



Reconstructing Vulnerability or Reconstruction with Change?

Following recent events, the ability of the transport sector to respond to both the immediate and long-term demands of disaster situations has returned to the spotlight. Forum News last addressed this issue in 2002 when we focused on the minimisation of risk prior to natural disasters in order to reduce vulnerability. In this edition, we highlight the issue from another angle, advocating that the prevention of risk should also be a key component of disaster rehabilitation.

The articles here contrast learning from Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and the Orissa cyclone of 1999, with the approaches emerging in post-Tsunami Sri Lanka today, and we examine the transport sector's ability to balance its awareness of social issues and long-term planning for sustainability with the need to act immediately. This Forum News concludes by revisiting the proposal for an Access in Emergency network. Could this provide a means of ensuring that the transport sector's immediate response carries with it the learning from the past?



Greg Beeton, ITC, 2005

Post-Tsunami bridge building in Sri Lanka

Hurricane Mitch was described by many as the worst tropical hurricane to affect the Caribbean in 200 years. The magnitude of this natural disaster in October 1998 was intensified for the Central American countries of Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala where two billion US dollars of loss represented 70% of GDP. However, to really understand the impact of hurricane Mitch, we have to look beyond the recorded statistics; to the consequences for employment and incomes for poor families; to the trauma suffered by children, women, men and the elderly; to the compulsory relocation and migration that followed the crisis; and to the uneven access to resources available for reconstruction – all of which represent key factors in the recovery and future development of the region.

In Honduras the approach of the transport sector was both positive and negative. Positively, the bilateral and multilateral organisations joined forces for the reconstruction plan, and while some donor agencies worked at government level, others like the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) acted on requests received directly from communities. They worked with *Municipios*, providing them with machinery, tools and technical support, and generating employment for local communities. This two-year short-term support from SDC and other donors provided an initial push for reconstruction and

development that was responsive to the needs of the rural poor. Less positively, major post-disaster investment focused primarily on big or secondary roads and not rural networks. Some agencies even brought their own contractors, missing the opportunity for employment creation and local income generation. In the context of post-disaster reconstruction, the transport sector's modern rhetoric of issues such as sustainability and maintenance, gender and the environment were strangely absent.

Post-disaster analysis often focuses on the impact of the event on a nation's development, distracting from the culpability of the existing development model that enabled the disaster to occur in the first place. Disasters do not throw people into underdevelopment; rather underdevelopment, unsustainable environments and poor people turn a natural disaster into a human one. By ignoring its own rhetoric for social responsiveness is the transport sector complicit in reconstructing vulnerability?

The key challenge for transport is reconstruction with change, avoiding becoming a mechanism for constructing new vulnerabilities or exacerbating those that already exist. For example, prioritising the rehabilitation of rural road networks to enable small farmers to access markets could potentially discourage post-disaster migration to

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vulnerable rural areas and urban slums. By continuing to listen to the needs of the poor in the post-disaster context, the transport sector has the potential to avoid creating new societies with even greater vulnerability.

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Useful Resource:

LA RED – Latin American Network for Social Studies on Disaster Prevention
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Recovery and Capacity Building; After the Orissa Super Cyclone

On October 29th 1999, a super cyclone hit the coast of Orissa, India, unleashing death and destruction on a huge scale. Twelve out of 30 districts, corresponding to over five million people, were severely affected. Houses were destroyed, infrastructure ravaged, the environment denuded and flooded, and livelihoods and the economy shattered. The influx of saline water from tidal waves over ten metres left most drinking water sources polluted and dysfunctional for days.

In addition to a death toll of over 30,000 people (10,000 according to government records), the super cyclone has traumatised millions of survivors, decimated mud and thatch villages, and rendered six million people jobless for at least six months. Over 350,000 cattle perished, nine million trees were lost, over 2.4 million hectares of paddy field destroyed, and increased salinity rendered land infertile for years. This cyclone completely eradicated the economic fabric of the coastal region.

