

# Reference Note: Gender and Urban Mobility Planning

2023

**For more information:**

MobiliseYourCity Partnership Secretariat, Brussels

<https://mobiliseyourcity.net/>

email: [contact@mobiliseyourcity.net](mailto:contact@mobiliseyourcity.net)

**Title:** Guidance Note: Gender and Urban Mobility Planning

**Printed and distributed:** MobiliseYourCity Partnership

**Authors:** Chris Blanche (Genre et Ville)

**Contributors:** Anne Chaussavoine (AFD), Sasank Vemuri (GIZ)

**Copyright:**

This publication is subject to copyright of the MobiliseYourCity Partnership and its partners, authors and contributors. Partial or total reproduction of this document is authorised for non-profit purposes, provided the source is acknowledged.

**Disclaimer:**

The content presented in this document represents the opinion of the authors and is not necessarily representative of the position of the individual partners of MobiliseYourCity or the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

## Donors



## Implementing partners



## Part of:



# Table of contents

I. Introduction.....	1
1. Defining Gender .....	2
1.1. What does gender mean? .....	2
1.2. What is an inclusive city?.....	4
1.3. What does gender-disaggregated data mean?.....	4
1.4. What does intersectionality mean? .....	4
2. Gender equality and sustainable development.....	6
3. Gender and mobility .....	7
3.1. Why focusing on gender issues is important for the transport and mobility sector?.....	8
4. The diagnosis phase: knowing the gender-specific challenges and needs.....	9
4.1. Women specific travel patterns .....	9
4.2. Insecurity and harassment .....	11
5. Integration of gender into Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) and National Urban Mobility Policies (NUMPs).....	12
5.1. At the team level .....	12
Strive for gender-equal treatment.....	12
Gender expertise is available on the core team .....	12
5.2. The Sustainable Mobility Planning Process.....	12

# I. Introduction

Experiences in less sexist urban planning and architecture already conducted in several countries demonstrate that, even when proactive policies are led, equality is not a given. A gender sensitive paradigm requires a constant critical reading of the replication of social structures through urban structures.

"While there are no ready-made answers or 'catalogue solutions', let alone an 'urban model of a gender-neutral society', there is a need to introduce this issue into urban planning for social equality between women and men in a systemic and holistic way. Furthermore, the actions undertaken must be cumulative and cannot be reduced to simple isolated or disparate solutions to be integrated into a call for tenders, at the risk of not producing the expected results."<sup>1</sup>

"Transport is a critical system in the city, which, through providing access to essential activities, enables diverse women and men, girls and boys to 'appropriate' their right to the city and to realise a fully rounded and substantive urban citizenship. Yet, despite decades of work on gender in urban development and urban planning, mainstream transport planning remains largely untouched by debates on diversity and difference in cities."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, this cross-disciplinary subject, which is both societal and technical, will have to be dealt with within the teams themselves in an approach based on equal employment. And be introduced at all project stages, from its initialisation phase to its completion. To guarantee the efficiency of the process, an evaluation process should be set up throughout the project.

Additionally, the gender perspective gives an analysis framework to assess the inclusiveness of the different transport networks and consider qualitative criteria about the level of services.

---

<sup>1</sup> Genre et Ville (n.d.) : Genre et Espaces Publics – Méthode et Outils.

<sup>2</sup> Levy, C. (2019): Travel Choice Reframed: "Deep Distribution" and Gender in Urban Transport. In: Scholten, C., Joelsson, T. (eds.): Integrating Gender into Transport Planning. Palgrave Macmillan.

# 1. Defining Gender

## 1.1. What does gender mean?

### Gender is a social construct

Contrary to notions suggesting fixed attributes based on biological characteristics for men (like strength, dominance, rationality, and lesser communication skills) and for women (spatial challenges, emotional orientation, and a desire for protection), gender studies assert otherwise. These studies assert that there is no inherent essence of 'femininity' or 'masculinity'. Instead, a continuous process of lifelong learning shapes the socially expected behaviours of individuals as women or men.

