



# Forum

News

**International Forum for Rural Transport and Development**

**Viability of Community Transport Solutions**

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## Community Driven

*The geographical and economic isolation of rural communities, is often exacerbated by a lack of political commitment to local mobility issues. Rather than wait for state and regional authorities to deliver adequate transport facilities, many rural communities are taking responsibility for their own mobility needs and driving forward their own transport solutions. Amid the complex forces that shape these initiatives how do we isolate the factors which influence success or failure?*

*In this edition of Forum News we examine case studies drawn from the IFRTD network to highlight the issues arising from the challenge of establishing sustainable local transport interventions. We also look at a Toolkit developed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to address the particular challenges of infrastructure rehabilitation at community level.*

*What emerges is the importance of addressing socio-political factors; ownership, participation, political will, perceptions of responsibility, in order to mobilise local resources and to understand the extent and potential of local capacities. A viable community solution may include strong alliances with outside agents or local authorities, but will take the responsibility for sustainability back to the community and leave them firmly in the driving seat.*



*Building the road to Ratnapura, communities forging their own solutions, Sri Lanka*

## A Tool for a New Dynamic

Inspired by their experience in Bolivia where a successful alliance between local organisations, the local authorities and a donor agency has delivered a sustainable system for road maintenance. The Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) have developed 'The Toolkit for Promoting Sustainability of Rural Transport Infrastructure'. Their aim is to strengthen the sustainability of rehabilitation and maintenance systems serving rural mobility by enabling decision-making leaders and rural development practitioners to gear community level investments to meet local capacities.

The toolkit focuses on the longevity of projects and the need to replace the 'vicious cycle of infrastructure deterioration' with a more sustainable dynamic. At the forefront of the approach is an awareness of the socio-political factors underpinning any community driven initiative. Participation is highlighted as key to the appropriation of the project by local stakeholders and vital in the mobilisation of local resources. Imposed rehabilitation is seen to act as a disincentive although the toolkit recognises positive forms of external assistance.

Maintenance is tackled as an integral part of any infrastructure intervention and a product of empowerment and development processes rather than just a technical or financial issue. The toolkit stresses the importance of defining maintenance capabilities at the initial stages of project definition and planning, and demands recognition of the interdependence of rehabilitation and maintenance as a condition for the viability of a project.

Through a series of steps, questions and useful suggestions the toolkit guides the user through an analysis of their particular situation, examining

strengths and weaknesses, defining realistic objectives and asking relevant questions to choose the best possible options. The toolkit is brought to life by case studies drawn from the breadth of the IFRTD network, some of which you will find outlined in the next two pages.

The IFRTD is developing an interactive version of the toolkit on CD-Rom. Please look out for your free copy which will be distributed in a forthcoming edition of Forum News.

*The Toolkit was developed for SDC by Laurent Thevoz. For more information please contact the IFRTD Secretariat.*

### Obras Sociales De Caminos De Acceso Rural (OSCAR)

OSCAR was founded in 1969 by Franciscan monks as a means to construct access routes in the sub tropical region of La Paz, Bolivia. Since 1983 this local association has built up to 270km of gravelled roads in the Bolivian Amazon. By forming an alliance with the local authority and SDC, local organisations have been able to ensure the financial sustainability of the project through the establishment of a municipal fund. Monies from all three partners combined with toll revenues are deposited with a Bolivian financial institution and the annual interest funds all maintenance requirements.

The strength and common goals of this alliance of stakeholders, the priority given to ensuring maintenance capacity, and the ownership of mobility problems by the wider community, are all seen to be key factors in the success of this intervention.

## In this issue:

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## Localising the Roads Agenda

For the small community of Ngecha, 40km Northwest of Nairobi, Kenya, a combination of high population, high rainfall and intensive land use had led to the rapid deterioration of the local road infrastructure, causing an increase in the cost of transporting agricultural and dairy produce, and making some areas virtually inaccessible to motor vehicles and animal carts. In the 'good old days' the local authority had regularly graded village roads, cleared bushes and storm drains, and ensured that no roadside encroachment took place. However it had become increasingly apparent to the Ngecha villagers that their disappearing roads were no longer on anyone's agenda but their own.

Crucially this shift in perception led women from several homesteads to take the initiative to allocate time to voluntary communal work reclaiming and rehabilitating access roads to their villages. Development activities in the area are co-ordinated by a voluntary body formed by the villagers, The Ngecha Location Development Association (NLDA). This Association is recognised by and sits in the District Development Committee (DDC) the statutory body responsible for co-ordinating development activities at district level under Kenya's decentralised planning strategy. There is a strong gender balance among the NLDA and importantly for this initiative it's Chair is also the Chairperson of the Ngecha Women Self-help Group. Through these strong organisational alliances the Ngecha women were able to bring their ideas for road rehabilitation to the wider community and particularly to involve the men.

