

Opening session: Closing the gender gap in transport entrepreneurship

24 May 2023, 09:00-10:30 | [Session outline](#)

Closing the gender gap in transport entrepreneurship is not just about equal representation, but also bringing a wider variety of perspectives and approaches to the table, leading to a more inclusive transport sector. First, it is necessary to challenge the perception of gender equality as a niche topic: women make up half the population, and importantly, inequality costs everyone.

As the transport sector shifts towards a more balanced mix of public transport, active transport and shared mobility, there are opportunities for innovation to make multimodality as convenient as car ownership. The benefits associated with the female perspective in decision making, such as empathy for others' needs and experiences and getting more done with less money, positions women to take advantage of these opportunities. As emerging modes and their integration with traditional modes change how people move, women entrepreneurs can challenge the status quo and provide new perspectives on service provision, financing, regulation and infrastructure.

Changing mobility needs come with new opportunities for investment in transport infrastructure and service delivery. Public procurement processes provide an opportunity to close the gender gap in transport entrepreneurship. Women are overrepresented in small and micro-enterprises and can benefit from capacity-building programmes to participate in public procurement (e.g. as part of larger consortiums). Reducing bureaucracy in the procurement process (e.g. through quality- and cost-based selection) can make it more accessible.

The risks associated with entrepreneurship, barriers such as access to funding, and flawed perceptions about women's abilities in the field can deter their participation. However, mentorship programmes, networking opportunities outside traditionally male-dominated contexts, and policies that support inclusion can close the gender gap.

For policies to effectively close the gender gap, they must recognise systemic inequities. For example, a subsidy programme for e-rickshaws in Delhi that allocated one-third of permits for women resulted in more women as e-rickshaw drivers. A membership-based union played a critical role in increasing uptake through capacity building by providing support for licensing, access to loans and maintenance training programmes. However, an analysis of the programme found that per day, on average, women e-rickshaw drivers travelled half the distance of men and worked 2.5 fewer hours, resulting in 28% lower daily earnings. This was because of their household caregiving duties, which meant they opted for trips closer to home and could work fewer hours.

To address such inequities, policies should consider the broader context. Better diversity among decision makers plays a role in this. For example, public transport systems worldwide are designed by and for men's travel needs, despite women making up a higher share of the global public transport ridership. To improve women's participation in the transport workforce, protection for workers' collective interests, better parental leave policies and support for childcare will be necessary.