

## What next for the Forum? IFRTD's Strategy 2007-2011

What can we hope to achieve as a network by 2011? IFRTD's 2006 strategy development process has provided some essential time to reflect on this question and our new five year strategy, recently endorsed by the Executive Committee, sets out our collective answer. The new vision and mission are underscored by 18 concise strategic priorities that were developed by our members during a year long participatory consultation. This latest IFRTD Update reviews the strategic priorities, the process by which they were developed and their implications for the Forum.

Since IFRTD was established in 1991 many things have changed: a decentralised Secretariat, National Forum Groups (NFGs) and Communities of Practice have all been established, the network has grown to a membership of over 3500 and international networked research programmes have brought together Southern researchers from across the globe. These changes were, in part, a response to the changing nature of the transport and development sector - broad initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals are shaping the international context while issues such as gender, safety, trade and urban transport are rising up the agenda. Increasingly transport is seen as a cross-cutting issue with its significance recognised across a variety of sectors such as poverty reduction, 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. IFRTD's new strategy is a response to both these internal and external changes. But it is also a vindication of the principle that has remained unchanged at the heart of IFRTD since its inception 15

years ago: to use our *collective strength as a Southern-driven global network* to share information, research, advocate and build capacity to champion the transport needs of poor and vulnerable communities in developing countries.

The Secretariat extend our thanks both to those who have participated in the strategy development process and to the wider network for your continued commitment to IFRTD and rural transport issues. It is your contribution of time and resources and the confidence of our donors that has enabled the Forum to remain such a dynamic network for the past 15 years and that has produced, in this strategy, such a definitive call to action for our next 5 years.

The strategy, its 6 key focus areas and the 18 strategic priorities are summarised on the next page (for a copy of the full document see contact details opposite).



Members of the Executive Committee signing new strategy

### Project Bio:

#### Title:

IFRTD strategy development process and new network strategy for 2007-2011

#### Location:

International

#### External Consultant:

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**“This strategy was developed in a participatory exercise and reflects our member's clear sense of mission for working together over the next five years, continuing to give a voice to the access and mobility needs of poor rural communities”**

- Danang Parikesit,  
IFRTD Chairman

**“The transport and development sector has mainstreamed gender rhetoric, I am glad to see the IFRTD network and its new strategy go one step further in ensuring these words become a reality”**

- Maria Gutierrez,  
Executive Committee member  
and GATNET representative

## 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 and how we can work towards that goal. IFRTD's vision, mission and values should inspire the overall strategy and our work for the next 5 years.

### 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.

## 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. Our challenge is to better understand and define IFRTD membership, not only to encourage wider participation in Forum activities but to increase the sense of ownership by outlining clearly the benefits and obligations of belonging to the network. Our priorities for the next 5 years are to:

- 2.1 Better define IFRTD membership**
- 2.2 Consolidate and expand the membership**

## 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. Our priorities for the next 5 years are to:

- 3.1 Ensure the interests of poor communities and vulnerable groups are represented in the policies and practices of the transport and development sector**
- 3.2 Continue to fight for gender equality within the transport and development sector**
- 3.3 Continue to pioneer collaborative Southern-driven action research**
- 3.4 Champion pro-poor rural transport issues and act as a clearing house for Southern-driven information dissemination**
- 3.5 Stimulate and support network activity**

## 4. HOW WE ORGANISE:

While IFRTD recognises the rich and positive history with its host and financial and contractual managers - Practical Action and Practical Action Consulting, all three parties agree that registering as an independent legal entity would open up new potential income streams for IFRTD. Our priority for the next 5 years is for:

- 4.1 IFRTD to become an independent legal entity**

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. Our priorities for the next 5 years are to:

- 4.2 Continue to organise the network in an innovative and pragmatic way**
- 4.3 Develop and improve the NFG model**
- 4.4 Ensure the governance structures reflect the diversity of the network**
- 4.5 Promote gender equality and uphold the principles of gender balance in all levels of IFRTD**

## 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 Civil Society Organisations. IFRTD must effectively track this changing funding landscape and ensure it is well-equipped to take advantage of these new opportunities. Our priorities for the next 5 years are to:

- 5.1 Consolidate existing funding streams**
- 5.2 Expand and diversify funding base**
- 5.3 Decentralise IFRTD's fundraising**
- 5.4 Encourage independent member-led consultancies**

