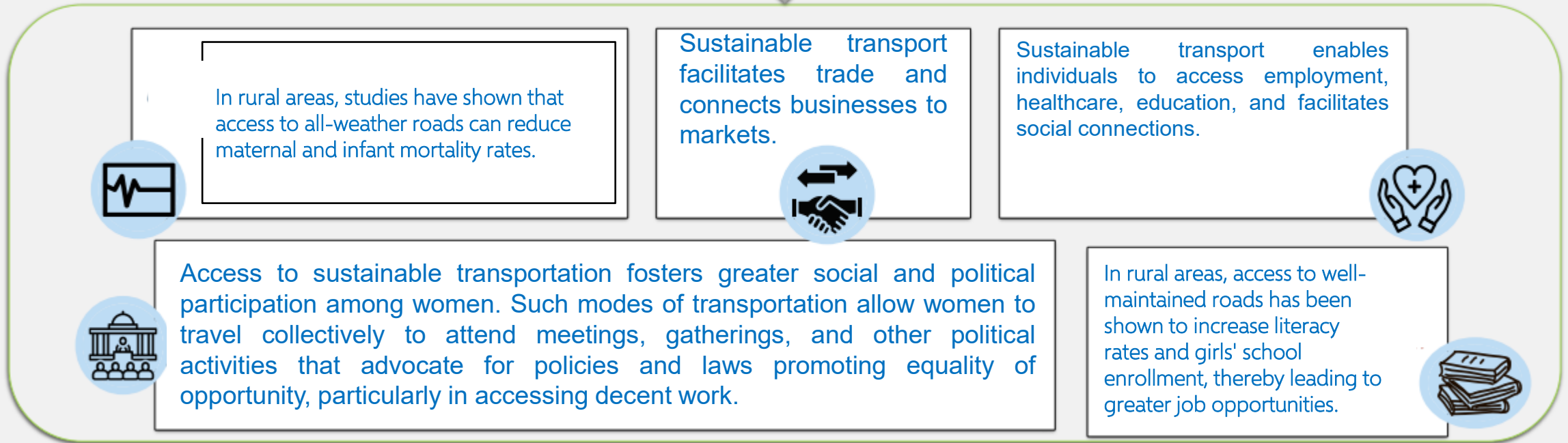
Safe public transport is a network of vehicles that meets the mobility needs of the general public, provides a secure environment, and is characterized by efficiency through reliable and affordable services that reduce travel time.

The public transport system comprises infrastructure such as bus stations, and services including transport networks, trains, and roads.

Access to safe public transport must be recognized as a multidimensional issue. Access to infrastructure and services is one key factor that partially explains to the mobility barriers faced by women and their economic empowerment.

