



Time to Broaden the Transport Safety Debate?

Much has happened since 2001 when *Forum News* last focused on the issue of safety and rural transport, yet the statistics still paint a bleak picture of both current and predicted trends:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that by 2020 road accidents will be the third most important cause of death or disability worldwide.
- More than 85% of road traffic deaths and injuries occur in low income and middle income countries yet they own just 40% of the world's motor vehicles.
- The global economic cost of road safety is estimated at up to \$100 billion. Compared with total bilateral overseas aid amounting to \$106.5 billion in 2005.
- It is estimated that over the next 15 years the number of road traffic accident fatalities may rise from 1.2 million to 2.4 million per annum with the increase occurring in developing and transitional countries (Source: www.GRSProadsafety.org).

These statistics have triggered attention at international as well as regional and national level. Today the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) plays a key role in uniting governments, business and civil society in concerted efforts to save lives. In 2004 the WHO devoted their World Health Day to road safety and consequently the United Nations (UN) established the UN Road Safety Collaboration consisting mainly of UN bodies. More recently the World Bank established the Global Road Safety Facility to generate increased funding for the issue, while for low and middle income countries the Road Traffic Injuries Research Network (RTIRN) has been based in Sri Lanka with the primary aim of developing appropriate strategies and interventions for developing countries. Finally, the 1st UN Global Road Safety Week is planned for 23rd to 29th April 2007.

Until now safety issues in the transport sector have overwhelmingly concentrated on roads, highways and motorised traffic. In this light the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the WHO recently invited IFRTD to organise a panel to explore the rural dimensions of transport safety, broadening the debate beyond roads, for their upcoming Annual Road Safety Conference in Ghana. Data on road accidents are already scarce (it is estimated that in some countries less than half of the deaths that occur as a result of road traffic accidents are reported) and reliable data on safety issues in rural transport are even harder to find. Therefore five researchers (members of IFRTD) have carried out small, mainly qualitative studies, in **India, Peru, Cameroon, Madagascar and Sri Lanka** to explore if and how transport safety issues are affecting the lives of women, men and children in rural areas.



Maria Gutierrez, 2006

Female micro-entrepreneurs in Peru differentiated between safety and security when travelling

The studies have looked at various aspects of rural transport safety. In India and Peru the researchers looked at safety issues on rural roads. They argue that by building rural roads and opening up formerly isolated areas safety becomes a critical issue, particularly due to the increased interaction between motorised and non-motorised traffic. The India study by Ashoke Sarkar (see page 2) has looked at the development of an Accident Potential Index (API), while the Peru case study by Maria Gutierrez has concentrated on the gender dimensions of safety and highlighted the distinction between safety and security. The study entitled *'The better the road the greater the risk'* explores the linkages between road rehabilitation, tourism and children and women's safety. It demonstrates that people, especially women and girl children, feel increasingly unsafe after the roads open up. Sexual harassment on transport services is prevalent, one respondent stated "If I use the car that passes through at 6am in the morning I won't get a seat when the bus returns, so I would travel crushed or squeezed in the bus, and sometimes they touch me". The study on the Bayam-Salam women in Cameroon on page 3 also explores the gender dimensions of rural transport safety.

In Madagascar Didier Young found that the interaction between motorised and non-motorised transport caused the most incidents on rural roads. These incidents are rarely fatal and with injuries treated at rural health clinics they generally go unreported. The Madagascar study also focused on some safety elements of rural water transport, highlighting the additional risks associated with the use of traditional pirogues.

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Granie R Jayalath assessed the safety issues of local infrastructure, mainly footbridges and other water crossings, in Sri Lanka. The study, carried out in four villages, revealed that the majority of water crossings are non-engineered and do not meet any safety standards. Of 142 families interviewed, about 40% were able to recall occasions when they have been compelled to keep their sick elderly mothers at home due to the safety risks involved with carrying them across water crossings. However for most rural communities the water crossings remain a positive advancement despite their safety shortcomings as they halve the time it takes them to reach critical services.