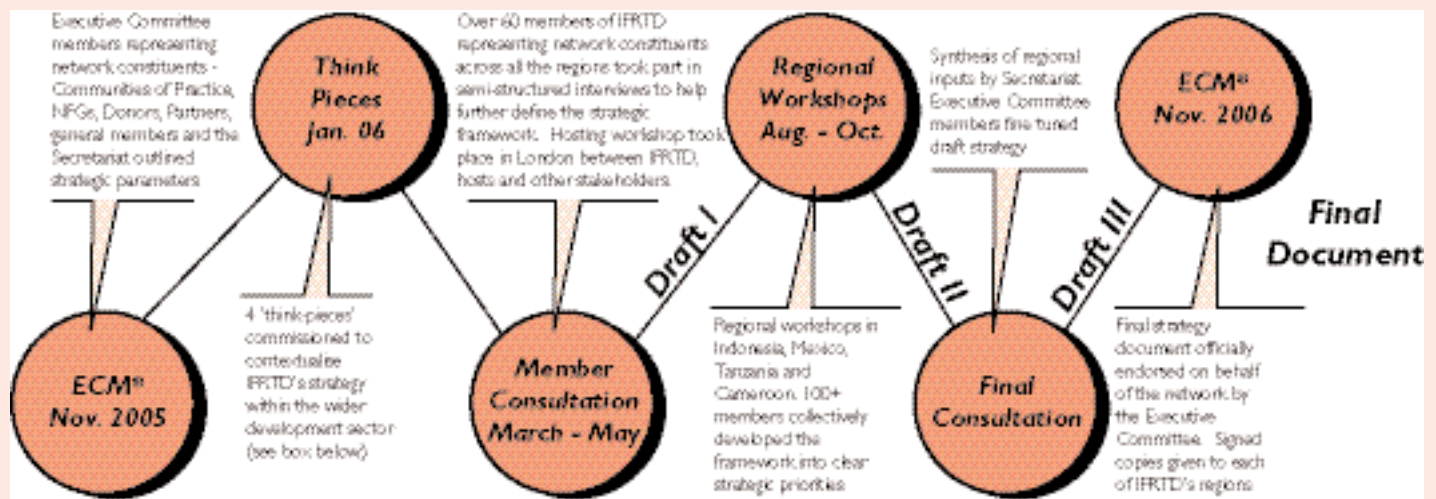
## 6. HOW WE ASSESS OUR WORK:

It is difficult for a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process to fully capture the activities of a network like IFRTD. The work of the Secretariat may be visible, but this is only the tip of the iceberg with many more 'invisible' activities occurring across the wider network. IFRTD must introduce systematic M&E processes to improve transparency and accountability to donors, encourage self-reflection, recognise the contributions of members and meet the expectations of stakeholders. Our priority for the next 5 years is to:

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



## Developing the IFRTD Strategy - an International Participatory Process:



Devising and implementing a participatory strategy development process for a global organisation is recognised as a considerable challenge, doing so for a global network is doubly so. IFRTD's strategy was developed during an intensive year long consultation and the same principles contained in the document of non-hierarchical, democratic and participatory networking were applied to the process itself. Successive rounds of consultation and synthesis helped to hone the initial sketches of IFRTD's future strategy into 18 concise strategic priorities grouped

under six key focus areas. Through an extensive consultation, four regional workshops, a hosting workshop, a Secretariat workshop, two ECMs, a website survey, a literature review and four think-pieces IFRTD was able to gather a wealth of information from over 200 stakeholders worldwide to ensure the strategy represents the diversity of network members and constituents (for more information see contact details page 1).

\*Executive Committee Meeting

### What It Means For Our Members:

How can members get involved in the Forum? There are some members who simply subscribe to IFRTD's free publications: Forum News, the E-newsletter and Updates such as this, some are also active with NFGs and Communities of Practice, whilst others participate in IFRTD networked research programmes. It is the diversity of these networking functions that characterises IFRTD's dynamism - a key aim of the strategy is to enable members to engage with these groups at the local, national, regional and/or international level. IFRTD will continue to create new spaces for networking while building on past successes such as The Lanka Forum on Rural Transport and Development which receives its own funding to promote rural transport issues in Sri-Lanka, IFRTDAL (the Latin America Listserv) that continues to host regular and lively regional debate and international networked research programmes (such as the current Mobility and Health programme) that bring together Southern researchers from across the globe to design and implement locally relevant research.