### Gender is a relational process

The characteristics mentioned above are not constructed and learned independently but in an adversarial relationship between male and female. Gender studies therefore assume that we cannot study what is feminine without the masculine, and vice versa - which does not mean, of course, that we cannot focus on one or the other group.

### Gender is a power relationship

The dominant vision emphasizes gender difference. It has already been said that gender should be considered a relational process. The masculine and feminine are in a relationship that is not symmetrical or balanced. It is, therefore, necessary to "understand social relations between the sexes as a power relationship". Gender distinguishes between men and women and, in the same movement, hierarchises them to the advantage of men.

Moreover, by drawing a line between the two categories of sex, gender is oppressive, as it does not admit any deviation from the norms it sets.

### Gender is embedded in other power relations

Gender is a power relationship that cannot be considered completely autonomously. It is at the intersection of several power relations governed by class, race, sexuality, age and other factors.

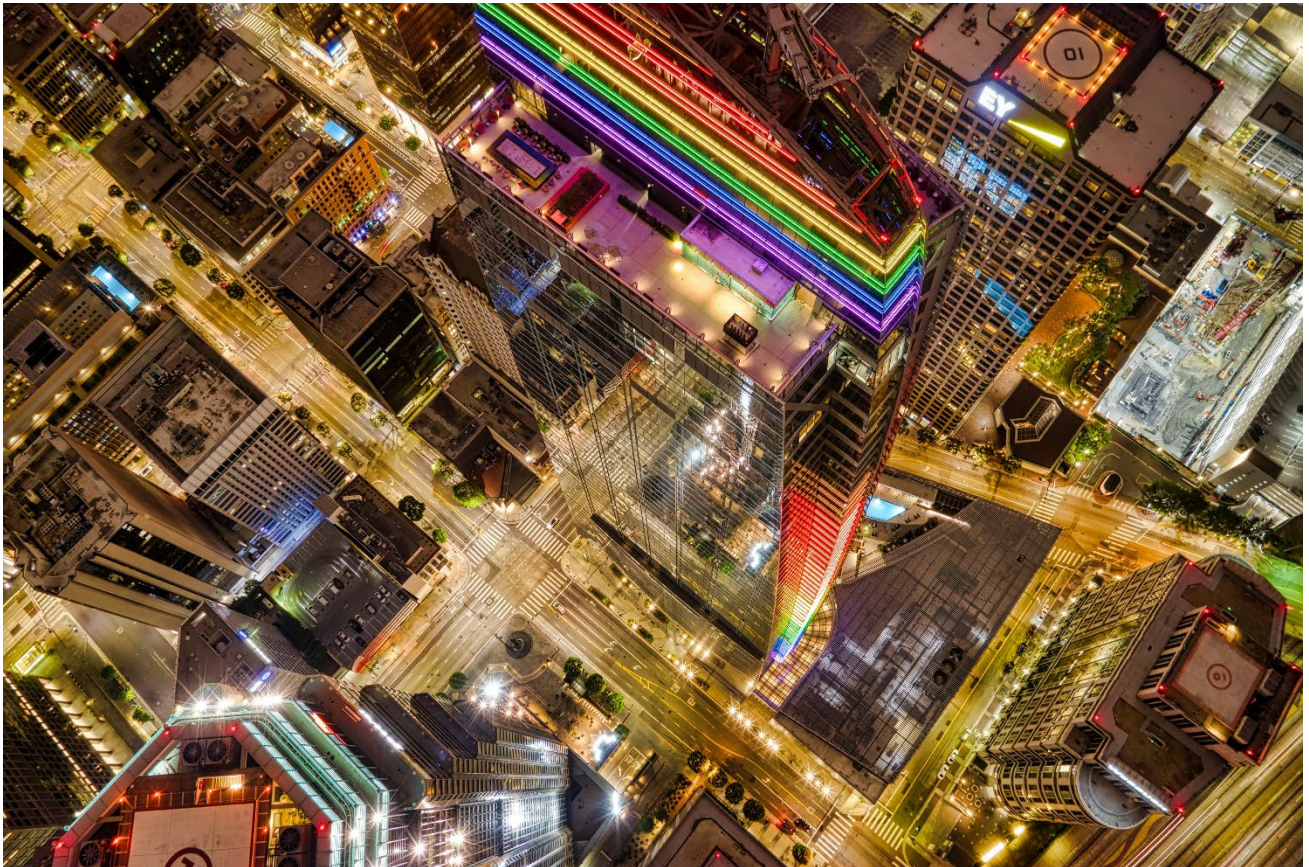
Gender is a hierarchical bi-categorisation system between the sexes (men/women) and between the values and representations associated with them (male/female). Gender is also a normative order that implies a boundary between the two sexes that should not be transgressed.



