



# IFRTD The International Forum for Rural Transport and Development

## Strategy 2007-2011

On behalf of the network we, the undersigned, endorse this document as the new IFRTD strategy for the next strategic cycle 2007-2011:

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The transport and development sector is changing - broad initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals are shaping the international context whilst issues such as safety, gender, trade and urban transport are rising up the agenda. Increasingly transport is seen as a cross-cutting issue with its significance being recognised across a variety of sectors such as energy, economics and the environment. There is also a shift in the way programmes are funded with sector wide approaches, consultancies, budgetary support and national/regional level funding increasing in importance.

In the five years since IFRTD developed its last strategy it is not just the external environment that has changed, but the network itself. Membership has tripled, National Forum Groups (NFGs) and Communities of Practice have been introduced and expanded, regional networks have taken on their own identity and networked research programmes have been established as a successful approach to bridging research, policy and implementation.

This changing landscape means IFRTD must collaboratively set some strategic priorities for the next five years in order to continue to give voice to the transport needs of the world's poorest communities and most vulnerable groups. IFRTD's strength lies in the collaborative use of its membership's collective knowledge and skill base and their commitment to the issues. This strategy sets out not only what we hope to achieve, but also how we hope to achieve it by fulfilling the network's potential.

The following document is based on six strategic focus areas – What we stand for, What we do, Who we are, How we organise, How we generate resources and How we assess our work. Each of these focus areas contains key priorities that will guide the work of the Forum over the next five years.

The strategy was developed during an intensive year long consultation and the same principles contained in this document of non-hierarchical democratic and participatory networking were applied to the process itself (for more information on the process and timeline please see Annex 1). The Forum's members must be recognised and thanked for the time and resources they have provided during the strategy development process.

IFRTD is a global network operating at the international, regional, national and local level and the strategic priorities contained herein are a reflection of the views across all of IFRTD's constituents. The responsibility of fulfilling the strategy lies with the network as a whole and throughout this document 'IFRTD' refers collectively to all network constituents. Where strategic implications are for specific constituents then this is clearly stated.



# 1. WHAT WE STAND FOR

At the heart of IFRTD must be a clear understanding of the sort of world we would like to see, how we can work towards that goal and the values we abide by. IFRTD's vision, mission and values stand above everything else and should inspire the rest of the strategy document and our work over the next five years.

## 1.1

### **Our vision:**

Poor and vulnerable communities in developing countries are able to improve their lives through enhanced mobility, access and economic opportunity.

### **Our mission:**

As a Southern-driven global network IFRTD works to improve policies and practices in transport operations, infrastructure, access and service provision that will benefit the lives of poor rural communities in developing countries through dialogue, information sharing, capacity building, research and advocacy.

### **Our strap line:**

The IFRTD is a global network of individuals and organisations working together towards improved access, mobility and economic opportunity for poor communities in developing countries.

### **Our values:**

- IFRTD is committed to addressing the accessibility and mobility needs of poor and vulnerable communities as a catalyst for improving their lives.
- We aim to work together with others to add value to the transport and development sector and we strive to work with other non-transport sector organisations to ensure a holistic approach to the mobility and access needs and potentials of poor communities.
- IFRTD strives for gender equality both in the transport and development sector and within its own network.
- We empower and support network members to influence both mainstream policy and to promote and uphold marginalised issues related to access and mobility.
- We are a Southern-driven global network of individuals and organisations whose strength lies in the collaborative use of our collective knowledge, skills and interests.
- We uphold the principles of non-hierarchical and democratic networking. We are committed to the decentralisation of decision-making and implementation. We strive to provide all members with equal opportunities to participate in the activities of the network and take ownership of the network.
- We have a participative governance structure that is representative of the network.
- We are a flexible, dynamic and innovative network through self questioning and learning.
- We freely share knowledge and information to promote change in a multi-disciplinary, cross-regional, multi-lingual way.



- IFRTD is committed to disseminating information to the widest possible audience using both print and electronic media.
- We respect cultural diversity and oppose all forms of discrimination due to sex, race, age, social status or religion.
- Membership of IFRTD will be open to all those who share our vision, mission and values. Members will have the right to engage in the Forum in a non-hierarchical, democratic and participatory manner.
- We recognise and value the contribution of our members for amongst other things the time, experience, expertise, communications, contacts, services and locally raised funds they bring to IFRTD.

## 2. WHO WE ARE

Networks are, by their nature, a loose association of individuals and organisations and IFRTD derives its strength and dynamism from this – being able to draw on the network’s diverse range of interests and skills.

With over 3300 members there is inevitably a proportion of IFRTD’s membership who is more active than others. The challenge for IFRTD is to better understand and define our membership, not only to encourage wider participation in the Forum’s activities but also to increase the sense of ownership by outlining clearly the benefits and obligations of belonging to the Forum.

### 2.1 Better define IFRTD membership

To do this IFRTD will:

Ask members to actively sign up to the Forum’s vision, mission and values (including signing a declaration through the website). In return IFRTD will explicitly state the benefits of becoming a member and outline how members can understand more about the network and get involved.