Looking Ahead to a Broader Debate

As these small IFRTD studies have shown, rural transport safety is multi-dimensional and a challenge for many people especially women and children in rural areas. So what solutions can be offered? The most obvious answer, touched on by all the studies, is better law enforcement. A recent study on Rural Transport Services commissioned by the Sub Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) and carried out by a team of rural transport specialists led by Paul Starkey has already shed some light on this. The study, carried out in four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, revealed that operators, regulators and passengers agree that the enforcement of existing and new safety regulations would bring an end to the already limited rural transport services. This could spell a disaster for local communities' accessibility and prove counterproductive to the goals of most rural roads programmes. A more context-sensitive approach is recommended combined with realistic safety regulations. For example in rural areas with a scarcity of transport services freight vehicles could be allowed to combine passengers and freight.

Another solution highlighted by many of the researchers is the development of an integrated planning and implementation approach that applies poverty reduction criteria and involves all rural stakeholders, including women and children. For national rural road programmes such as those in Peru and India, the researchers felt that a safety education component should be included to sensitise communities on impending changes. In the context of Sri Lanka local communities could be involved in identifying and prioritising the most pressing water crossings and helping the local governments to construct and maintain new, safer structures.



Weak, uneven water crossings can be hazardous (Sri Lanka)

Granie R Jayalath, 2006

Finally more research, both quantitative and qualitative, is needed. These small IFRTD studies are just the tip of the iceberg, we need to generate a greater understanding of the real and specific safety and security risks experienced by men, women and children in rural areas every day.

Resources:

- The Global Road Safety Partnership – www.GRSProadsafety.org
- The IFRTD Rural Transport and Safety Case studies (2007) – www.ifrtd.org/new/projlr_trans_safe.php
- UN Road Safety Collaboration – www.who.int/roadsafety/en/
- The Global Road Safety Facility – www.worldbank.org/globalroadsafetyfacility/
- The Road Traffic Injuries Research Network – www.rtim.net
- SSATP Rural Transport Services Study - www.ifrtd.org/new/issues/AssessingRuralTransportDraft060315.pdf

Developing an appropriate Accident Potential Index

In 2000 the government of India initiated a programme, popularly known as the Prime Minister's Rural Roads Programme or Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). PMGSY aims to construct all weather rural roads to connect all villages with populations exceeding 500 by the end of 2007. The improvements in accessibility and mobility that PMGSY has delivered have had both positive and negative impacts. Although social, physical, financial and human capital has improved, the increase in high speed and heavy motorised traffic reaching villages has had a negative impact on rural transport safety levels. These issues are particularly relevant to school children who travel long distances to reach their schools.

To identify particularly accident prone areas a study was conducted in 5 selected villages in Rajasthan with the primary objective of developing an Accident Potential Index (API) along PMGSY roads with a high traffic of school-going children. The parameters considered included:

- The geometric characteristics of the roads.
- The width and quality of the shoulder.
- Distances that need to be travelled along PMGSY roads.
- The mode of transport used by students (walking and cycling).
- Traffic volume and modal-mix on the roads.

The relative weights of the parameters were determined through an expert opinion survey and children and villagers participated to help rate the scores against each parameter. Surprisingly the study revealed that children feel safer cycling than walking to school. The resulting API value will help decision makers to identify the stretches of road that



Sharp curves with blind corners make cyclists in particular susceptible to accidents

Ashoke Sarkar, 2006

require immediate attention for improved safety standards. Thus far this study has been carried out as a small pilot and it is recommended that it is carried out on a larger scale to further test and standardise the API.

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www.pmgsy.org



No Choice: journeys with rural Cameroon's Bayam-Salam women

The Bayam-Salam (buy and sell) women of rural Cameroon are micro-entrepreneurs who travel between rural areas purchasing perishable and non-perishable goods to sell in urban areas. This is a popular income generating activity for vulnerable women, particularly orphans, in Cameroon. A local proverb describes the market as "an orphan's mother", reflecting the nurturing and socio-economic protection it provides.

