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opportunities and entrepreneurship. In addition, young people have the right to be integrally involved in poverty reduction through their active participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of poverty-reduction policies and strategies.

Given the extent of the impact of HIV/AIDS on young people in Africa, the Charter places considerable emphasis on the implementation of comprehensive programmes for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, and care and support for those living with it.

Conflict is another issue that limits developmental opportunities for many young people across the continent. The Charter mandates states to engage in capacity strengthening of young people and youth organisations in the fields of peace building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. In addition, states are obligated to condemn armed conflict and institute all possible measures to prevent the participation, involvement, recruitment and sexual slavery of young people in this context.

Alongside the numerous rights afforded to young people, the Charter also outlines the responsibilities that young people bear towards their families, the society and the state. It is of paramount importance that young people become the custodians of their own development, partake fully in citizenship duties, and contribute towards the economic development of states and Africa as a whole. They should become the vanguards of preserving, promoting and representing Africa's cultural heritage in languages and in forms to which youth are able to relate. •

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# A HEAVY LOAD TO CARRY

## Women and rural transport

Safe movement and transport are integral parts of our daily lives, and the fact that these travel activities affect men and women differently must form part of policy-makers' agenda, write CHERYL POTGIETER, RENAY PILLAY and TUMELO MODISANE.

OVER THE LAST 10 TO 15 YEARS transport planners, economists and policy-makers have identified the differences between the travel and travel-related activities of women and men. It is increasingly recognised that transport affects men and women differently and, in rural areas especially, women carry the heavier transport burden. But few of these insights have influenced transport planning and policy-making practice. Only a few transport projects address the issue of gender and, as a result, women in many



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countries continue to face the adversities of inefficient transport systems designed by men to meet their own travel needs.

In 2004/2005 the HSRC's Gender and Development unit was commissioned to conduct a study for the South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL), which took place in the villages of Nkozi Qaukeni (Flagstaff) Local Municipality and Gqubeni, Port St Johns (PSJ) in the Eastern Cape. The study explores the gender-based dimensions of rural women's travel activities, experiences and needs with a view to providing policy and planning guidelines to government departments and other stakeholders involved in poverty alleviation and development. The study also aims to address the impact of transport and travel on the social, economic and political roles of women in the area and to assess how roads affect men and women differently there.

A participatory empowerment approach was adopted for the data-collection and data-capturing processes of the study. Due

to the high unemployment rate it was decided that local people would be recruited to assist with the project. The fieldwork manager and fieldworkers were recruited from the areas of study. Most of the fieldworkers were unemployed university graduates. Data was collected by means of 237 questionnaires, three focus groups and 17-time use diaries.

The study found that women, along with girl children, are primarily responsible for collecting water and firewood, as well as walking to the fields, even when they are sick or pregnant. If they did not do these activities, no one else in the household would. One woman aptly captures the gendered nature of the challenges facing rural women and girls: 'Boys will collect water in an emergency. If there are no girls, or the mother and the grandmother are dead or sick, he will find a girl that will collect for him [...] maybe a friend.'

Women also reported that they experienced sore backs and necks and constant headaches associated with head-loading.

They also raised the point that although their households owned carts and donkeys, they were not allowed to use them because they were used by men and boys to carry out their activities.

Women spend considerable amounts of time on travel related to primary activities. In a week in Flagstaff our researchers found that women spend on average 29 hours 20 minutes walking to and from the river, 27 hours 10 minutes to and from the field/garden and 19 hours 40 minutes to and from the forest. The travel time does not include time spent actually collecting water and firewood. Women reported that the travel time could be reduced if they were provided with transport such as wheelbarrows or animal drawn carts.

When we take into consideration the vast amount of time women spend on activities related to household maintenance and primary production, it is no surprise that we find the majority of women not accessing and participating in educational, social, political

and community activities and services. Women simply do not have the time for these and other personal activities.

Another concern that women raised was the issue of personal safety. They report their constant fear of being raped and assaulted whilst using public places for bathing and when walking to collect water and firewood and work in the fields. They point out that it is easy for robbers and rapists to hide in the tall grass and to attack them as they carry their heavy loads (often with babies on their backs).

Aside from issues relating to personal safety, women also complained about public transport in their areas. The bus stops are far from their households and offer no protection from the extreme heat or cold. There are also insufficient numbers of buses and taxis. If buses and taxis exist, they are usually overcrowded, unroadworthy and unreliable. Women further report that they do not attend health-care services when they are sick, either because of the lack of, or high costs of transport, or because it would have a negative impact on their daily responsibilities.

There is a clear relationship between the findings and recommendations of the gender and transport study in the Eastern Cape at an implementation level as well as in respect of further scientific inquiry. SANRAL is committed to addressing the issues raised in the report and this commitment is in line with their mission 'towards making a positive impact; not only on the physical environment, but on the lives of the communities and individuals it touches in its day-to-day activities'. It is encouraging to note that the National Department of Transport (NDOT) draft document on Rural Strategy for South Africa has a clear commitment to the development of infrastructure for non-motorised transport and a section on capacity building that commits to 'community participation and mainstreaming of women and youth in all aspects of rural transport provision'.

One outcome of the research was the *First International African Conference on Gender, Transport and Development: Bridging the divide between development goals, research and policy in developing countries* that took place in Port Elizabeth in August. ●

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