Reference Note: Gender and Urban Mobility Planning

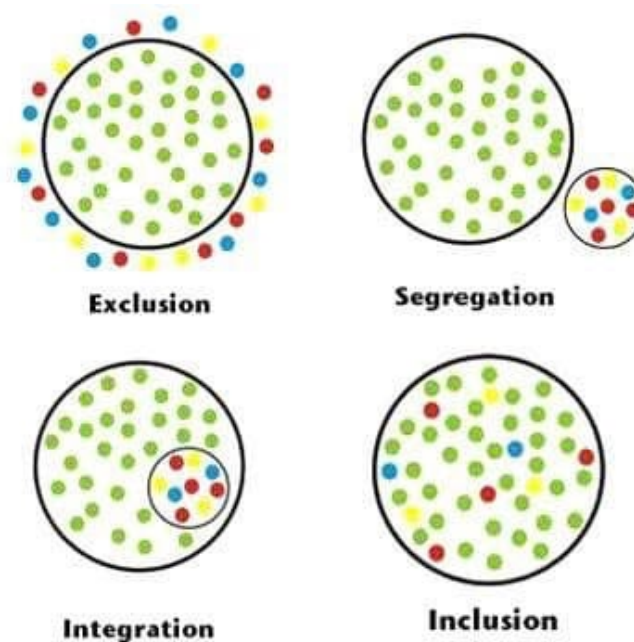
### Non-binary, Gender Queer

As language evolves and our understanding of gender continues to expand, people are identifying with an ever-growing and increasingly fluid group of labels. “Genderqueer,” “gender non-conforming,” and “non-binary” are all expressions used to refer to people who identify outside of the male-female gender binary.



## 1.2. What is an inclusive city?

The inclusive city is, first and foremost, one that has recognised and questioned exclusions. To avoid this word becoming an "empty" one, we should think about the future of our cities inclusively. Reducing spatial inequalities; working collectively to shake up the city of the rich against the city of the poor; considering the right to the city and redefining the hospitable city; allowing access for all to urban life and its ideal are some actions that can lead to inclusive cities.



## 1.3. What does gender disaggregated data mean?

Gender-differentiated data and information must be available for policy makers to be able to assess the situation and develop appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies. Such data must be collected and analyzed within the policy-making process, ideally covering several years to track changes and take corrective action. Surveys, interviews, reviews, opinion polls and benchmarking are also effective methods for obtaining and analyzing data on diversity policies, as well as desk review, household interviews, focus group discussion.

## 1.4. What does intersectionality mean?

The categories of sex are not homogeneous, they are intersected by social class, sexuality, skin color, age, abilities, and many other factors.



Reference Note: Gender and Urban Mobility Planning

"Intersectionality refers to the situation of people simultaneously experiencing several forms of domination or discrimination in a society. The links between these discriminations, sexism, racism, homophobia, and the relationship of domination between social categories cannot be explained if they are studied separately.<sup>3</sup>"

As an example, consider a middle-aged woman facing precarious circumstances. Despite never having ridden a bicycle and feeling illegitimate in public spaces due to potential judgment or control from family or neighbours, her unique mobility needs could significantly benefit from this mode of travel. In her case, the focus should be on facilitating learning, fostering a sense of safety, addressing cultural barriers, reassuring her that age is not a handicap, assisting with the financial aspects of acquiring a bike and ensuring safe parking conditions at home and in public spaces.