In 1996 after a local fundraising effort the group were able to purchase basic farm tools and hire a grader and compactor for use on the road. More than 200 people, both men and women, worked voluntarily in groups of 30 to 40. By 1999 they had cleared most of the encroaching bush and vegetation, patched and filled holes and gullies developed by erosion, and cleared culverts over 20km of access roads. Individual farmers responsible for encroachment were persuaded to restore the roads to their original condition.

Despite initial enthusiasm for the project, a lack of clarity over certain issues at the planning stage has led to a degree of disillusionment among villagers. Some members of the community expected an inflow of resources from the government through the DDC, but this expectation of only partial funding by the community was not based upon any firm financial commitments from other sources. The consequential shortage of resources limited the extent of intervention possible.

Another problematic issue was equity of labour. The scheme for continuous maintenance was founded on the premise of continuously available voluntary labour. It was expected that more households would be attracted to the scheme as it progressed but the project lacked a formula to secure this participation. Once again expectations outlined at the planning stage had failed to materialise and the consequential lack of equity in contribution from beneficiaries acted as a disincentive to those who had already

committed to the scheme, exacerbating the difficulties in labour supply.

The project lacked sound technical support and made improvements based upon the limited knowledge of civil works available in the village. The NLDA tried unsuccessfully to secure the services of the District Roads Engineer and some of the work, eg. design of storm drains, type of murrum used, could have benefited from further technical advice.

It is not always easy to identify the exact elements which propel a community initiative such as this one in Ngecha. Certainly the existing network of co-operation among local organisations was an enabling factor for a community mobilised by economic need and ready to take ownership of their local roads agenda.

It is unlikely that the Ngecha community will undertake any more ambitious rehabilitation projects, as this project worked within their existing institutional capacities but pushed the limits of the community's financial, material and labour resources. One could question the longevity of an initiative which often struggles over technical, legal and organisational issues without any external support. However to the extent that the people of Ngecha have established a link between roads access improvements and their livelihoods, it may be safe to say that a measure of sustainability exists.

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## Entrepreneurship & the Community

In an effort to counteract the catastrophic effects of El Nino rains in 1998, a family in rural Tanzania took the initiative to mobilise village members in the construction of a river crossing. The bridge would improve access between family members and land on either side of the water. It would also provide a public access route for approximately 100 persons on market days and 30 persons on other days, reducing a two hour journey negotiating the river to just two minutes.

Efforts by the family to mobilise resources from potential users in neighbouring villages were in vain. Villagers did not believe that a village or individual could manage the construction of a bridge, believing such investments to be the sole task of the government or a donor agency. In reality river crossings do

not fall under the direct mandate of the government for support, and in competition with other infrastructure priorities in the area, were unlikely to attract funding.

Despite their failure to mobilise the community at large, the entrepreneur managed to mobilise family labour and formed the MONA group (roughly translated as 'you wait and you will see'), who committed labour and resources to build the bridge. Unfortunately due to low technical input the bridge became loose and washed away in heavy rains in 1999. Undeterred, however, the group made a cash investment in the construction of a more technically advanced bridge, still stable to date.

To recoup their investment, put aside money for maintenance, and make a small profit, the group levied tolls for public use of the

bridge, weighted according to the type of user & the season. The head of the family group was exposed to a village meeting to explain why he was charging users to cross the bridge, to which he pointed out that without any community support for construction his family needed to recover the costs. The local community agreed to reject obligatory collective participation in favour of this private enterprise, which solves the mobility needs of the wider community while only demanding contributions from actual users. Importantly this overcomes the potential problem of 'free riders', people from neighbouring communities using the bridge without contributing financial or human resources.

It is likely that the investment will be both financially and socially sustainable. For a community with

varying social and economic interests in establishing a bridge there was no unifying factor to mobilise collective participation. The 'private' solution has provided a transport solution directly sustained by the user and also established a permanent funding mechanism for maintenance. The technical inputs made were within the capabilities of the group in terms of organisation, labour and resources. While on a social and political level the building of the bridge has challenged the local perception that government alone should tackle infrastructure problems.

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## Creating Space for Small Enterprise

The widespread diffusion of the donkey cart, both in Senegal and in the Sahelian region of West Africa is an example of the successful transfer and appropriation of technology by different stakeholders; industry, artisans, producers, and the private sector.

The history of agricultural policy in Senegal has some bearing on this diffusion. From the mid 1960s until 1980 the state supported agricultural programme allowed more than 90% of farmers in targeted areas to equip themselves with agricultural equipment for cultivation and transport. 26% of the equipment distributed under this programme were carts (donkey, horse and bullock). 1984 saw the beginning of a new set of policies, focused on the disengagement of the State and putting greater responsibility on farmers to become more self-sufficient. The manufacture of

agricultural equipment entered into a new dynamic of competition between SISMAR (formerly the state-run SISCOMAR) and the artisan sector.