It has become a priority for the state of Orissa to not only recover from the super cyclone, but to take forward the lessons learned from it and to integrate disaster preparedness as a central component of its development plans. Not least because the India sub-continent is one of the six most cyclone-battered regions in the world, and of all the severe cyclones that make land on the Eastern coast, over 20% can be expected to directly affect Orissa.

By building a disaster reduction component into development activities it is possible to achieve twin objectives of restoration and recovery as well as building capacity for facing future disasters. Preparedness will combine traditional knowledge and coping mechanisms with modern science technology and information systems. Roads built in flood and cyclone-prone areas will be raised and strengthened in a manner that can withstand disaster impacts, and environmental restoration and regeneration, including the reforestation of mangroves, plantation of tree shelterbelts, and the rebuilding of coastal embankment, shall be prioritised.

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Employment Intensive Solutions

In October 1998, hurricane Mitch wreaked havoc in Nicaragua, destroying much of the infrastructure in its path. Many of those lucky enough to survive were left without homes and incomes, and with very little access to basic services, resulting in an even more generalised situation of poverty and unemployment.

International support was at hand to help in the reconstruction of the country, with an expected investment of one billion dollars over a five-year period. In addition to creating much-needed transport and other infrastructure, this reconstruction offered a great opportunity for employment generation through the use of labour-based technologies.

Rural Roads in Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka

Hundreds of rural roads in the Southern, Eastern and Northern provinces of Sri Lanka were seriously damaged by the Asian Tsunami. The Road Development Authority (RDA) estimates that some 2425kms of Sri Lanka's 2825km coastal belt has been affected. The consequent lack of access to the area has broken down social networks and considerably delayed rehabilitation activities including the distribution of relief, communications and urgent construction.

According to the Centre for National Operation (CNO – Sri Lanka), there will be less attention to the restoration of the damaged rural roads network (gravel roads, earth roads, footpaths, footbridges, trails and tracks), while grade 'A' and 'B' roads will be rehabilitated by the government with the assistance of the international community. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is expected to study the urgent funding requirement of the transport sector in a joint needs assessment with the World Bank and the Japan Bank for International Corporation (JBIC). Costs for the expanded reconstruction effort are yet to be finalised and the Ministry is hoping to tap donor funding to bridge any gaps. The capacity of local governments (Pradeshiya Sabha) to address access issues has been restricted by a lack of technical knowledge and financial limitations.

The Lanka Forum for Rural Transport and Development (LFRTD), a local IFRTD-affiliated network, recently prepared guidelines on rural road construction, rehabilitation and maintenance, for the attention of policy makers. These guidelines will be published in newspapers and strategically disseminated through the development of audience-specific information materials. LFRTD expects to pressure the government through line ministries and to encourage NGOs to adopt the guidelines in their work. The Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) is partnering with LFRTD to develop and publish the guidelines. ITDG has already incorporated learning from the guidelines in their plans for Tsunami rehabilitation projects.



Greg Beeton, ITC, 2005

Post-Tsunami damage in Sri Lanka

In addition, LFRTD will be engaging with related ministries such as transport, highways, local government and provincial councils to advocate constructing cycle parking places and cycle lanes in newly constructed cities/towns, and to promote the need for cost-effective IMTs in areas where many modes of transport have been lost. The challenge is to integrate these issues into a planning situation that requires urgent action.

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Having verified the interest of national and international investment agencies in such an approach, a need was identified for capacity building in the private and public sectors for the execution of labour-based works. An ILO pilot project, funded by the Dutch, provided training and awareness raising for reconstruction efforts funded by other national and international sources, in areas such as rural road rehabilitation, urban road paving, housing, river protection and land recovery.

By means of 'on-the-job-training', contractors were trained in labour-based technologies and enterprise management, while local government officials were trained in project identification and design as well as contract administration and supervision. At a central level, activities focused on institutionalising the training capacity, and creating awareness of the employment-intensive approach as a policy tool.