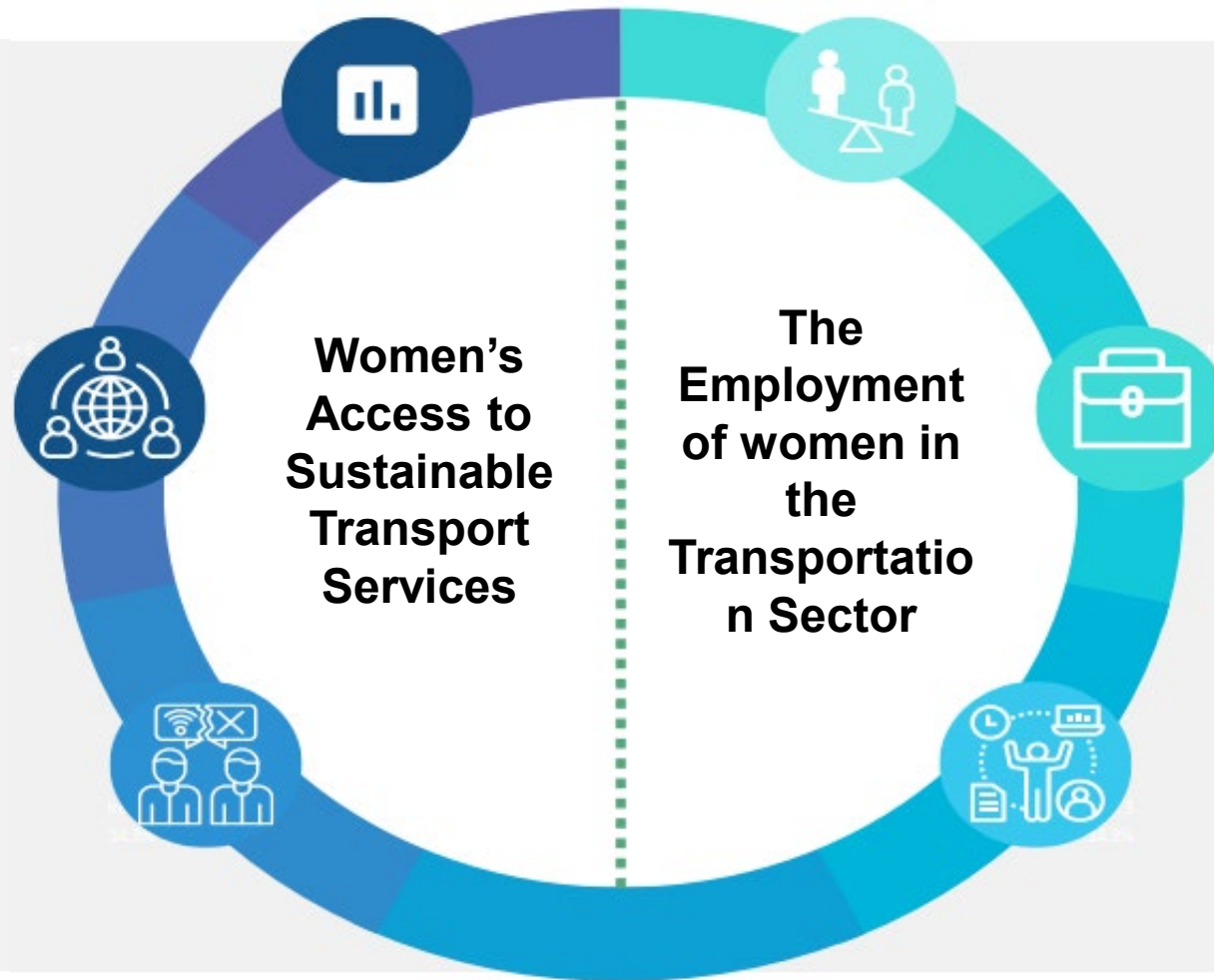
# The Role of Public Transportation in Advancing Sustainable Development

Transport is a system that facilitates mobility, enabling people to move from one place to another to meet their daily needs and broaden their range of activities.



Sustainable public transportation plays a pivotal role in reducing gender inequality and promoting women's economic empowerment.

# Transport and Women's Economic Empowerment.



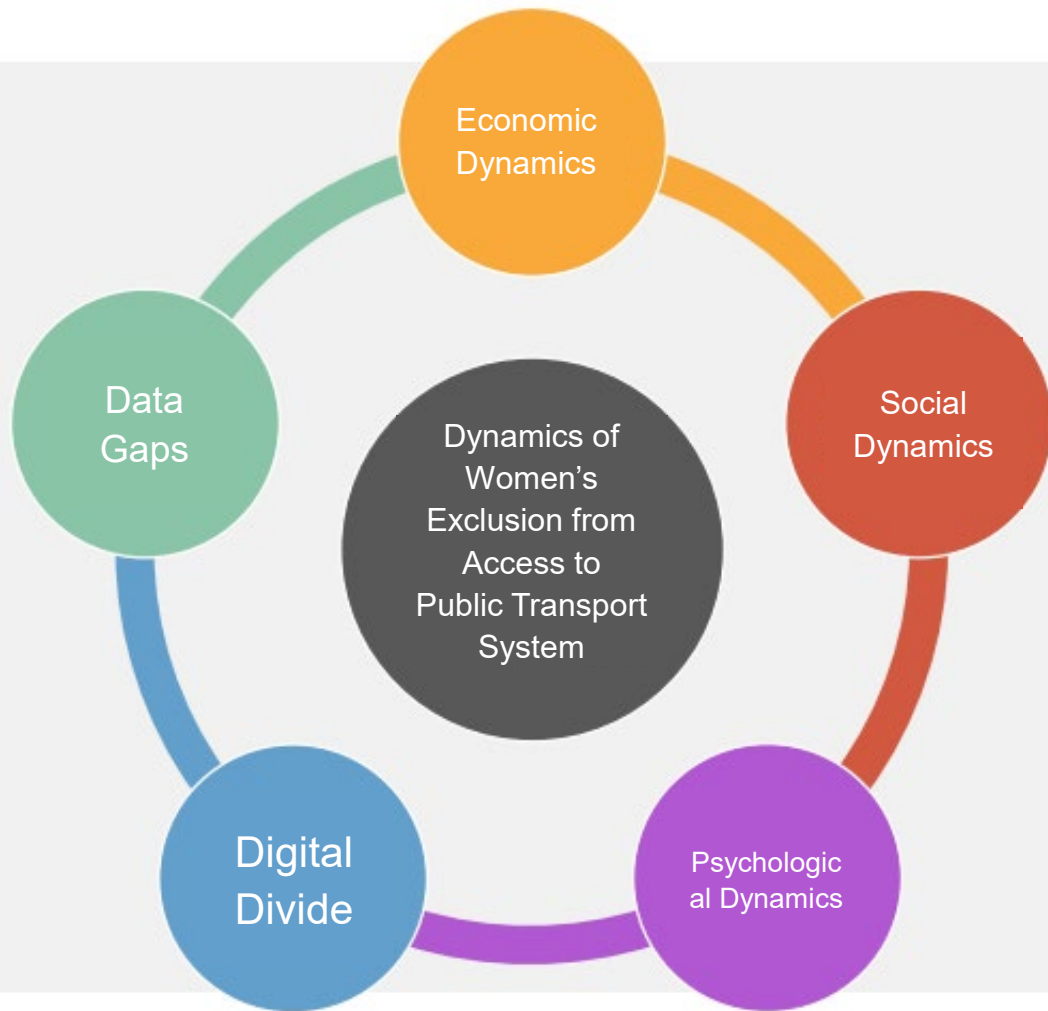
## Transport and Women's Economic Empowerment: Enhancing Women's Access to Sustainable Transport Services

