

Transport Forum News

**A newsletter for Transport Forum Group, Uganda (TFGU).
TFGU is affiliated to the International Forum for Rural Transport and
Development. (IFRTD).**

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About TFG Uganda.

TFG U was founded in 1997 with the aim of implementing the mission of International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) based in the U.K. The mission is to improve rural development through rural transport. This mission is being achieved in a number of ways including: information sharing, advocacy, dissemination and research in rural transport issues. TFG Uganda draws membership from Government, NGO and Private Sector.

TFG has a secretariat at Plot 5, Edinburgh Avenue, Kyambogo, Kampala. At the secretariat, there is an ever-growing collection of rural transport documentation and database. In addition, TFG has developed itself into a rural transport resource center that provides a one stop-center on issues of rural transport. Since its inception in 1997, TFG has been active in rural transport in a number of areas especially in research and project implementation. This newsletter will be highlighting and sharing our experiences with a wider readership. This newsletter is about Transport and Poverty project being implemented by TFG. It involved the review of government transport programmes and projects to establish whether or not they are responsive to poverty reduction. TFG U in collaboration with International Forum for Rural Transport and Development have for the last two years been implementing a project on Transport and Poverty in Uganda. The Civil Society Challenge Fund funded the Project. Below is the summary of the findings.

Role of Transport in Poverty Alleviation

Transport sector plays a central role in the development of the economy and poverty eradication. Transport sector contributes to the domestic revenue. Transport related operations in terms of fuel tax, road licenses, income tax and import the provision of an efficient road service is at the core of poverty eradication strategy and enhancing rural incomes. The critical importance of roads in transforming and developing the economy has been recognised by the government. In the last four years Road infrastructure has been government's fastest growing programme with a doubling of resources provided to the main roads to over shs.35 billion a year. Donors have also been increasingly willing to commit substantial resources and their spending is expected to rise from around US\$30million in 1997/98 to over US\$150 million in 2000/01. The Ten Year Road Sector Development Programme [RSDP] has been developed for the classified road network The original focus of Road Sector Development Programme was on main roads but with the background of Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) there was shift to include District, Urban & Community Roads (DUCAR) in order for the rural communities and the poor people to participate in national economy. PEAP is the background to the change in prioritisation of the national road development and maintenance investment plan. The provision of an efficient road network (National and District) is pivotal to the PEAP. Given the complementary nature of the national roads and DUCAR, strategies have been worked out to ensure that harmonious and synchronised development of these networks is undertaken in support of Government's poverty reduction strategy.

Government's strategy of increased expenditure on roads is a deliberate attempt, together with other initiatives to eradicate poverty. It is committed to poverty reduction, which is

not just expected to be a by-product of economic growth but a result of the participation of the poor in the economy. For economic growth and poverty reduction to be sustainable, the largest proportion of the population, who are the poor rural dwellers, should be included in the economy regeneration

Uganda is a beneficiary of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative (HIPC). This initiative will save the country US\$ 650M in debt over the next 30 years and \$40m. Under this initiative a Poverty Action Fund (PAF) has been created. Much of these resources are being used to fund rural feeder roads.

Road improvement had in the past been done without much attention on traffic management, traffic safety, traffic axle load limits, environmental protection and social impact mitigation. Government has realized it very important to develop policy and regulatory frameworks under which road users, road assets, and the environment can be protected and managed by putting in place relevant policies and mitigate measurers. Improved road network has led to increased traffic volumes, leading to problems of worsening traffic accidents, and increasing axle load violations. These externalities contribute to poverty intensification if they are not adequately addressed.

Roads also improve trader's access to villages, making the market competitive. They improve farmer's access to information and new ideas. Transport plays a crucial role in meeting transversal objectives of poverty reduction. In the case of HIV/Aids for instance, the victims are usually taken back to rural areas for care by the relatives. During their illness they need easy access to health services for drugs and other home care services.