---

<sup>3</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989)

## 2. Gender equality and sustainable development

Concerning gender equality and sustainable development, things must be operated in a concerted and comprehensive manner, since they are tightly linked, both on economic, health, quality of life or resilience levels. Gender equality corresponds to SDG5 in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

“Transport systems will benefit greatly by becoming gender-responsive as the sector can then simultaneously cater to the three pillars of sustainable development – environment, social and economic pillars. As an initial step, it would be useful to have a simple and overarching framework that underlines the relevance of transport to women’s employment/livelihoods/income security and unpaid domestic care work (i.e., ‘production’ and ‘reproduction’). In other words, mobility/transport are needed to facilitate women’s access to markets and jobs and to facilitate their access to services (e.g. health centres, schools, childcare centres, shops, etc.). Additionally, the transport sector itself can be a source of employment for women, contributing to becoming a source of livelihood but more essentially, influencing the norms dictating the field of transport at large to be more mindful of women’s needs and preferences.”<sup>4</sup>

Rethinking mobility in terms of gender means considering integrating the criteria of sustainable urbanity, where soft mobility is part of the process of women and men’s journeys.

Whether getting out of town or circulating throughout the neighbourhood, an egalitarian, sustainable and supportive system of mobility must be put in place, serving neighbourhoods and/or multi-polar territories. An accessible place is a place that allows everyone to circulate and benefit from all the services provided in complete autonomy. It is the access to the territory and its activities – jobs, shops, services, recreation, and culture.

With a gender focus, it will be a question of balancing the different means of transport available, the equilibrium of power in the ‘right of space’, and in extenso, the ‘right to the city’ for women.

---

<sup>4</sup> Uteng, P., Turner, J. (n.d.): Addressing the linkages between gender and transport in low- and middle-income countries.

“Achieving the target of sustainability in urban mobility means considering the needs of different users and thereby offering equal levels of accessibility to transport to all different groups. The need to adopt a gender-sensitive perspective is emerging as a challenging and impending task for urban mobility policymakers and planners. In this sense, to be effective, urban mobility policy action needs to be more gender sensitive.”<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Gender and mobility

Transport and mobility are not gender neutral. Women tend to have shorter and more frequent journeys due to socially constructed tasks, whereas men move farther away from home but on more limited tasks, especially linked to work and play. Also, due to their normative duties, women face more hurdles than men; they carry, push, accompany others, making their journeys more difficult. In that respect, the inequalities noted in transport are part of those observed in the public space in general.

The research and integration of disaggregated data will provide a much more accurate picture of needs and solutions to prevent inequalities. Meanwhile, as the male and female categories are not homogenous and cannot be considered monolithic entities, this complexity must be addressed with care.



<sup>5</sup> CIVITAS (n.d.): Policy Note: Smart choices for cities. Gender equality and mobility. Mind the gap!

### Why focusing on gender issues is important for the transport and mobility sector?<sup>6</sup>

Women around the world are responsible for a disproportionate share of the household's transport burden while having less access to available means of transport. This lack of access has direct and measurable negative economic consequences on women, and therefore on their respective household and ultimately for society as a whole.

Projects designed to improve transport infrastructure and services cannot be considered as automatically benefitting women. Improvements on transport systems can affect men and women differently, not always positively. These inequalities can be broadly summarized by the following proposals:

- Women's mobilities take place at a more local level than men's; their mobility patterns are therefore differentiated.
- More women than men have no access to other modes of transportation than walking.
- More women than men are dependent on public transport.
- Women are less likely than men to have access to intermediate means of transport, such as buses, subways, or bicycles.
- Women are also less likely than men to have access to motorised vehicles.
- Women are heavily impacted by harassment and can feel more insecure in transport and public spaces.

The subject of mobility is central to any planning policy and holds the keys and opportunities for greater equality and empowerment for all.