- The issue of access to safe and effective public transport has become a **more severe turn for women in developing countries**, where:
  - A Significant proportion of women rely on public transportation on their daily commutes to and from work.
  - The lack of reliable transport options is a major barrier to employment, often resulting in missed work shifts, lost wages, and decreased productivity.
  - These difficulties are further exacerbated by the prevalence of gender-based violence, particularly harassment, on public transport vehicles and at stations.

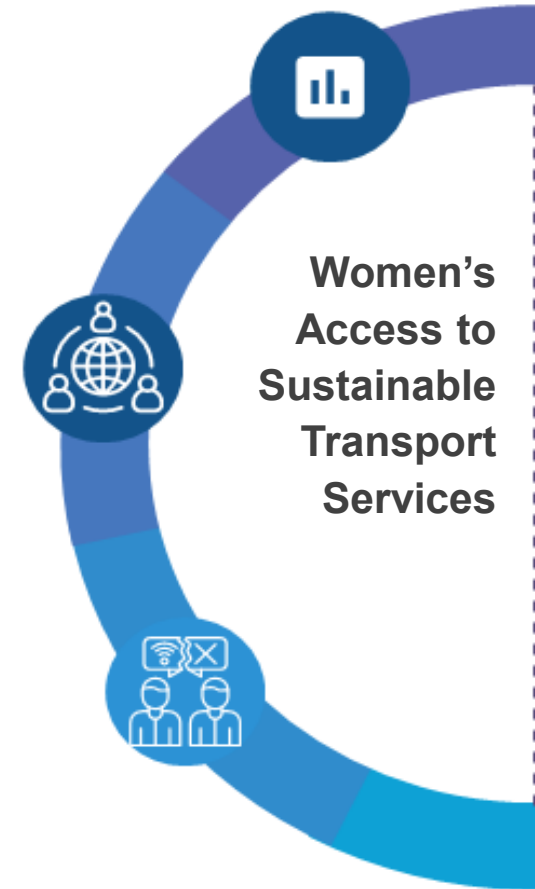




# Transport and Women's Economic Empowerment: Women's Access to Sustainable Transport Services



- **Access to safe public transport is a multifaceted issue, with several dynamics that hinder women's use of public infrastructure, preventing them from reaching their full potential.**



# Dynamics of Women's Exclusion from Access to Public Transport System: Economic Dynamics



Women's ability to afford transportation is affected by **poverty**, **gender wage gaps**, and **limited labor force participation**, all of which restrict access to public transport and reduce economic empowerment.



