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# **Bodaboda in Dar es Salaam: Towards Sustainable Transport and Secure Livelihoods**

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## Overview and aims

This policy brief summarises key messages from a recent report on the political economy of Dar es Salaam's moto-taxi sector. The report draws evidence from qualitative interview data, a survey of 150 moto-taxi drivers, including 47 women, and a review of relevant academic and grey literature, government reports, and similar. The primary aim is to better understand what factors enable—or hinder—both sustainable transport and equitable outcomes for drivers.

## The political economy of reform

Moto-taxis emerged in Dar es Salaam as a self-regulating sector in the early 2000s. After the first formal regulations were introduced in 2010, subsequent regulatory and planning efforts have been 'episodic', often failing to deliver on their ambitious goals or to achieve a more lasting impact.

The latest wave of interventions, which started approximately a year into President Suluhu Hassan's time in office (2021—), has positive elements, including an emphasis on destigmatizing moto-taxis and a more participatory regulatory and planning approach.

However, several challenges persist, including: (1) fragmented governance structures, and a tendency to (re) centralize control; (2) politicization; and (3) overly top-down engagement with drivers' associations. A further, cross-cutting challenge is a persistent

emphasis on comprehensive reform and swift enforcement without due attention to the need for context-specific adaptation. This approach risks overlooking gains made through more incremental—and bottom up—regulation and planning.

## Drivers' livelihoods and work conditions

More equitable regulation and improved enforcement requires an understanding not only of past reform efforts but also of drivers' own experience and work conditions.

68% of men and 78% of women said their income improved after becoming a moto-taxi driver.

Drivers, women and men, support 4-5 dependents on average from their moto-taxi work.

Moto-taxi work is an important source of urban livelihoods for both men and women drivers, but it remains precarious with notable obstacles limiting accumulation and investment beyond earning a livelihood day-to-day. Women also face marginalisation and gender-based violence.

New private-sector players, such as asset-finance companies and ride-hailing apps, claim to offer opportunities but may depress incomes and worsen congestion, highlighting the need for

stricter regulation of these companies. Some regulations to formalise the moto-taxi sector also risk having an adverse impact.

## Key regulatory and planning alternatives

The analysis informs several recommendations, which we group under six key themes. Together, these could help improve both transport sustainability and drivers' livelihoods.

### *(1) Improved institutional co-ordination and respect for local government autonomy and innovation in planning.*

While various state actors have led promising reform initiatives, better intra-governmental coordination on moto-taxi regulation and planning is needed at all levels. This includes enhanced inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination nationally. But national regulatory authorities and donors should also learn from and work with local authorities.

Within Dar es Salaam, improved city-wide coordination is essential. Ilala Municipality currently doubles as the Dar es Salaam City Council since the latter was disbanded in 2021; however, its coordination role remains limited. The current Ilala DC has taken an interest in the moto-taxi sector, spearheading various initiatives. Even so, city-wide coordination is difficult, and future DCs may not maintain this focus on moto-taxis.

While an institution like the Dar es Salaam Urban Transport Authority (DUTA)—long advocated by donors—might be a solution, it has yet to be established. Meanwhile, the Dar es Salaam Road Safety Committee offers one provisional coordinating mechanism for state actors with a stake in paratransit, including moto-taxis.

### *(2) More incremental and participatory formalization and planning processes, which would align national regulation with locally 'negotiated' realities.*

Ambitious regulatory and planning interventions—aimed at swift, comprehensive reform—have encountered numerous challenges, resulting in repeated, often disruptive efforts that fall short of their goals. By contrast, there have been incremental, bottom-up improvements in moto-taxi regulation and planning.

These outcomes suggest the need for a compromise approach, which better integrates national regulatory ambition with more localized, bottom-up initiatives. National-level regulators like LATRA, TANROADS, and TARURA could learn from the more participatory approach of some LGAs; they could then adapt national regulations to match local best practice, ensuring realistic, enforceable standards, for instance, regarding the planning of parking areas. Meanwhile, LGAs also need consistency in their approach; clear commitments with less backtracking would help build and maintain drivers' trust and co-operation.