This is especially so with regard to enhancing rural household incomes. This is largely for creating employment through labour-based construction. The MOWHC is implementing a deliberate policy to encourage contractors to use Labour-based methodologies as a way of alleviating poverty. Taxes contributed up to Ushs 260 billion by 1998 representing 23% of the local domestic revenue to the treasury. Secondly, employment opportunities are created in the transport services, public transport is one of the largest informal sector employment providers. Poor people are employed as drivers, cyclists, conductors, guides, boat operators, tax collectors, and porters among others. In addition several people are employed as mechanics, artisans, fuel company employees and traffic enforcement officers. Government has set a policy of involving women in labour-based works as a way of addressing poverty and equity. This is seen in the policy of use at least 30% of their labour force as women.

Roads benefit the poor in many ways. Roads facilitate the modernisation of agro-business and improving accessibility to schools, markets, health care, water and sanitation points, administration and security. As well as making its own contributions to the growth of economy, transport is a facility that helps other sector to reach their own potential. Transport is referred as "oil of the wheel of the economy".

Transport and Poverty Project. Is the Transport sector planning programmes responsive to poverty reduction?

The role of transport in poverty alleviation is without doubt significant. This is confirmed by the fact that 6.3% of the GDP comes from the sector. The sector provides one of the biggest sources of internal revenue for both central and local government level. This is largely through fuel taxes and local taxi parks management tenders respectively. This revenue is in turn used by government to implement poverty reduction programmes. There is however, need to ensure that revenues from the transport sector are re-invested in sufficient quantities to guarantee efficiency of the sector's operations. At the moment, the road transport infrastructure remains in an unsatisfactory condition leading to difficulties in mobility and high transport costs. In urban areas, there is little attention being paid in developing the urban infrastructure for efficient urban mobility.

Transport sector also contributes positively towards poverty reduction both as a facilitator and stimulates the development of other related sectors, which also contributes towards poverty reduction efforts. It creates and provides employment especially to the poor and is a means by which the poor to conduct their business and a source of livelihood. The private sector in the transport sector has particularly been at the forefront at creating and maintaining employment. This has been largely seen in the areas of *boda boda*, mechanics, drivers, spare part dealers and fuel dealers. Road infrastructure works is also beneficial in employment provision especially under labour-based methods.

A review of government documents and policies however shows more emphasis on the role of roads to poverty alleviation rather than transport as a totality. This has led to biased policies towards road transport and roads in particular and the draft transport policy and strategy paper seems silent on this. Road infrastructural investment without much regard for users does not necessarily alleviate poverty. Roads should be complemented with affordable pro-poor transport service system. There are also arguments that emphasis on roads has led to the neglect in terms of investments of other modes of transport e.g. water transport.

Privatisation of the transport service sector by government into the hands of private sector was important given the fact that government is not good player in regard to business and the overall global trends. This is based on the premise that the forces of supply and demand of the business will create an efficient transport service. There is however a danger about leaving service provision entirely in the hands of the private sector, this is because the driving force behind the private sector is profit rather than service for the poor. There are for instance, reported cases of withdrawal of transport services due to low demand or poor road condition. In addition it has led to the growth of cartels in the sector thereby disrupting efficient service provision.

This lack of integrated planning system has contributed to the limitation of the sector's contribution towards poverty reduction. It is important to address the current planning framework, as it is an explanation for inefficient transport services in Uganda. Such impediments require urgent attention if the poor are to benefit in terms of cheaper yet efficient transport services.

Uganda is yet to articulate an integrated rural transport policy that looks at more than the rural roads. Rural transport is poorly developed and expensive. For example, there is evidence to show that the poor people use *boda boda* yet it is more expensive compared to taxi. Little is being done to promote Intermediate Means of Transport (IMT). Even the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture little is mentioned on use of IMTs to improve on rural travel. Bicycles, which are widely used in rural Uganda, for instance, are heavily levied with tax duties making the poor peoples ability to afford difficult unlike in Kenya where the taxes were waived to promote rural transport and transport for the poor.