**Poverty rates among women are higher than those among men worldwide, including in the Arab region, where 59 million women live in poverty. This disproportionately affects women's ability to afford the costs of public transportation.**



**The gender wage gap directly impacts women's ability to afford transportation, as women are underrepresented in higher-paid positions and overrepresented in low-paid, insecure jobs.**

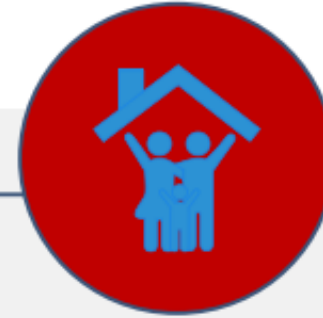


**Women's participation in the labor force is lower than that of men worldwide, with the Arab region recording the lowest level of female participation (28.8%) and the largest gender gap. Unemployed women often depend on others to cover the costs of transportation.**

# Dynamics of Women's Exclusion from Access to Public Transport System: Social Dynamics



- Negative social and cultural norms, along with prejudiced attitudes, limit women's access to safe and accessible public transport networks, deepening their economic disempowerment.
- **In the Arab region, social practices and negative attitudes restrict women's freedom of movement and independence. These practices are often justified as religious customs, such as prohibiting women from driving or leaving the house without a male companion.**



- **Caregiving is a social dynamic that limits women's control over their lives, as they bear 80% of household caregiving responsibilities. This imposes an additional burden on them, restricting their mobility and reinforcing perceptions of their social status and role within the family.**
- **Long-distance travel can make it challenging for women to balance work and family, influencing their professional decisions.**

# Dynamics of Women's Exclusion from Access to Public Transport System: psychological Dynamics



- **The frequency of violence against women undermines the safety of public transport networks and restricts women's access to sustainable transportation**, influencing their decisions to use transport for education or employment.
- The dominance of male workers in the transportation sector perpetuates gender-based discrimination and reinforces gender inequality.

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- **Elderly women and women with disabilities face both physical and social barriers in accessing public transportation.**
- To achieve sustainability, transportation systems must be inclusive to promote social and economic development.

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- Women, especially survivors of harassment, experience negative effects from the constant vigilance required for their safety, which often leads them to avoid more efficient transportation options.
- **The built environment shapes perceptions of safety, restricts women's mobility, and limits the opportunities available to them.**



- **Obstacles are more severe for elderly women and women with disabilities**, as the lack of safe transportation not only creates a barrier to their mobility but also exposes them to greater risks, limiting their access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

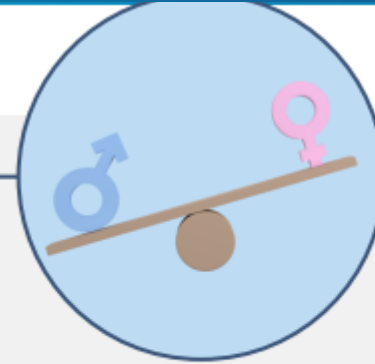
# Dynamics of Women's Exclusion from Access to Public Transport System: Digital Divide



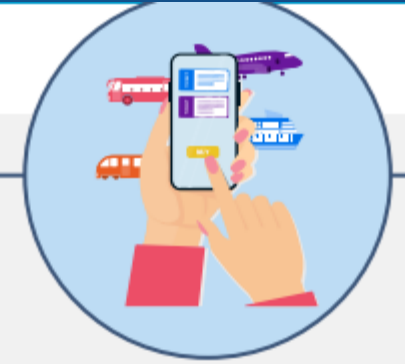
- Technological innovations and the internet promote sustainable development and the well-being of individuals, providing potential for sustainable public transportation. **However, the digital divide may exacerbate inequality.**



- Women are underrepresented in the digital sphere compared to men, primarily due to a lack of resources and education, which **limits their ability to fully benefit from the opportunities the internet provides.** The 2022 report by the International Telecommunication Union highlighted the lower internet usage among women in developing countries, driven by digital illiteracy.



- The cost of using the internet increases the gender digital divide due to economic inequality. **Affordable Internet and wireless access in public places are essential to enable women to use public transportation.**



- The shift to digital tickets threatens to exclude women from using public transportation if they are unable to purchase the digital tickets due to the digital divide.