This issue is particularly crucial to opening a majority of neighbourhoods located in peri-urban or rural areas and penalize the movement and empowerment of the women who live there.

It is the reality of women's use of transport, their needs, their appropriation of urban space and their place in society – access to employment, care, leisure, and culture – that we must consider.

---

<sup>6</sup> Agence Française de Développement (n.d.) : Boîte à Outils Genre, Transport et Mobilité.



## 4. The diagnosis phase: knowing the gender-specific challenges and needs

### 4.1. Women specific travel patterns

Upstream and disaggregated studies of uses and regular journey will be necessary to understand and address the inequalities between the sexes and people in general. We highly recommend that phases of consultation with the various audiences to take place throughout the entire preparation process of an urban mobility project.

It is necessary to start with the needs and uses, taking gender norms into account, to offer mobility solutions that are more suitable for everyone, without recreating stereotypes that would offer specific solutions for women, for example. The differentiated mobility of women and men is linked to activities strongly marked by normative codes: more segmented, more local mobility for women; staggered working hours; frequent stops; economic brakes; congestion – women carry, push, accompany.

Finally, women often make little use of public space and transport for their relaxation and leisure, due to the social pressure to comply with the norms they are subjected to and their roles within the family unit.

“A study of eight European and Asian cities (...) shows that women travel shorter trips on average than men, use public transport more and travel more during off-peak hours. Since women have more complicated travel patterns, they tend to prefer more flexible modes of transport, but, at the same time, public transport modes are also more appealing to women than to men. This implies that flexible modes, especially emerging trends such as shared mobility or mobility as a service, could attract more female than male users. When given better alternatives, women may choose to give up driving altogether. If cities want to further encourage the development of flexible and sustainable modes of transport, policies to address women users’ preferences should be implemented as women will be dominating users.”<sup>7</sup>

Learning about and drawing inspiration from good practices and, most of all, from the people themselves will bring the neighbourhood's resources to the surface.

It is, therefore, necessary to think about locally adapted solutions that will make it possible to link up the territory better, facilitate multimodality and better articulate temporalities.

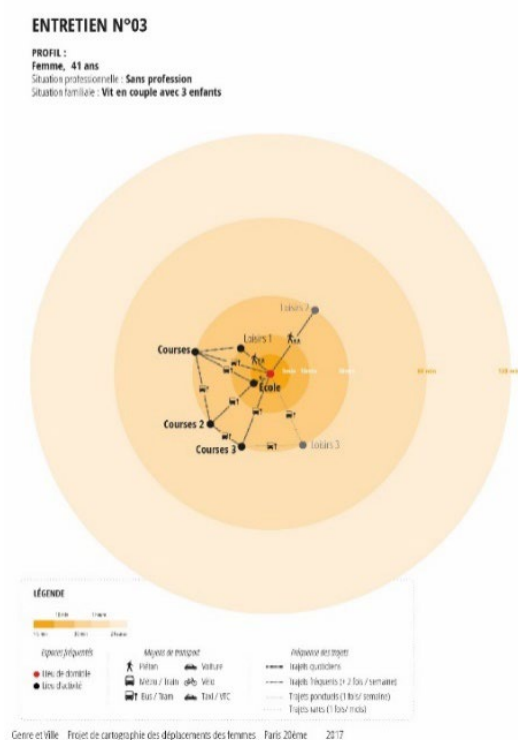
---

<sup>7</sup> OECD (n.d.): Gender Mainstreaming / Gender Equality and Sustainable Structures.

