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## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE IFRTD NETWORK

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From its inception in 1991, the central objective of the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) has been to use its collective strength to champion the transport needs of poor and vulnerable rural communities in developing countries. Today, the IFRTD is an effective, Southern-driven global network, with approximately 3,000 members, 30 affiliated National Forum Groups and 4 communities of practice, pursuing a common aim through information sharing, research, advocacy and capacity building.

### The guiding principles of IFRTD

- To ensure that the interests of the poor and vulnerable are represented in the policies and practices of the transport and development sector,
- To act as a focal point for Southern-driven information dissemination,
- To fight for gender equality,
- To stimulate and support non-hierarchical and participatory network activity, and
- To pioneer collaborative Southern-driven action research.

Underpinning the work of IFRTD is a firm conviction that these rural communities need effective rural transport solutions. With appropriate action, they can achieve widespread poverty reduction and socio-economic development, and attain the Millennium Development Goals.

### Origins and establishment of the IFRTD network

The Makete Integrated Rural Transport Project (MIRTP) influenced the emergence of IFRTD. This project was implemented in South East Tanzania between 1985 and 1996, using innovative ways to assess transport demand. The project examined the various constraints to access and mobility and their links to poverty, illustrating that the provision of roads alone did not have the expected impact on social and economic development.



MIRTP generated a rural travel and transport (RTT) discourse and created a movement of individuals and organisations committed to the emerging concepts. In 1991, following a meeting of a group of organisations in Geneva – including the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Programme (SSATP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD), the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and Intermediate Technology Transport (ITT) the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development was formed.

From its creation, the IFRTD was hosted by the Intermediate Technology Development Group (later to become Practical Action). In the early days, when the network extended to Africa and Asia, the central activities were raising awareness of rural travel and transport issues, information sharing and the establishment of IFRTD as a source of expertise. The *Forum News*, a quarterly newsletter was launched in 1992 to support these central objectives while promoting membership and supporting national and regional RTT activities. National Forum Groups (NFGs) were formed, which follow IFRTD's Vision and Mission (see below), becoming an important element in the development of the IFRTD network.

### Expansion and consolidation for the IFRTD network, 1996–2005

In 1996, a formal IFRTD Secretariat of three staff was established as a source of advice and expertise and to participate in international and national advocacy activities. The profile of IFRTD grew significantly with a rapid expansion in membership to 2,500 and the number of affiliated NFGs growing from 16 in 1998 to 30 by 2005.

This period saw IFRTD successfully coordinate a range of groundbreaking international and national awareness raising, capacity building and advocacy activities. The network also saw a significant expansion to Latin America.

From 2001, to support the increase in national and regional level RTT activities, IFRTD adopted a regionalised structure to maximise member participation and decentralise decision-making. The Secretariat took on regional coordinators, based in Asia, East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and Latin America.

*Forum News* was produced quarterly in three languages, covering a range of issues including mountainous access, transport safety, gender and transport, governance and community participation.

SDC continued to be a core funder for IFRTD, joined by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Sida.

#### IFRTD projects and activities, 1996–2005

- **Balancing the Load, 1996.** IFRTD's first networked research project on gender and transport. The project was high profile and groundbreaking, with 40 case studies from across Asia and Africa. It led to a widespread acceptance of the need for gender mainstreaming in the transport sector (assessing the different implications for women and men of any proposed action).
- **Waterways and Livelihoods, 2002.** A second project successfully raised the international profile of rural water transport and the importance of its place in integrated planning to achieve livelihood security for the rural poor.
- **Gender and Transport Community of Practice ('GATNET'), 2002.** IFRTD established an email discussion group to support dialogue between the gender and transport practitioners.
- **Improving Mobility Workshop series, 2003.** Workshops were held in Africa, Asia and Latin America focusing on the role of mobility and transport services in fighting poverty.
- **Poverty Watch, 2003.** Implemented in 14 countries in 3 regions, this programme aimed to pinpoint the role of transport in poverty reduction, and support civil society in monitoring and influencing transport sector policies and investments.

#### Path to independence, 2005–2009

IFRTD continued to grow, and the Secretariat, members and NFGs continued their involvement with innovative research projects, advocating at all levels for improved rural transport provision, and promoting the importance of transport as a cross-cutting issue and crucial catalyst to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Renewal of core support from Sida and SDC underpinned the IFRTD strategy 2007 to 2011.

In April 2009 IFRTD became an independent organisation registered as a company limited by guarantee in the UK in order to strengthen its operations and increase its impact.

#### IFRTD projects and activities, 2005–2009

- **Mobility and Health, 2006.** An ambitious research project involving 24 case studies across Latin America, Africa and Asia and the Pacific, this study was designed to provide essential information on the role of transport in the health of rural communities.
- **Children and Mobility.** Led by the University of Durham in association with IFRTD, child-led research featured in this programme carried out in sub-Saharan Africa to examine the problems experienced by children in accessing education, health and other services.
- **Transport Indicators.** IFRTD worked closely with the Transport Results Initiative of the World Bank to coordinate a series of stakeholder workshops. These were designed to support the Bank's efforts to improve transport sector diagnosis and develop sector databases to improve performance and impact monitoring.

## **IFRTD's MISSION, VISION AND STRUCTURE**

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### **IFRTD's 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.

### **IFRTD's Vision**

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

### **Structure:**

- The IFRTD **Executive Committee** meets annually and is a steering and advisory body providing strategic, policy and advocacy guidance to the IFRTD Secretariat, the Board and the IFRTD network as a whole.
- The **IFRTD Board** governs the IFRTD Secretariat and has full legal and financial responsibility for its activities. A central role of the Board is to oversee and ensure the delivery of the IFRTD Strategy.
- **IFRTD Secretariat** facilitates the activities of the IFRTD network. It comprises the Executive Director, a Communications and Marketing officer and Administrative Support, based in London, and four regional coordinators in the IFRTD regions of Latin America, Eastern and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and Asia and the Pacific.
- The way that IFRTD is regulated is detailed in two **governance documents**. The document entitled 'New Governance and Advisory Structure, December 2008' is an internal IFRTD document detailing the different elements of the IFRTD network's governance and advisory structure including the role, composition and selection of the Board and Executive Committee. The Memorandum and Articles of Association is a legal document detailing the structure and governance of IFRTD as it relates to, and complies with, Company Law.