Vivien Meli, a sociologist from the University of Dschang conducted a qualitative study to document the safety issues faced by the Bayam-Salam women on their journeys. The study was carried out in the high plateau rural areas of Bagam and Galim in Western Cameroon and the urban zone of Mbouda to which the Bayam-Salam women travel to sell their merchandise.

The study has demonstrated that reliable and safe transport is a key determinant of the types of goods that the women are able to buy and sell. Perishable goods in particular demand quick access to markets and due to the high transport costs involved the Bayam-Salam women are in most cases priced out of trading these goods. Safe rural transport is generally hard to come by, bad roads, bad driving habits such as speeding, and overloading are all prevalent. However, the study has also shown that women in particular face specific safety hazards when they use the transport options available; mini truck, bush taxi, motorbike or walking. For example:

- Women are more likely than men to fall victim to bribes at road blocks as they mainly sit on top of the vehicles to protect their merchandise and are therefore more accessible to the 'officers'.
- Using community paths to access producers and directly negotiate better prices compromises the personal safety of the women through increased exposure to sexual harassment.

- Unsafe transport exacerbates the exposure of the Bayam-Salam women to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Sexual favours (usually unprotected) between the transport provider and the woman are often negotiated or demanded in exchange for better and safer seats.



Vivien Meli 2006

The safer the seat the higher the fare

The Bayam-Salam women tackle their transportation safety issues by utilising a variety of transport modes, stocking produce and contributing financially to road maintenance workers. However these are all informal coping mechanisms and this study recommends further quantitative and qualitative research to support the integration of these very real safety concerns for women in the planning and implementation of rural transport services and infrastructure.

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Building Bridges: Rural water crossings in Sri Lanka

There are an estimated 120,000 engineered rural waterway crossings in Sri Lanka, falling under the responsibility of local governments called Pradeshiya Saba (PS). To date no attempt has been made to count and assess the quality of the so-called 'non-engineered' ones. Non-engineered water crossings are classified as those structures that do not follow any engineering standards, they are built in the first instance to benefit an individual or a family and are consequently used by an entire community. The small study carried out in four villages, both in mountainous and flat areas, was a first attempt to carry out an assessment of these types of waterway crossings, looking at the safety concerns that communities might have and any recommendations for improvements.

Within the four villages 67 waterway crossings were examined and 142 affected families were interviewed to provide a qualitative and quantitative picture. It was found that more than 92% of these crossings do not have basic engineering arrangements. The most significant deficiency is the non-availability of firm abutments. Only 50% of the crossings were of sufficient width for a motorbike or bicycle to pass through. Of the families interviewed it was revealed that 80% tend to use a water crossing if it reduces their journey distance by over 50%. In fact 35% of the families were entirely dependent on a water crossing to reach a main road. In terms of access to critical health care services almost half of the families were able to relate incidents where they had to keep their sick mothers at home due to the challenges of carrying them over unsafe water crossings.

As a potential solution the communities interviewed expressed a desire to engage with their PS to identify and prioritise the most dangerous crossings which they could then help to upgrade. As part of this participatory process communities were also enthusiastic to be

involved in construction and maintenance so that they can do this on a long-term basis. The study has recommended that the non-engineered water crossings are classified for integration into the draft National Rural Transport Policy.

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News and Events

New IFRTD E-Newsletter

In addition to *Forum News* you can now receive an IFRTD E-Newsletter direct to your inbox each month. *Network News* keeps IFRTD members up to date with the latest news, events, resources and projects from across the IFRTD network. To receive the E-Newsletter either subscribe online at **www.ifrtd.org** or email us at **ifrtd@ifrtd.org**

Don't forget that the most up-to-date news listings from IFRTD can still be accessed on our homepage **www.ifrtd.org** We rely upon your inputs to keep our information sharing current so please remember to share your news, events and resources with us.