*(3) De-centring larger district- and city-level drivers' associations, re-centring more localized organising efforts.*

District- and regional-level drivers' associations and SACCOS may play a productive role in smaller cities like Moshi, where a new LATRA strategy of regulating moto-taxis through SACCOS was first piloted. In Dar es Salaam too, these large organisations periodically advocate for drivers' interests. However, they can also be problematic, lacking accountability to ordinary drivers while privileging leaders. This dynamic may prove especially challenging in the case of LATRA's SACCOS plans and the newly established MAUPIDA SACCOS, which require close monitoring.

If there is an interest in co-operative development, a more promising alternative strategy may involve engaging at ward or street level with drivers' bottom-up organising. An eco-system of self-regulating groups already exists around drivers' parking areas, some operating as co-operative-like organisations, even if not formally registered. These groups could benefit from more recognition and support through Tanzania's existing co-operative development and community welfare institutions, among others.

Further research could also explore effective forms of transport co-operative beyond the now dominant SACCOS model. For instance, informal co-ops at the level of individual parking areas have purchased vehicles for their members to operate. They then use additional revenues sometimes to lend to each other, but also to invest in further co-operative ventures or to buy land for members.

*(4) Stricter regulation of emerging private sector stakeholders, especially asset-finance and platform companies.*

Private sector actors entering the moto-taxi sector can have both positive and negative impacts. Yet, while regulatory efforts frequently target moto-taxi drivers, growing asset-finance and platform companies remain under-regulated. Policymakers and regulators should address these gaps.

**Asset-finance companies** and new fintech ventures are not subject to the same regulations as commercial banks and often lend at very high interest rates, which adversely affect road safety and drivers' incomes. Regulations should curb high interest rates and misinformation of drivers. Regarding **platform companies**,

**“The source of many accidents? Motorcycle loans.”**

53% of male drivers and 66% of women are not satisfied with ride-hailing apps. 78 percent of drivers think ride hailing apps suppress their income.

**We are robbed bling by the owners of Uber and Bolt**  
- Woman driver

**We work hard, but the work you do pays the platform bosses**  
- Woman driver

LATRA introduced stricter regulations of ride-hailing automobile taxis in 2022 but relaxed them again following pressure from international companies, Uber and Bolt. Meanwhile, riding-hailing moto-taxis, food delivery, and e-commerce platforms remain largely unregulated employing thousands of platform workers. Policymakers should develop measures ensuring living pay standards, social protections, worker association engagement, and ethical data protection. They should also address misclassification of drivers as ‘independent contractors’ instead of workers with more legal protections.

### *(5) Support for women drivers*

Many women drivers’ priorities mirror men’s. Women would welcome cheaper training opportunities and hope to progress within the transport sector. Subsidized training programmes would help all drivers—particularly women—obtain commercial driver’s licenses, including upgrading to operate larger vehicles and access better-paying forms of transport work. Women also desire **low or no-interest motorcycle loans**. Both LGAs and national government can build on existing strategies to support women among other ‘special groups’, although current initiatives have limited reach. Any scheme to provide these no or low-interest loans for women drivers specifically should integrate training opportunities to ensure the loan recipients are willing and prepared to take up transport work.

For women seeking to progress further

in transport, future research and pilot programmes could explore ways of **encouraging bus and logistics companies to hire more women**. This Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) could, for instance, partner with employers to offer subsidized training to women who are then matched with employers after qualifying for the appropriate commercial driver’s license. This approach could increase women’s representation and help normalize their presence in the transport sector. Women participants in our research

**Being a driver was my dream.  
One day I will drive a truck.**  
- Woman driver

also expressed an interest in **tailored policies protecting informal economy workers**, with specific provisions for moto-taxi drivers and women. Strategies for tackling gender-based violence were a particularly emphasized, perhaps along similar lines as the ‘GBV Guidelines for Public Spaces’ adopted by the Ministry of Community Development.<sup>1</sup>

Additional priorities include support for women’s organisation through existing associations or by expanding women-only groups. This would likely involve consolidating networks among women drivers rather than a more place-based approach targeting parking areas. Trade unions like COTWU-T might play a supporting role here.

<sup>1</sup> The guidelines are available here (accessed 31 March 2025):

<https://efg.or.tz/gbv-guideline-for-1public-spaces/>



## *(6) Inclusive infrastructure planning*

Drivers should be consulted and accommodated in new urban infrastructure projects, for instance, through the addition of shelters around parking areas and modified road design such as dedicated lanes on large arterial roads. New infrastructure plans should also include a longer-term vision, avoiding the repeated displacement of informal workers, even from locations to which they were previously relocated.



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