Uganda is yet to develop a rural transport policy to effectively address rural transport services (especially water transport) and intermediate means of transport (IMTs).

The implementation processes of laws and regulations within the transport sector for protecting the poor from transport operation externalities is largely weak especially in the case of water transport. The supervisory institutions under the Ministry of Works like the Transport Licensing Board and National Road Safety Council are too weak and under-funded to control the powerful service providers. This inadequate supervision of the private sector by the line ministry has had implications to the quality of service provision especially for the poor.

It should however be noted that efficient transport services for the poor cannot be created through government efforts alone. This requires government in partnership with both the private sector and NGO to review the transport planning process with poverty focused perspective. A strong and vibrant civil society is important for the Ministry to become responsive to the needs of the poor. These organisations are effective “feelers” on the ground for the benefit of government. They also understand issues affecting the poor quite accurately as their advocacy roles are deeply rooted in their work that is largely based on action research and this paper is one of the many such results. However, the civil society organisations in the transport sector are in infancy stages compared to those in other sectors in Health. The MOWHC has recognised the role of partnership with the private sector and has helped the development of the local contractors association. However, there is need to expand to include other organisations like the Transport Forum Group (TFG), First African Bicycle information Office (FABIO) and Uganda Private Road users Association (UPRUA).

There is a strong relationship between safety and poverty reduction. Studies have shown that the poor suffer more than the rich in cases of accidents. The poor depend on public transport that are unsafe and their access to post accident assistance is limited due to inability to access quality medical services.

Public awareness in regard to problems related to safety need to be heightened to both the policy makers who allocate the resources and the road users who are the victims. This is important because the policy makers under-allocate resources for this safety. The road users need to be made aware of dangers of unsafe transport behaviours.

Transport for the poor: The case for People with Disabilities (PWD)

People with disability are at a disadvantage when using public means of transport, they are usually left behind during the rush hours due to the relatively long time they take to board or disembark public transport and yet there is no effort to orient them towards catering for such disadvantaged persons. PWD also have to wait for hours in rush hours till everybody has left before they are transported. Taxi operators are reluctant to stop especially when it is raining and assist them into the taxi. In addition, public transport vehicles have no provisions for transporting disabled passengers. In Kampala for instance, there is no single vehicle fitted with sky jacks tailifts. The disabled require to be accommodated in the design and operations of the transport system because it is their basic right. The benefits of providing transport to people with disabilities are closely related to poverty reduction. They are as follows; mobility allows a disabled person to earn a living, Providing transport improves the opportunity for social acceptance, it helps to develop personal skills and knowledge, supports the disabled to fulfill political, social and economic goals, Increases their independence and helps recover the investment in human potential, for instance where a trained disabled person is economically active

The general layout of the taxi parks in the Kampala city and other urban areas has no provision for the wheelchair use. Useable sidewalks providing access to pedestrian traffic are usually not accessible due to vendors and closed access by shop owners who fence off the pavements. Currently, there is no institution for hearing public complaints about public transport service delivery.

Improved Food Crop Marketing through Appropriate Means of transport for Poor farmers in Uganda Project ends

The project, which commenced in 2001, came to an end in the December 2004. The project saw the distribution of 38 oxen, 88 donkeys, 23 ox-ploughs, 15 ox carts and 13 donkey carts to poor farmers in Kasese, Iganga and Katakwi district. Transport Forum Group implemented it in association with Natural Resources institute of the UK. The transport Research Laboratory and Silsoe Institute provided specialist input in the project. A number of lessons were realized by this project. In addition to helping poor farmers access IMTs, their use is crucial if rural development. Rural credit facility is important as the rural populace have limitations in subsistence savings. The project assisted the TFG to gain access to contemporary methodologies like participatory rural appraisals, participatory monitoring and evaluation, institutional histories methodologies

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