During its 11-month lifetime, the project not only effectively demonstrated the viability of using infrastructure investments to generate urgently needed incomes for the poor in situations of crisis, but also proved an effective means of local economic development and poverty alleviation within a general development strategy. However, the project was too short to have a significant impact on the reconstruction efforts, which are in fact still underway in Nicaragua. At the local level, institutionalisation and sustainability of the approach was good, as the benefit to municipalities and contractors was evident. At the national level, the project mainly raised awareness, but did not succeed in institutionalisation due to the limited timeframe. A follow-up programme funded by Luxemburg is fortunately addressing this issue.

A second difficulty was the dependence of the project on reconstruction funds from external sources, and the lack of coordination of these investments, resulting in the project having to go in search of suitable investments and subsequently enter into separate agreements with each funding agency, severely delaying initial activities. It is therefore recommended that similar projects in the future include a certain minimum of investment funds for demonstration purposes.

Having learnt from this and other crisis interventions, the ILO, through its Employment-Intensive Investment Programme, is currently promoting the employment-intensive approach in reconstruction efforts underway in the areas affected by the Tsunami. Various countries are incorporating the approach into their response strategies, aware of the immediate need for infrastructure reconstruction as well as income generation.

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Access in Emergency

Two years ago, Forum News carried an article from us proposing to establish a dedicated organisation to meet transport needs in emergency situations. This was provisionally called 'Access in Emergency' or AIE. Having been involved with transport infrastructure in development or disaster situations, we recognised that access problems were limiting the effective deployment of relief and the subsequent rate of recovery. However, the concept did not attract much further interest or funding, so the idea lay dormant.

Recently, the Asian Tsunami and other emergencies have confirmed our view that ensuring adequate transport infrastructure in disaster situations may not be addressed either cost-effectively or appropriately in relation to development work.

Other technical needs arising from emergency situations can have 'packages' of pre-prepared equipment and resources that can be flown into place and installed. Yet gaining access requires addressing a variety of problems over various distances. This either demands very large amounts and sizes of equipment to be sent in, with inevitable delays during which all other relief supplies also have to be airlifted in, or requires the rapid mobilisation of indigenous capacity.

Development programmes over recent decades have created an extensive indigenous capacity in road construction and maintenance. The use of local indigenous capacity at all stages, from initial response to long-term rehabilitation, would help local communities rebound and rebuild from disasters by providing continuity of work, the development

of new skills, and the re-establishment of community confidence. It could also potentially save huge sums of money by being quicker, more effective and more locally appropriate.

But when disaster strikes this capacity is often ignored. Either international contractors or external relief agencies or military personnel and equipment are deployed instead. Among the reasons for this are:

- Indigenous capacity cannot be easily identified by relief organisations.
- Even if identified, indigenous capacity may not be readily assessed. In emergencies managing agencies cannot risk a failure to deliver crucial components of wider operations.
- Local capacity may not have the capability or capacity to meet the inevitably increased demands of the emergency. This may be both a general shortfall of resources to cope with extraordinary demands and a lack of specialised expertise or resources.
- Local private and public sector capacity may themselves have suffered the loss of human and material resources in the disaster.
- Contractual arrangements may be time-consuming to establish with small scale operations. The time saved in mobilising local capacity may be more than offset by delays in authorisation to start work.

To be able to use indigenous capability with confidence, these five issues need to be addressed. The proposed 'Access in Emergency' would have directly tackled these barriers by establishing international, regional and local networks to identify, assess, contract with, support and reinforce competent local capacity in its time of need whilst acting as a focus point for international relief agencies needing implementing partners. Has the time now come to build the capacity of AIE?

Tell us what you think about the proposed AIE or email for more information:

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Workshop on Road Safety in Modjo, Ethiopia

The Ethiopian National Forum for Rural Transport and Development (ENFRTD), an IFRTD-affiliated network, organised a workshop on Transport and Road Safety in Modjo on the 5th February 2005.

The objective of the workshop was to sensitise stakeholders, namely, owners/drivers of horse carts, traffic police officers, road safety office representatives, representatives of the local administrations and the general public, about the serious impacts of road accidents on human life, animals and property in both rural and urban areas.