# Dynamics of Women's Exclusion from Access to Public Transport System: Data Gaps



The gender data gap arises from biased or incomplete data, which negatively affects women's access to public transportation systems **and limits the understanding of how they use these services.**



**Without gender-disaggregated data, it is difficult to assess women's specific transportation needs,** leading to the design of services and infrastructure that fail to meet those needs, such as insufficiently safe stations or poorly designed roads.

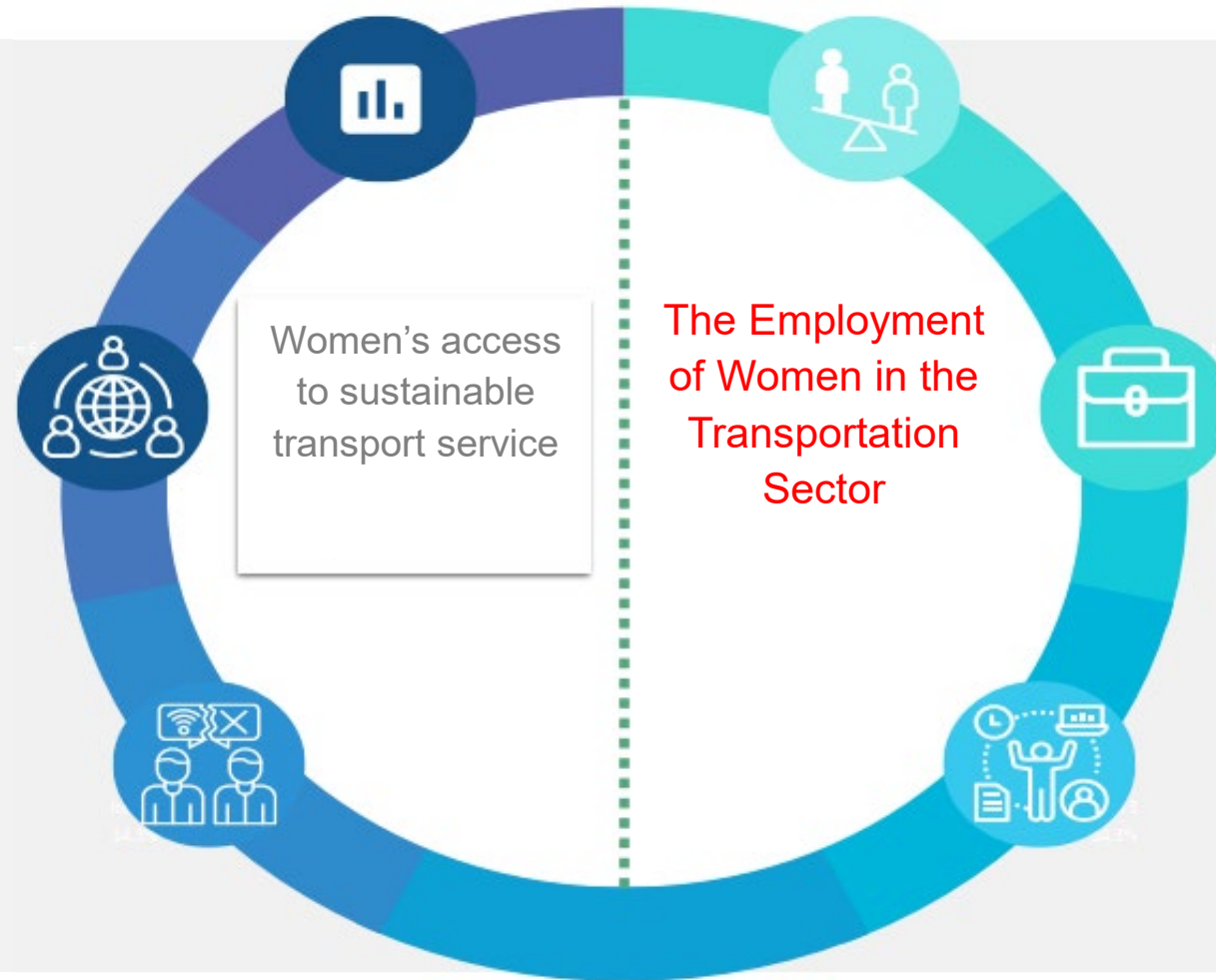


**Gender-disaggregated data helps identify potential safety and security issues, guiding initiatives to address them,** such as awareness campaigns or the provision of additional security personnel.



