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GENDERISE

Mobility and Access in Cities (MAC) Program

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GENDERISE is proud to introduce a new program dedicated to improving mobility in African megacities through approaches that center on inclusivity and real-life experiences. This focus area responds to growing concerns over unsafe travel conditions, underfunded infrastructure, and uneven access to affordable transport—challenges that disproportionately affect groups who have been historically overlooked. Our goal is to reimagine how cities can move people fairly, efficiently, and sustainably without leaving anyone behind.[1]

African cities are rapidly expanding. Many are transforming into megacities where wealth gaps and infrastructure deficits coexist, creating acute stress on transportation networks. Private cars offer comfort for a privileged few, but most residents must rely on unreliable or poorly regulated public transport. Overcrowded minibuses, long waiting periods, and badly maintained roads combine to make daily commutes physically and mentally taxing. Older adults, caregivers, and communities with fewer resources feel the impacts more strongly.[2]

1 Arora-Jonsson, S. (2011). Virtue and vulnerability: Discourses on women, gender and climate change. *Global Environmental Change*, 21(2), 744–751. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.01.005

2 Cervero, R. (2013). Transport infrastructure and the environment: Sustainable mobility and urbanism. *Journal of Transport and Land Use*, 6(1), 1–3. https://doi.org/10.5198/jtlu.v6i1.432

Emerging technologies, such as electric vehicles or ride-hailing apps, have generated fresh interest in how to address these problems. Yet, technology alone is not enough. Political inertia and limited financing often stall large-scale adoption.Some initiatives focus on efficiency but overlook the underlying social and cultural factors that shape travel patterns. When new services cater only to those who can pay more or have the latest smartphones, pre-existing inequalities persist. GENDERISE emphasizes that truly sustainable mobility must account for the diverse realities of all city residents.[3]

Our research agenda highlights how accessibility, safety, and affordability directly link to issues of well-being and social justice. We explore why traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and high accident rates disproportionately affect those who have little power in decision-making. Women, for instance, may juggle caregiving with employment, forcing them to choose between unsafe walkways or unreliable minibuses. Older adults need transport systems that accommodate limited mobility and potential health risks. Such everyday concerns often remain invisible in policy debates that focus on large-scale infrastructural fixes but neglect personal experiences.[4]

In response, GENDERISE's new program encourages collaborative research and capacity-building. We aim to bring together city officials, scholars, and community organizations to strengthen policies that bridge infrastructure gaps and social realities. This approach rests on the principle that long-term transformation relies on listening to local voices, comparing multiple city contexts, and adapting solutions to specific cultural and institutional landscapes. A successful strategy in one setting will not necessarily translate to another without careful attention to local norms, funding sources, and political alliances.[5]

Our focus area on African cities offers clear evidence of why these issues matter. Residents often face unpredictable commutes, frequent traffic jams, and limited travel options. Economic hardships mean that most people cannot afford personal vehicles. Public transport can be overcrowded, poorly lit, or prone to breakdowns. Rising pollution levels lead to health problems and environmental strain. Vulnerable groups bear the brunt of these challenges. By studying these conditions, GENDERISE can identify concrete ways to make public transport safer and more accessible while also reducing emissions.[6]

3 Kunieda, M., & Gauthier, A. (2007). *Gender and Urban Transport: Smart and Affordable—Module 7a.* GTZ Sustainable Urban Transport Project. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.33804.83844

4 Levy, C. (2013). Travel choice reframed: "Deep distribution" and gender in urban transport. *Environment and Urbanization*, 25(1), 47–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247813477810

5 Rode, P., Floater, G., Thomopoulos, N., Docherty, I., Schwinger, P., Mahendra, A., & Fang, W. (2017). Accessibility in cities: Transport and urban form. *DisP - The Planning Review*, 53(1), 82–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2017.1316532

6 Sietchiping, R., Permezel, M. J., & Ngomsi, C. (2012). Mobility and accessibility https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S026427511100134X

We organize this initiative around five thematic clusters. First is User Needs and Practices, Equity Issues, which explores how personal backgrounds—from income levels to caregiving roles—shape mobility choices. Second is Governance, Politics, Institutions, and Finances, examining how political will, budget allocations, and local institutions influence transport outcomes. Third is Emerging Business Models and Services Options, analyzing whether new market entrants or technological platforms can serve low-income areas or simply reinforce gaps. Fourth is Safety, Health, and the Urban Environment, emphasizing that reduced road accidents and lower air pollution can boost overall well-being. Finally, System Design and Modal Integration focuses on how multiple transport modes—buses, trains, ride-shares, walkways—can work together for everyone's benefit.

GENDERISE believes in a comparative research approach. In practice, this means assessing different interventions, from pilot programs for electric minibuses to the regulation of informal bus lines. Some city governments might rely on private capital to finance public projects, while others might tap into grassroots advocacy for policy change. By comparing these diverse practices, we spotlight both successes and missteps and then share these findings widely. This work ensures that ideas proven effective in one place can inspire action elsewhere, provided they are adapted to local realities.

We also recognize that technology and policy must complement deeper social transformation. Simply introducing high-end buses or advanced apps may leave behind those who lack the resources or skills to use them. In many cases, those most affected by poor transport rarely have a say in official forums. GENDERISE encourages inclusive participation that amplifies a range of perspectives, particularly those from marginalized voices. When policy-makers, civil society groups, and everyday commuters come together, they can craft solutions that reflect lived experiences and dismantle long-standing barriers.

Capacity-building is another pillar of this program. We support training sessions, seminars, and knowledge-exchange platforms where stakeholders can learn effective data-gathering methods, analyze findings, and advocate for policy improvements. Urban planners and civic leaders can then move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions. They can consider local cultural norms, economic realities, and existing social structures. This holistic approach builds trust and increases the likelihood that reforms will endure even when political leadership changes.

Expanding mobility access also has broader societal benefits. It can connect people to jobs, education, and social services, thereby spurring economic development. Reduced congestion can lower carbon emissions and mitigate air pollution. Better-designed roads can enhance public safety, decrease accidents, and promote more active forms of commuting. Ultimately, equitable and sustainable transport networks can reshape how African megacities grow and evolve, making them more resilient in the face of global challenges like climate change and public health crises.

By framing this new program, GENDERISE underscores its commitment to deeper, research-driven change. We consider the intersecting pressures that individuals face, whether from economic constraints or limited representation in decision-making. Our research and capacity-building initiatives aim to illuminate how structural, cultural, and institutional factors intersect. Ultimately, we want to shift the narrative from quick fixes to long-term planning that benefits everyone, including those typically left out of major infrastructure projects.

This initiative aligns seamlessly with GENDERISE's broader mission to highlight how social identities and unequal power relations shape our worlds. Although this perspective may not be stated overtly in each policy recommendation, it informs our research design, data interpretation, and on-the-ground collaborations. We invite you to follow our progress, engage with our findings, and support a future where African megacities provide safe, dignified, and efficient mobility options for all.

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