The workshop established some key recommendations, which included:

- 1) The need for stakeholders to coordinate their efforts to prevent road accidents that occur as a result of reckless driving, and/or the breach of traffic rules and regulations by drivers and pedestrians.
- 2) The need to organise Transport and Road Safety Committees, bringing together key stakeholders including: traffic police, the transport office, cart owner associations and insurance companies.
- 3) The need for stakeholders to continue to exchange information and debate the issues of road safety, providing similar workshops to the Cart Owner Associations and other stakeholders.

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News and Events

Transport and Community Participation – A Workshop in Gaya, Niger

Community Participation in the Promotion of Sustainable Transport Infrastructure in Rural Areas was the subject of a workshop held in Gaya, Northern Niger from the 6th to 9th December 2004. The event was organised by the IFRTD Secretariat in collaboration with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The meeting brought together experiences from Benin, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Togo, Senegal and Niger. Participants explored the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies, strategies and programmes of rural road management in these countries, and the workshop provided the opportunity to share useful information to address the challenges of adopting a participatory approach to building and maintaining rural roads.

Plenary sessions, to share experiences, information and feedback, were interspersed with group work to allow more in-depth discussion of the topics identified. An organised field trip gave participants the chance for discussion with those involved in the practicalities of implementing community projects in the local area. As a result of seeing what is happening on the ground, some proposals and recommendations for improving the current situation were formulated for development at local and national decision-making level and by donors, NGOs and civil society organisations.

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TransNet Workshop on Mobility and Health

The significant contribution of transport and mobility to development and the livelihoods of poor people is widely recognized. However, the development sector is yet to fully acknowledge and understand the role of transport in improving poor people's health.

The TransNet Workshop on Mobility and Health, held in Bern, Switzerland in November 2004, aimed to bridge this gap, bringing together transport and health specialists, many from the TransNet and IFRTD networks, to discuss the issues and develop a plan of action that will push this relatively new agenda forward.

The workshop agenda included four varied and insightful presentations, allowing plenty of time for reflection and debate among participants, followed by a brainstorming session to identify knowledge gaps and potential opportunities for action. Key messages taken forward from the presentations and brainstorming session included:

- Transport interventions generate both positive and negative health impacts. To help to optimize the health potentials of mobility and transport activities, the transport sector must fully assess the gaps in its knowledge, and make steps to share existing research and generate new research to fill the gaps.
- Health is broader than the health sector. The transport sector needs to be proactive in sensitising the health sector to the importance of mobility as a cross-cutting component of health interventions.

These themes generated a number of ideas for action including a

Networked Research Programme on Mobility and Health.

This international research programme on mobility interventions and related health impacts will have the objectives of:

- Increasing the understanding of mobility and issues of poor people in different developing country contexts.
- Developing tools that will enable transport professionals to include holistic health impact assessments and mitigation measures in the planning, design and implementation of transport interventions.
- Developing an advocacy programme to sensitise the health sector to mobility and health issues.

The workshop was supported by both the Mobility and Health desks of the Swiss Development Cooperation's Social Development Department.

TransNet is a Swiss-based informal Community of Practice (COP) of public, private, national and international actors in the transport field. TransNet organises twice-yearly events for members and invited people, to encourage networking, and thinking and learning on hot sector issues.

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Happy Anniversary Ngware Bicycle Group!

On the 17th February 2005 the Ngware Bicycle Transport Group, previous winners of the IFRTD Colin Relf Award, celebrated their 15th anniversary. The Ngware group pioneered the business of organised bicycle taxi services in Kisumu, Kenya. They started in 1990 and were officially registered in 1994 by the Department of Social Services. Their main objective is to create employment and to facilitate access to education and health services among members and their families.

Despite many hurdles, the initiative has competed reasonably with other transport service providers in the town by providing effective, efficient and affordable alternative transport. It is also accessible, reliable and non-air polluting. The business has created employment both in Kisumu and in neighbouring towns.

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The IFRTD is a network of individuals and organisations working together towards improved access and mobility for the rural poor. It provides a framework for collaboration, information sharing, debate and advocacy that bridges traditional geographic, academic 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, Kenya, Perú, Senegal and Sri Lanka.

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