This can be achieved in numerous ways:

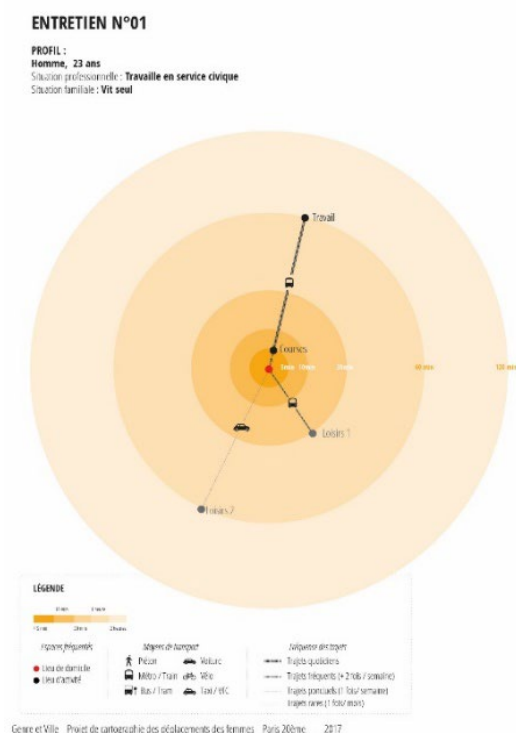
- **On a structural level**, by providing the ad hoc infrastructures, including providing secured bicycle garages; ensuring a better connection and easier access between modes of transport; facilitating transporting one's bicycle on the train, bus or tram.
- **On an organizational level** by better synchronizing the rhythms of the different means of transport and by reinforcing the regularity of trains, buses, trams (in a study led over several years on equality in public transportation in Poitiers, France by the Time Management Office, the first thing women asked for was punctuality). By introducing on-demand stops for buses, particularly at night, to address the sense of insecurity.
- **On a communication level** by providing an effective signalization and information system.

The detailed study of uses and needs through a participatory tool (differentiated cartographies of groups of inhabitants, mixed and non-mixed working groups) will guarantee a better adaptation to daily life. Disaggregated data will also prove the differences and need to adjust solutions.



Mobility Map #03, Female, 41 yo.

Paris (Genre et Ville 2017)



Mobility Map #01, Male, 21 yo.

## 4.2. Insecurity and harassment

Finally, raising the question of women's mobility cannot be done without fully addressing the feeling of insecurity that they experience and live with daily, and which too often limits their movements. In France, most women have been victims of sexist harassment in the public space and/or public transportation. Global research shows this is true all over the world. Clearly addressing this discrimination is the responsibility of public authorities to enforce the law.

The improvement of transportation systems, whether they are public, private, or individual can enhance the traveler's experience: improving the riding experience, enlarging cycle lanes, working on a micro level on the ambiances, atmosphere, offering better lighted train or bus stations; better signposting for orientation. The organization itself can provide a sense of safety: stop on demand, access to carpool sharing, and digital apps.

"A better dosage of lighting and an improvement on the location of bus stops, stations and their surroundings will be strong vectors for restoring a sense of security and improve uses."<sup>8</sup>



CargoByke Copenhagen (Genre et Ville 2016)

<sup>8</sup> Genre et Ville (n.d.) : Guide ANRU

## 5. Integration of gender into Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) and National Urban Mobility Policies (NUMPs)

Gender is a transversal and comprehensive subject and should be considered at every stage of the planning process, from the formation of the team to the initiation, diagnosis, vision and measure selection, implementation, and evaluation phases.

### 5.1. At the team level

#### Strive for gender-equal treatment

The transportation sector is male dominated. It is highly recommended to introduce not only more women at all levels of governance, but most of all, to build a **gender-sensitive culture within the teams** by doing regular training and mandatory introduction of gender in all projects.

#### Gender expertise is available on the core team

It is recommended to always **have gender experts within the team** or external gender consulting services to initiate, conduct and evaluate the research and process.

For SUMP and NUMPs, for which a specific focus on gender is expected, a specific gender expert may be requested, for example, with the following requirements.

- Gender specialist with a master's degree in urban planning, geography or a similar academic background.
- 5 years relevant job experience both in gender planning as well as gender studies, policy advisory, master planning and similar.
- Writing and speaking proficiency in <English/French/Spanish> language.

### 5.2. The Sustainable Mobility Planning Process

#### Initiation / Inception

Consider gender issues while setting the objectives: **Who is our target? How to detect gender inequalities and offer gender-balanced solutions at the inception level.** Gender must be introduced at the very beginning of the mission while setting the objectives; this will help achieve equality goals upstream. Gender is an integral part of the issue and it is



central to introduce it at the initiation level in an intersectional way, bringing together: gender, age, culture, social status, sexual identity, ability. This means introducing the gender issue in the main action levels: governance, data collection, financing, capacity building, technological choices.