It is essential to improve data collection practices and **mainstream gender perspectives to ensure a transparent and accurate process that enables policymakers to make informed, reality-based decisions.**

# Transport and Women's Economic Empowerment



# Transport and Women's Economic Empowerment: The Employment of Women in the Transportation Sector

The Transportation Sector includes: land, air and water transportation

## The Employment of Women in the Transportation Sector



60 million  
Direct jobs worldwide

2%  
Of the global labor force

20%  
The percentage of females in the labor force

The representation of women in the transportation sector is much lower than global averages.

7.1%

in the Arab region, the overall employment rate includes the transportation sector.





# Transport and Women's Economic Empowerment: The Employment of Women in the Transportation Sector

- There is a strong representation of women in the aviation sector, with women making up 40% of the workforce. However, the percentage of female pilots worldwide is only **about 5%, and women account for just 3% of CEOs in airline companies.**
- Additionally, women represent no more than **2% of the global seafaring workforce.**



The  
Employment of  
Women in the  
Transportation  
Sector

# Transport and Women's Economic Empowerment: The Employment of Women in the Transportation Sector

## The Employment of Women in the Transportation Sector



- Increasing the employment of women in the transportation sector **helps reduce existing forms of inequality by challenging gender-biased norms and attitudes**. Additionally, it improves transportation safety for women, thereby empowering them economically.
- Barriers to women's participation in transportation include challenging working conditions, **such as long hours, remote locations, lack of family-friendly policies, inadequate safety practices, and insufficient facilities**. Additionally, limited access to resources and training hinders women from acquiring the necessary skills. Traditional gender roles further restrict women's employment opportunities in fields like transportation, engineering, and mechanics.
- **Gender stereotypes and biases** often discourage women from entering male-dominated sectors, such as transportation. Additionally, unsafe work environments expose women to physical and sexual harassment, particularly when they work in isolation or during late hours.

# Technology and the New Landscape of Sustainable Transport



# Technology and the New Landscape of Sustainable Transport

- Technology has revolutionized the ways in which people access transportation, bringing significant benefits to women, especially since they have often lacked access to traditional transportation services.
- Technology-based solutions and effective planning, such as real-time tracking of transportation, online ticket purchasing, and mobile applications, enhance the overall user experience, particularly for women, by making transportation more accessible and efficient.
- Smart transportation can enhance sustainability in public transportation by integrating advanced technologies into the transportation sector. Examples of smart transportation include public transportation systems, bike-sharing programs, and automated vehicles.
- Several cities have adopted applications that allow women to track their trips and alert friends and family if they feel unsafe.



**If governments and transport service providers fully leverage technology and innovation, it could lead to the development of a more reliable, safer, and women-friendly sustainable transport sector.**

# Technology and the New Landscape of Sustainable Transport



## Communication Infrastructure

- Access to information about transport services
- Electronic payment for services
- Leveraging Safety Benefits



## Internet of Things (IoT)

- The Internet of Things (IoT) enables real-time access to essential public transport data, such as traffic conditions, transport routes, and areas in need of additional transportation services.
- enhancing the efficiency of public transport services.



## Big Data and Open Data

- Implementing initiatives that benefit women (such as identifying areas that require additional public transport coverage or offering incentives to encourage increased usage).
- Analyzing and improving **trends** in public transportation use



## Cloud Computing

- Access to a wide range of connected applications and services using public transport, such as( trip planning and locating public transport services)
- Real-time updates on public transport services



## Global Positioning Systems (GPS)

- Location Tracking for Monitoring Public Transportation Vehicle
- Use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to Analyze Public Transportation Networks

**It is crucial to implement initiatives that promote digital literacy in order to fully harness the potential of digital solutions within the transport system.**

# The Sustainable Public Transport Initiative

## **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:**

The Smart Madinah Strategy is a project initiated by the Madinah Development Authority to plan the development of smart mobility systems. The strategy also aims to create a comprehensive multi-modal transport app, enabling users to plan their trips using various modes of transport.

## **United Arab Emirates:**

The new metro system exclusively serves women and children to ensure safety in public transport.

## **International Initiatives:**

Lyon and Strasbourg: Women's Demand-Responsive Bus Stations  
Chile: New Inclusive Public Buses  
Voi Co: Inclusive Electric Scooters



## **Jordan:**

The Code of Conduct in Amman, signed by all bus service providers, represents a significant initiative in the region.