### 2.2 Consolidate and expand the membership

To do this IFRTD will:

Categorise members more effectively. This will involve asking members (new and old) for additional information and responding appropriately to active and passive members. IFRTD will distinguish between institutional and individual members. The Secretariat, Regional Coordinators and NFGs will streamline member details at the international, regional and national level to ensure better coordination. Information will be kept up-to-date and members will be contacted in this regard.

Increase membership through reaching out to new audiences from different sectors.

## 3. WHAT WE DO

Since its inception IFRTD has pioneered Southern-driven research as a means of highlighting the transport needs of poor rural communities. To ensure this research has a real impact on policies and practices IFRTD has also prioritised a number of key tools - advocacy, information dissemination, capacity building and networking. The following strategic priorities reflect that these are still at the core of what IFRTD does, but they also reflect the fact that the network is maturing and it must set clearer objectives at the local, national, regional and international level.



### **3.1 Ensure the interests of poor communities and vulnerable groups are represented in the policies and practices of the transport and development sector.**

To do this at the international level IFRTD will:

Continue to engage in constructive dialogue with transport and development sector agencies. This will involve the Forum developing partnerships with organisations, giving a voice to network members and challenging trends at the international level.

Increase its visibility and impact by strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships through building on the cross-cutting nature of transport issues. IFRTD must recognise and be able to link the importance of transport to emerging and established international trends such as the Millennium Development Goals.

To do this at the regional level IFRTD will:

Support Regional Coordinators to raise IFRTD's regional profile and advocate with, for example, regional bodies and investment programmes and to be able to link up with national governments.

To do this at the national and local level IFRTD will:

Support national and local level advocacy so that NFGs, affiliated networks, local groups and members are able to identify and reach their target audience and partner with implementing agencies, through for example:

- Information dissemination and communication strategies
- Regional, national and municipal level thematic workshops
- High-visibility IFRTD 'branding' and promotional material
- Capacity building
- Training and attending workshops

### **3.2 Continue to fight for gender equality**

To do this IFRTD will:

Work with network constituents such as GATNET and other like-minded networks to promote and advocate for gender mainstreaming in the transport and development sector. In particular IFRTD will hold transport organisations, projects and programmes to account through gender auditing.

### **3.3 Continue to pioneer collaborative Southern-driven action research**

To do this IFRTD will:

Use successful participatory methodologies such as 'networked research' to build Southern ownership not only of research activities but also to empower network members to have a real impact on local, national and international policies and practices. This participatory approach to research and advocacy that highlights pro-poor and community-focused issues that are often marginalised within the transport and development sector is at the heart of IFRTD's work and we will continue to find new ways to bridge the knowledge gap.

### **3.4 Champion pro-poor rural transport issues and act as a clearing house for Southern-driven information dissemination**

To do this IFRTD will:

Raise the Forum's profile both amongst transport and development sector organisations and other sectors as the leading global hub for information relating to the policies and practices that affects poor rural communities.



Support regional, national and local level network constituents to produce where appropriate local language information products, promotional materials, new media products and communication strategies. Successful models such as the LFRTD (The Lanka Forum on Rural Transport and Development) can act as a guide for other network constituents.

Ensure tri-lingual information flows reach the widest possible audience using not just electronic media but print media wherever appropriate. IFRTD will continue to innovate in the field of knowledge management and information exchange and will tailor its information products to have a bigger impact on specific target audiences. For example: national governments, engineers, those wanting to learn from IFRTD's networking experience and non-transport sectors such as health, energy and the environment.

### **3.5 Stimulate and support network activity**

To do this IFRTD will:

Stimulate more debate and activities at the regional, national and local level. To do this there is a need to be aware of regional and country specific contexts. Regional Coordinators are best placed to do this and will be supported in this role.

IFRTD will continue to use innovative methodologies such as networked research programmes and Communities of Practice to empower members, build capacity and create new spaces for networking. We will remain open to new ways of communicating and networking through for example national listservs, new regional fora and online blogs, whilst remaining alert to the digital divide and the need for traditional face to face and print networking.

As membership of the Forum is voluntary IFRTD members will continue to be recognised and acknowledged for committing their time and resources to the network and network activities.

## **4. HOW WE ORGANISE**

IFRTD's structure of the decentralised Secretariat, regional networks, NFGs and/or affiliated networks, Communities of Practice and active members allows a combination of global as well as regional and local networking functions. IFRTD must ensure that these structures, or any new network groupings, are dynamic enough to allow members to actively engage at the local, national, regional and/or international level.

IFRTD is currently hosted by Practical Action (formerly ITDG) with financial and contractual management being outsourced to Practical Action Consulting (formerly ITC). Whilst IFRTD recognises the rich and positive history between the three organisations it has also had serious implications for the autonomy and fundraising capacity of the Forum over the past few years. All three parties agree that registering as an independent legal entity would open up new potential income streams for IFRTD. In terms of further decentralising of the Forum's activities legal autonomy can also act as an important precedent.