**Initial assessment of urban mobility in the country and stakeholder dialogue:** **Gender must be introduced at all assessment levels:** assessment of urban mobility situation, gender-disaggregated datamining and research; Identification of stakeholders, among others.

## Status quo analysis

**Assess gender in a comprehensive manner that respects the complexity of issue:** To obtain a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of various technical, institutional and financial aspects and to provide an in-depth assessment of the urban mobility situation in the country, including recommendations for action, **gender as a non-homogenous topic must be introduced in the data collection and evaluation activities. By non-homogenous, we mean that women and men are not monolithic categories.** Complexity in the public profile is to be always addressed. This will ensure that the strategy will be more effective and inclusive. For SUMP and NUMP for which a specific focus on gender is expected, additional surveys targeting specifically gender issues may be requested. 'Gender budgeting', which aims at evaluating the gender fairness of investments, could be an interesting analysis to be conducted at the diagnosis phase.

**Ensure gender-disaggregated data collection:** Within the data collection process, a **gender-inclusive approach with disaggregated data collection tools must be mandatory** to propose actionable and efficient solutions. Most questionnaires tend to provide information on socio-professional categories and the number of households but rarely distinguish between different types of families (single-parent - male or female, same-sex, stepparent and all the groups that define themselves as "family") and do not provide gender-specific information.

**Assess capacity building framework:** At all levels of governance, **key actors must be identified** to help achieve sustainable and equal goals. By key actors, we understand professionals who can maintain and assert the gender focus by providing solutions and evaluating the actions.

**Develop a communication plan:** Efficient communication includes **targeting large and diverse groups of people** in an intersectional way (women, men, different age groups, culture, sexual identity, ability, etc.). Here again, the objective is to take complexity into account to reach a large public.

**Require diversity in the stakeholder participation and workshops:** At this stage, it is a question of **ensuring gender equality within the teams and structures identified** to obtain more complex and richer results to achieve equality.

## Vision, goal setting and measure selection

**Strive for inclusive mobility systems:** this is the stage where the framework for inclusion should be provided, considering the disaggregated data and research carried out in the previous stages. **The objective is not to make mobilities for women, but for all**, regardless of sex, age, social background, sexual orientation, ability, culture. This means considering temporalities, ergonomics, accessibility, economy, security, efficiency, taking gender into perspective.

**Build and Develop Scenarios with broad stakeholders:** formulate and agree on a common long term **“vision” for sustainable urban and gender equal mobility** (pollution free, affordability, efficiency, accessibility, quality) and short term result oriented gender inclusive experiments (with indicators showing the degree and quality of response). **Make sure focus groups are gender equal.**

**Agree on priority areas and select measures related to Gender:** economy, facilitated and equal access, ergonomics (most designs tend to be modelled on men), training (to understand the impact of inequalities on gender), public space quality, anti-harassment strategies, fighting stereotypes.

## Feasibility

**At this stage, the final step before implementation, one must be careful not to forget gender.** As mentioned in the SUMP/NUMP Terms of Reference of the project, budgeting and finance are key at this level. Our experience shows that this is often at this stage, with budget consideration in mind that gender or social aspects fail to be introduced, the rationale often focusing on structural projects and forgetting about the soft skills. **When evaluating the costs and benefits of a project, the theme of equality is often sacrificed on the economic front.** As a reminder, if the system is efficient because satisfying to most the citizens, it will be less costly in the long run. The evaluation phase of the project, envisioning how the project will produce equality, is mandatory.

## Participation

During participatory activities, **gender equality must always remain mandatory**, and actions must be taken to guarantee women can be present (childcare for the children, appropriate schedules) and, most importantly, invited to speak and listen to. Cooperating with NGOs can support engagement and raise awareness among the different stakeholders.