# The Sustainable Transport Initiative: Al-Madinah

هيئة تطوير منطقة المدينة المنورة  
Al Madinah Region Development Authority



برنامج المدينة الذكية  
Smart Madinah Program

## Sectors

### Environment and Agriculture



Providing a vibrant sustainable culture while preserving resources for future generations.

### Tourism



To provide visitors with a seamless, enjoyable, affluent, and safe experience throughout the city.

### Health and Safety



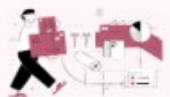
Empowering residents to maintain good health by providing proactive, responsive, and high-quality healthcare services.

### The Old Neighborhoods



Enabling the integration of the old neighborhoods in Al-Madinah with the thriving economic and social landscape, and providing higher living standards.

### Business, Industrial, and Logistics Sectors



Providing an integrated, effective, and productive environment to foster prosperity in business and industry.

### Transport and Mobility



Providing a safer, more comfortable city with improved mobility and accessibility.

Assistive technologies designed to enhance mobility.



- Smart Street Lighting
- Identification of accident hot spots to enhance emergency response.
- Smart Traffic Lighting
- Implementation of traffic simulations and strategic road planning.
- Improvement of Mobile Network Capacity

Move in Al Madinah Companion App



- Ticket Reservation and transport permits
- Availability of all public transport options through a single app.
- Displaying trip schedules with and without internet connectivity.
- Notifications on suggested routes and real-time traffic updates.
- Unified Loyalty and Payment Program

Direct transport infrastructure with prompt and responsive service.



- Child-friendly safe seating areas
- Folding ramps for wheelchair users
- Ensuring public transport is designed to be inclusive for both women and men.
- Alert and warning system

# The Sustainable Public Transport Initiative: The United Arab Emirates

## Initiatives



Pink taxis, which are driven by women, are available to transport women, children under the age of ten, and families.



There are designated parking spaces for women throughout Abu Dhabi.



In Dubai, the metro features separate cabins designated exclusively for women. A fine of 100 dirhams is imposed for occupying a cabin reserved for women on public transportation in the UAE.

## Laws and Security



Women can utilize the SOS button in the Dubai Police app to alert the authorities with their location and set up emergency contacts. The app also offers reporting and instant chat services, as well as information on women's rights and safety tips.



The Dubai Police have established a Women's Complaints Office, providing a safe space for women to report crimes and seek support.



Federal Law No. 3 of 1987, known as the UAE Penal Code, criminalizes any inappropriate or indecent behavior toward women.



# Recommendations for Public Policy

## Enhancing the Planning of Public Transportation Systems.



- Adopt a human-centered approach in urban planning that addresses the needs of all residents and ensures urban infrastructure is responsive, enhancing both safety and accessibility.
- Strengthen the capacity to integrate gender perspectives in gender coordination centers within ministries and transportation committees.
- Leverage smart and digital solutions to improve security and safety for women and girls in public spaces.

## Promoting Universal Access to Public Transportation Systems



- Design safe and effective public transportation systems that address the needs of all residents, including people with disabilities, the elderly, women, and pregnant individuals, based on the principle of inclusivity and leaving no one behind.
- Reduce the digital gender gap by ensuring women and girls have access to smart technologies and digital solutions.
- Develop small-scale transportation options specifically tailored to the needs and comfort of women in urban areas, while also ensuring practicality for short trips.

## Reducing Public Transportation System Costs



- Encourage the adoption of affordable alternative transportation options, such as car-sharing and ride-sharing programs.
- Advocate for the development of smart transportation infrastructure, including smart traffic systems and intelligent parking solutions, to reduce traffic congestion and minimize both time and financial costs of transportation. Additionally, promote the implementation of smart lighting to enhance safety and security.

## Enhancing Women's Employment Opportunities in the Transportation Sector



- Encourage diversity and inclusion in recruitment and employment practices to ensure that women are equally considered for transportation jobs alongside men.
- Promote public-private partnerships that support women-owned transportation businesses and enhance women's participation in the sector as entrepreneurs.
- Highlight female role models who challenge stereotypes in the transportation industry, inspiring more women to pursue careers in this field.

# Share your Experience..

- What unique challenges do women face when using transportation systems in your country?
- What programs and policies have been implemented in your country to improve transportation options for women?



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## **Safe and Efficient Transportation Systems as Key Factors in Women's Economic Empowerment.**

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# Thank You

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