Children, Mobility and Transport in Sub-Saharan Africa

The specifics of children's access and mobility, particularly in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, are a neglected area of transport research. A short sighted perspective given that children represent Africa's future, and their health and education needs are essential components of the Millennium Development Goals.

Gina Porter, 2006



A hazardous route to school (Malawi)

In an effort to bridge this gap the University of Durham has initiated a three year research programme in partnership with the IFRTD, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa (CSIR), the University of Malawi, the University of Cape Coast in Ghana and Child researchers from South Africa, Malawi and Ghana.

The overall aim is to establish a child-centred body of evidence strong enough to substantiate policy improvements in the three focus countries and ultimately across Africa. It focuses on the following issues:

1. The mobility constraints faced by girl and boy children in accessing health, educational and other facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa.
2. The lack of direct information on how these constraints impact on children's current and future livelihood opportunities.
3. The lack of guidelines on how to address these constraints.

The research programme will test an innovative two-strand child-centred methodology involving both adult and child researchers. In addition to more conventional interviews conducted by adult researchers with children, parents, teachers, and community leaders, the study also includes a complementary component of research conducted by child researchers with adult facilitation. This methodology builds upon an earlier child-centred pilot project carried out in India, Ghana and South Africa in 2004/05. The programme will use this methodology to establish a substantial and comparable quantitative and qualitative data-set from which policy guidelines can be developed.

Inception Workshop, Blantyre, Malawi, 25th Sept – 1st Oct 2006

The programme's inception workshop enabled key country researchers to meet and review their research plans with one another, with the UK team and with Professor Michael Bourdillon who is advising the programme on the children's research component.

The workshop comprised a mix of joint meetings with all researchers and a second component when teachers and child researchers undertook activities separately from the adult researchers. Teachers acted as chaperones and provided translation where necessary.

Children's Training Workshop 2nd – 5th Oct 2006

The inception workshop was followed by the first children's research training workshop for the participating young researchers in Malawi. The children were trained in the following methods of information collection:

- Photography (using disposable cameras provided by the programme).
- Accompanied or observation walks.

- Journey diaries.
- Counting by observation and asking.
- Group and individual interviews.

The aim is to get a full insight into the the children's perceptions, experiences and ideas. For example during a field visit to a secondary school in Malawi one of the observations from the child researchers was that "when they come to school late due to the long walk, teachers refuse entry without asking why they are late".

The workshop series will now continue in Ghana and South Africa in early 2007 before the field work begins. The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

For more information including background resources please check the project website: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/child.mobility/>

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IFRTD's New 5 year Strategy

Enclosed with this edition of Forum News you will find a new issue from the IFRTD Update series. This Update provides an overview of the new IFRTD 5 year strategy which will take the network forward to 2011. A year long participatory development process, facilitated by the IFRTD Secretariat in collaboration with an external consultant, has gathered the opinions of IFRTD members across the world. These views were then collated in a strategy document that outlines the network's shared vision for the future. This document was approved by the IFRTD Executive Committee at the annual governance meeting in November 2006.

For the minutes of the IFRTD Executive Committee Meeting 2006 please see: <http://www.ifrtd.org/new/about/gov.php>

About Us:

The IFRTD is a global network of individuals and organisations working towards improved access, mobility, and economic opportunity for poor communities in developing countries. It provides a framework for collaboration, information sharing, debate and advocacy that bridges traditional geographic and institutional boundaries.

Membership of the IFRTD is free. All members receive *Forum News* and any other publications that are made available to the network. In over 20 countries autonomous networks that subscribe to the vision of the international network have become affiliated to the IFRTD as National Forum Groups (NFGs).

The IFRTD is facilitated by a small, decentralised Secretariat based in the UK, Cameroon, Kenya, Peru, and Sri Lanka.

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