The strategy emphasises the need for IFRTD to continue to promote the networking and advocacy potential of these decentralised network constituents and empower members to have a real impact on local, national and international policies and practices. For example:

- Increasing the advocacy profile of IFRTD with regional, national and local level bodies
- Establishing more cross-sectoral and thematic partnerships

- Developing and improving the NFG model to act as a national hub for members in their country
- Producing locally relevant information products and communication strategies
- Understanding IFRTD membership better through increased information flows between Secretariat, network constituents and general members.

### Setting the Scene:

The changing nature of the transport and development sector poses both opportunities and challenges for the Forum. What significant developments can we expect over the next 5 years and how should we respond? IFRTD commissioned 4 'think-pieces' to help map this changing landscape and provide some of the answers. Written by leading experts in their field they helped to ground the strategy development process and also make insightful reading for those interested in the changing nature of the transport and development sector.

- Trends in the development sector
- Trends in the rural transport sector
- Trends in donor activities
- The rewards and challenges for international networks

Download the think-pieces: [www.ifrtd.org/new/about/strat.php](http://www.ifrtd.org/new/about/strat.php) or see contact details (page 1).



### Autonomy

IFRTD is currently hosted by Practical Action (formerly ITDG) with financial and contractual management being outsourced to Practical Action Consulting (formerly ITC). Despite the rich and positive history between the three organisations, in recent years synergies between the organisations have diminished and it has had serious implications for the autonomy and fundraising capacity of the Forum. Following a workshop all three parties agreed that registration as an independent legal entity would open up vital new income opportunities for IFRTD.

The strategy outlines a transition to legal autonomy by November 2009 - a critical challenge for which IFRTD must be fully equipped. The Forum must continue to implement

rigorous financial assurance processes and enshrine the principles of non-hierarchical, democratic, transparent and representational governance in its new independent legal structures. The Executive Committee will continue to function as the main decision-making body - representing network constituents, agreeing on and overseeing the Secretariat's mandate. IFRTD's move to independence also sets an important precedent for the further decentralisation of financial and managerial control as the Secretariat will be accountable not to an outside host, but directly to network members and donors. A sub-committee of the Executive Committee has already been established to oversee these important changes.

### Making the Strategy a Reality

If this strategy is to become a reality rather than gather dust on a shelf then our work has only just begun. With the strategic priorities set we must first ask ourselves whether the network is equipped to implement them. Thanks to a small fund from our core donor Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) IFRTD will carry out a capacity assessment to map the network's governance and accountability processes and how these must adapt to effectively incorporate the new strategy - particularly in light of the move to legal independence.

The 18 strategic priorities will form the backbone of IFRTD's work plans - at the international, regional and national level. Already there are a few key deliverable dates: collective agreement of NFG standards and guidelines by November 2008, legal autonomy by 2009 (see box above) and in line with strategic priority 6.1 "Demonstrate accountability and

**"The Forum's new strategy captures the view from the West and Central Africa region well - autonomy for the Forum will help us work collectively towards our goals."**

*- Idesbald Chinamula,  
West and Central Africa representative  
of the Executive Committee*

learning at all levels of the network through systematic M&E" the Secretariat continues to work with strategic consultant Bruce Britton to develop some simple and common indicators that will help ensure both upward and downward accountability for the strategy. These indicators will form the basis not only of Secretariat reporting to the Executive Committee and donors, but regional and national level reporting as well. For example:

- At least two new cross-sectoral partnerships have been developed with (international or grassroots) organisations outside the transport sector
- A gender audit pilot programme has been carried out in at least

- one country in each region
- All IFRTD communications (including proposals, data) and activities are gender-sensitive
- At least one new member-driven research proposal developed and funded in the regions
- IFRTD registers 175 new members a year
- Active engagement of decision-makers and donors at IFRTD events

These indicators were developed for a Logical Framework Analysis included in the new core funding agreement with Sida which will form the basis of all internal and external reporting mechanisms (see contact details on page 1 to obtain a full copy).

### Notes, credits, disclaimers...

This IFRTD Update series profiles key learning from projects and activities carried out by members of the IFRTD network. If you would like to share your work through this series please contact the IFRTD Secretariat (see page 1).

We thank SDC and Sida as core supporters that have enabled IFRTD to develop this update. SDC and Sida do not necessarily share all opinions presented in this document.

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Executive Committee meeting  
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