### **4.1 IFRTD will become an independent legal entity**

To do this the Secretariat will:

Implement a strategy to become a fully autonomous legal entity by, at the latest, November 2009. The Forum will develop detailed plans and work closely with the current hosts to ensure a smooth transition.

### **4.2 Continue to organise the network in an innovative and pragmatic way**

To do this IFRTD will:

Organise in a way that maximises the network's energy and potential. IFRTD will continue to empower network members to advocate for a Southern-driven agenda. IFRTD will nurture



successful network groupings, whether they are thematic (CoPs) or geographic (NFGs and regional networks), and create new and innovative forms of networking and information exchange. IFRTD must be clear about the various successes of the existing network constituents.

Strive to decentralise its activities further by prioritising regional and national level networking through supporting and replicating successful models such as the IFRTDAL (Latin American regional network) and LFRTD (Lanka Forum on Rural Transport and Development) as well as more ad hoc network groupings where South-South information exchange and capacity building encourages both national and international debate.

#### **4.3 Develop and improve the NFG model**

To do this IFRTD will:

Learn from past experiences - both positive and negative - to encourage and support NFGs to act as a national hub for members in their country. This will involve not only disseminating information locally and generating local activities but encouraging participation in IFRTD's regional and international activities. Feedback from the strategy process will be used to draft a set of NFG standards and guidelines that will be agreed collectively by the regions and the Executive Committee by November 2008. The Secretariat will develop its own process for working with and supporting NFGs in light of these recommendations.

#### **4.4 Ensure the governance structures reflect the diversity of the network**

To do this IFRTD will:

Ensure the principles of non-hierarchical, democratic, transparent and representational governance are upheld. The Southern-driven nature of the network, fairer representation of Communities of Practice and non-NFG active members and a gender balance will all be enshrined in IFRTD's constitution and working governance structures.

In the same manner IFRTD's chairperson election process will be formalised in the constitution and will be comprised of the principles laid out during the Executive Committee Meeting 2005.

Regional and national network constituents will be supported to implement and uphold their own systems of governance.

#### **4.5 Promote gender equality**

To do this IFRTD will:

Uphold the principle of gender balance in all areas of its work and will implement criteria to ensure fair representation at all levels. This will apply to National Forum Groups (NFGs), regional networks, the Executive Committee, the Secretariat and participation in workshops and meetings. IFRTD will encourage and promote gender awareness among its members.

## **5. HOW WE GENERATE RESOURCES**

The way development is funded is changing but with a strong network IFRTD can respond positively to the rise in consultancies, regional and country level funding as well as the increasing importance of NGOs and CSOs. IFRTD must effectively track this changing funding landscape and ensure it is well-equipped to take advantage of these new opportunities.



## **5.1 Consolidate existing funding streams**

To do this IFRTD will:

Continue to acknowledge and foster good relationships with all our core donors, helping to build on a sustainable financial base that has supported IFRTD since its inception.

## **5.2 Expand and diversify funding base**

To do this IFRTD will:

Increase cross-sectoral partnerships by building on the cross-cutting nature of transport issues. IFRTD will collaborate with and receive funding from such organisations as International NGOs and regional organisations working on issues such as poverty, health, gender, environment and safety. IFRTD will encourage joint-owned networked research programmes with other organisations and sectors.

## **5.3 Decentralise IFRTD's fundraising**

To do this IFRTD will:

Build capacity for and support a strong set of decentralised fundraising mechanisms to access funds from regional and national level agencies. This will involve, where appropriate, training, support for proposal writing, institutionalisation and increased information flows to network constituents.

## **5.4 Encourage independent member-led consultancies**

To do this IFRTD will:

Disseminate information to members to encourage them to bid for the increasing number of consultancies. IFRTD will promote and support self-organised Southern-driven consultancy collaborations and empower members to influence policy and build capacity themselves.

# **6. HOW WE ASSESS OUR WORK**

It is difficult for a Monitoring and Evaluation process to fully capture the activities of a network like IFRTD. Whilst the work of the Secretariat may be visible, this is only the tip of the iceberg with many more 'invisible' activities occurring throughout the wider network. IFRTD must introduce systematic monitoring and evaluation processes that not only improve transparency and accountability to donors, but help IFRTD to understand itself better as a network, recognise the contributions of its members and meet the expectations of its stakeholders.

## **6.1 Demonstrate accountability and learning at all levels of the network through systematic M&E**

To do this IFRTD will:

Introduce a systematic but simple methodology in the form of an interactive online database for the Secretariat and others to record, for example, observations, workshop reports, anecdotes, presentations and pictures that will help build a qualitative picture of IFRTD's impact. IFRTD will continue to explore and use other innovative M&E methodologies.

Agree simple and common indicators in line with the strategic priorities contained in this document. To ensure transparency and accountability reporting milestones will be built into IFRTD's existing governance structure. This will form the basis of an M&E system that can be used at the local, national, regional and international level.

Support network constituents in developing their own M&E systems and ensure adequate systems are in place for two way feedback between members and the Secretariat.