Liberalisation led to increased prices and tied farmers into relationships of production, resulting in debt and impoverishment. The sale of agricultural equipment did not fare very well during this period, though donkey and horse carts were more successful. Farmers were able to recoup their investment in the carts by diversifying their use, such as providing urban or inter-urban transport services. This was possible due to the existence of good quality roads and well maintained farm tracks, linking villages and urban centres.

The devaluation of the CFA in 1994 and the adoption of an Agricultural Sector Adjustment

Programme with the World Bank in 1996 led to the implementation of a rational investment programme for the revival of the agricultural sector. This gave producers the option of acquiring untaxed equipment from local industrial producers such as SISMAR or of dealing with highly qualified artisans. Today, the majority of donkey carts used by individual farmers in Senegal are manufactured by rural artisans, producing carts at a reasonable price and benefiting from training programmes conducted by several organisations. Their pricing responds to supply and demand and is aided by the provision of free labour through the traditional system of unpaid apprenticeship. Most of the carts made by SISMAR and URPATA-Sahel are destined for export or are on closed orders made via tender.

Although the involvement of artisans in the manufacturing of

carts has occurred spontaneously, the state has unconsciously played a role in their success. Through active promotion and more or less disguised grants to help organisations like SISMAR to sell off their produce, the state has created a critical demand for the carts. Changes in fiscal policy and the subsequent retreat of the state has allowed artisans to fill the gap left by industries waiting for the return of more favourable policies. The challenge for encouraging similar appropriation of technology in different situations is in stimulating this critical mass of demand which make small enterprise viable.

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## Empowering Communities to Meet the Responsibility of Sustainability

Communities in the Ratnapura district of Sri Lanka were looking to weak state and regional authorities, deficient in both funds and technical expertise, for solutions to their transport deprivation. These rural communities are financially, politically and socially isolated by distances that render walking or cycling impractical. Few bus services operate due to poor road infrastructure and the high costs involved in serving a small and highly dispersed population.

At a group discussion between LFRTD (Lanka Forum for Rural Transport & Development) and the villagers of Kosgala, Kitulpe and Halpe in the Ratnapura district, the villagers suggested a community operated bus service as a solution. They offered to construct and maintain a road suitable for bus operation, if a bus could be provided. They were confident of adequate demand for the service and of their capacity to construct and maintain the road.

The LFRTD initiated this 'Community Managed Rural Road and Bus Service project' as a pilot initiative to demonstrate a new approach to improving rural transport facilities. The intention was to create opportunities for communities to design and implement their own solutions. The LFRTD focused on developing local institutional

capacity. Strengthening and promoting existing community based organisations (CBO's) until they were able to accept the challenge of planning, developing and maintaining their own transport services, and able to accept responsibility for the project's sustainability.

A Management Committee (MC) comprising representatives of all the CBOs provided a focus for the initiative & worked alongside a community mobiliser (appointed by LFRTD), in a three stage capacity building process; community mobilisation, road construction and management development.

Community mobilisation focused upon raising awareness, encouraging community wide participation, and institutional capacity building, to create an environment conducive to project management by the community. Through participatory planning processes the villagers and their MC investigated their options and decided upon a bus service and the construction of an all weather road.

The community completed the road construction, widening and upgrading 3km of road to an 18 foot all weather road suitable to sustain a bus service. The road connected the communities of Kosgala & Kitulpe (440 households) to Ratnapura the provincial capital, a distance of 13 kms. The beneficiary commitment

in cash/kind/labour was about 46% of the estimated project cost including the establishment of a fund for part payment of the capital cost of the bus. The project remained constrained by lack of funds until the Ingo ITDG (Intermediate Technology Development Group), impressed by the demonstration of commitment and capability from the local community, offered to part-finance the cost of road construction and bus purchase. The remaining funds were raised by the MC as loan capital.

With the initial road construction complete the MC took on a new role overseeing the maintenance of the road and bus, and the operation of the bus service itself. The MC acquired legal status through registration with the Provincial Registrar of Companies. Annual election of office bearers and the ratification of audited accounts at an AGM effectively overcome any potential for village factionalism and assure transparency and the correct use of funds. For 3 years the company has successfully implemented and maintained the bus service over 1.5km of road, serving a population of 3500 and improving access to the provincial capital, providing improved educational, health, employment and marketing opportunities for all.

Widespread community involvement has led to an internalised sense of responsibility

for the longevity of the bus service. The effective performance of local organisations has highlighted the value and potential of participatory management for community initiatives. The Management Company has proven to be capable of effective decision making, particularly with regard to safeguarding the project, for example, aggressive marketing to pre-empt competitors. Problems have arisen due to insufficient technical inputs for maintenance, and the road is in need of repair. However the Management Company is providing a platform through which the community are able to negotiate with the provincial government for upgrading of the road.

Within this alliance of stakeholders; donor (ITDG), facilitator (LFRTD) and the community, the decision making power has remained firmly with the community. Through flexible community based organisations the beneficiaries were able to meet their own transport needs requiring only the facilitation skills of external agencies and limited one off financial inputs.

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## News and Events

### New Research & Regional Synergies

The Kenya Draught Animal Technology Network (KENDAT) is implementing a 2 year Rural Transport Services Project in Kenya. The project's goal is to: "Systematically assemble data, information and experience that can provide guidance on key policy options at the national and local levels, in regard to improved delivery of rural transport services".

The project is supported by DFID/IUDD for 1 year, and SIDA for 2 years. DFID/IUDD support focuses on the links between transport and livelihood strategies of poor people, with a specific focus on the role of Intermediate Means of Transport. SIDA's support focuses on the analysis of rural transport patterns using a logistics-planning framework, with a particular focus on environmental and gender outcomes.

The project has close parallels with the Orissa and Rajasthan Rural Transport Services Project currently being carried out by the two IFRTD regional networks in India. There will be ongoing exchange of information between the Kenyan and Indian projects especially in regard to the application of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach. The project is working in close collaboration with IFRTD, ITDG (East Africa), National Forum Group (Kenya), the Kenya Institute of Public Policy and Research Analysis (KIPPR) and the Kenya Roads Board.

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### ILO ASIST Key New Resources

#### **A** guide to Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning in Malawi. By Rob Dingen. ILO ASIST. June 2000. ISBN 92-2-112098-8

This guide describes the Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) approach - a multi-sectoral integrated planning tool that addresses the key aspects of rural household access needs. It is based on experience of a pilot integrated rural transport project in Malawi and provides a practical guide to the steps involved in the process.

#### **Guidelines for the design and construction of suspension footbridges.** By Emmanuel V Chipuru. ILO ASIST. December 2000. ISBN 92-2-112443-6

Guidelines developed from experience gained in Zimbabwe and Asia on the various aspects on the design and construction of suspension footbridges spanning 20m to 160m, from site investigations to maintenance. It is intended to be used as a guide complimented by sound engineering knowledge and adapted for local conditions.

To access these resources and others please contact:

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### Network Expansion

The international network congratulates IFRTD members in the République Démocratique du Congo who have gathered together to form a new National Forum Group. The GFN-RDC officially began its activities in July 2001 in Kinshasa. Members primarily derive from the transport sector and development associations, including 27 NGOs encompassing 8 provinces of the RDC.

The current organisation of the GFN-RDC consists of an executive committee comprising an Executive Secretariat and 5 commissions which address the key areas of the GFN's work; research and development, partnership, workshop and conference, publication and distribution and the omnipresent administration & finance.

For the first year, the GFN-RDC is focusing upon the development of its emerging network through the various provinces of RDC in order to

identify localised transport issues in rural areas of the country. Some activities have been organised such as the implementation of a web site [www.cid-congo.org/gfn](http://www.cid-congo.org/gfn), the organisation of two workshops on transport issues relevant to the RDC, and the preparation of a local newsletter. The support of the appropriate technology NGO, GRET (Groupe de Réflexion et d'échange technologique), has been vital in the realisation of these activities.

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### Tanzanian Forum Group Officially Launched

The Tanzania Forum Group (TFG) on Transport and Development was officially launched on 12th February 2002. Over 90 stakeholders attended the launch event at the historical Karimjee Hall, Dar-Es-Salaam. Hon Mizengo Pinda, Deputy Minister of State in the Office of the President (Regional Administration and Local Government) performed the official launch with a challenge to the TFG to live up to its mandate as a research and information resource for improved rural transport services in Tanzania. At the closing ceremony Mr Salum Msoma, Permanent Secretary, and Ministry of Communication

and Transport, underscored the centrality of improved transport systems in the achievement of key development objectives such as poverty reduction.

TFG now joins a growing number of National Forum Groups on transport in many developing countries. In Eastern and Southern Africa, National Forum groups already exist in Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Tanzania is particularly privileged to have pioneered some trail blazing pilot projects exploring sustainable solutions to rural transport problems. Examples include Makete Integrated Rural Project, the cycle trailer project in Lindi

and Mtwara Districts, and currently, the Village Transport and Travel Programme (VTTP). TFG can play a catalytic role, ensuring that key lessons emerging from pilot projects are systematised, debated and institutionalised in policy and practice. Stakeholders are invited to strengthen TFG as a platform for cross-sectoral information sharing and collaboration.

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