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ABSTRACT

The significance of the rural sector in the African context as far as economic development is concerned cannot be over emphasized. In Tanzania, the argument is supported by the fact that 80 percent of the country's population live in rural areas and are engaged in subsistence agricultural production. While agriculture remains the back bone of economic development, rural roads development and effective transport system are essential facilitators for this important process. Thus, Tanzania has increased its focus on road sector development.

Resources allocated to the road sector have relatively increased. However, the resources have been primarily directed towards the national road network, other classified roads and some of the essential feeder roads. The poor state of access roads, which link villages to district centres, is a major obstacle to farmers. The main connections between agriculture producers in the rural areas, consumers in sub- urban areas and marketing centres, and the majority of villages are not yet reached and accessible. The biggest number of small connections on community roads, tracks, footpaths and minor roads between the farm, villages, between villages and the main roads are not well connected. Thus, public sector services in rural areas remain inaccessible. Such services include health centres, schools, agricultural extension centres and the like. A lot of time and effort is thus lost in accessing such services; and unfortunately this burden follows over women who carry up to 85% of rural transport burden; in most cases such activities are carried on head and walking up to 5 km. Poor access and isolation need to be analysed as a development problem in economic as well as social parameters.

In addressing rural transport issues a holistic approach is needed. The physical design of transport infrastructure need to consider appropriate means of transport and types of transport services those rural communities need and can afford. The use of Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs) has proved to be very useful in rural areas. The participation of local communities from planning to implementation level as well as sustained resource mobilization system is essential for basic access and eventually rural development. This paper is an attempt to provide an analysis of poor basic access in rural Tanzania and some practical solutions to improve the situation..

Key words: Basic access, Roads, and Rural development

Rural development and economic growth

Rural development is tied to and synonymous with economic growth. The more rural areas produce, the more developed they become. Rural development is also a transformation process that aims at improving the welfare of people. Here the material increase is seen as a necessary means of giving people increased purchasing power in order to transform their lives. Since people are the main actors in rural development then the most important aspect of the whole process should be focused on poverty reduction and resource mobilization. It is not enough to mobilize people to produce, but it is essential to ascertain that the rural products are part and parcel of the plan for rural development and integrated development activities of the whole country. In this sense development aspects of the rural areas should be seen as integral part of national development. To realize the goal for rural development and economic growth, rural infrastructure is a necessary ingredient.

Rural infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting economic development in Tanzania since the country is predominantly rural. Studies elsewhere in the world have shown that a strong linkage exists between improved rural access and social services and facilities, employment and social development and poverty alleviation. Transport infrastructure is crucial in providing linkage of rural communities to urban market, where the agricultural inputs and products are transported to and from the farm gates respectively. Moreover, transport contributes to economic growth by mobilizing human and physical resources. Transport improvements lower transaction costs allow economies of scale and specialization, widen opportunities, expand trade, integrate markets, strengthen effective competition, enhance social interaction and eventually increase real income and welfare of the society. Transport also plays an important role in redistribution process, especially public interventions targeted at meeting the specific basic needs of the poor (especially food, health care and education).

Available quantitative analysis, from within and outside the country provides strong evidence that economic growth is a powerful means for poverty reduction. In this sense, the key objective of poverty reduction strategy should be the promotion of an accelerated and equitable growth. The Tanzanian strategy identifies income poverty (sustaining macroeconomic stability, rural sector development and economic growth and private sector development); Human capabilities, survival and well-being (education¹, health², governance³, social well-being, vulnerability, and environment as the overall poverty reduction strategy. Other areas to be considered are the development of economic infrastructure, notably all-weather roads and building local capacity for road repair and maintenance, the development of water resources, telecommunications, financial markets, the promotion of environmentally sensitive exploitation of land and other natural resources.

Transport situation in rural areas

The rural transport network in Tanzania comprises a hierarchy of paths and tracks, feeder roads, district, regional and trunk roads. Feeder roads are usually earth roads, which connect village centres to district, and regional roads. District roads that are mostly gravel connect division centres to district head quarters. The trunk roads, which are usually all-weather, serve long traffic and in most cases have very small significance for the local population. Recent research conducted in rural areas indicates that more than 80% of the total time and 95% of the total weight of goods transported in rural areas takes place within and around the village⁴ on feeder roads, paths and tracks and the major mode of transport includes walking/ portage, bicycle, pack-animals, animal carts and hand carts rarely on roads and using vehicles; the remaining

¹ The government is giving overriding attention to problems associated with education such as high-dropout rates, high rates of illiteracy, poor quality and limited access to primary school education

² According to PRSP health ranks third next to education and agriculture among the areas deserving attention. Specific concerns are on the poor level of health education, weak service provision and the limited involvement of the poor in the design of health plans and programs. Underlying these concerns is the sense of alarm in regard to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and high rates of morbidity and mortality.

³ The government recognizes that lack of transparency and accountability especially at lower levels of administration, and the inadequate financial support being provided for sectors that are deemed key in poverty reduction, are a fetter to overall rural development and need to be addressed

⁴ A good part of this time is dedicated to meeting household needs both economic or productive and reproductive activities

proportions account for time traveled and load transported outside the village. These cater for about 80% of the travel and transport requirements.

Resource allocation to the Road Sector

Despite its prime importance in economic development, the road sector has been suffering from inadequate maintenance funds for many years. As a consequence the road maintenance budget has continued to dwindle in real terms, thus resulting in rapid deterioration of existing roads and an increase in maintenance cost. Where as in late 1990s the maintenance needs were estimated at US \$ 80 million per annum, lack of maintenance was projected to cost the nation US \$ 365 million in 2000. The major part of the cost is realized on vehicle operating cost and loss of assets of existing roads. While this is the general situation on the road network, on the other hand rural roads suffer the greatest part since it receives the small percentage.

Table 1 below provides a summary of Road Development Programme Costing

Table 1: The Summary of Programme Costing (Tshs. Million)

Road sector ⁵	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Sectoral Requirement	242,427	260,170	287,287
Allocation	181,180	187,718	203,685
Gap	61,247	72,452	83,602
Breakdown between Trunk and Rural Roads			
Trunk Roads			
Construction (Budgeted)	112,226	114,872	126,360
Maintenance	44,898	46,693	48,577
TOTAL	157,124	161,565	174,937
Requirement	198,308	205,640	210,804

⁵ The sectoral requirement is the overall road sector including the construction costs for trunk roads

Gap	41,184	44,075	35,867
Rural Roads ¹			
Construction	3790	4,542	3,428
Maintenance	20266	21,611	25,320
TOTAL	24056	26,153	28,748
Rural Roads Requirement	44119	54,530	76,483
Gap	20063	28,377	47,735

Source: URT, Road Sector Progress Report 2001/02

Rural Transport and Access to Social Services

Continued lack of maintenance in most of the district and feeder roads has significantly denied basic social needs to most of villages in sub Saharan Africa, Tanzania inclusive; some villages in Tanzania are completely not accessible to motorized vehicles due to absence of appropriate infrastructure. With a few exceptions where access is only waterways, most of such villages are accessible by walking and bicycles where terrain permits. Most of the villages are accessible by tracks and feeder roads. About 50% of the villages however, are not accessible by these roads during the rainy season due to lack of drainage structures at stream/river crossings, prevalence of the naturally occurring black cotton and red coffee soils which render roads slippery when wet. On the other hand, the distribution of social services is not uniform in rural areas of Tanzania. Whereas in some areas the services are within the proximity of the communities, in others, people have to travel over long distances in search of services e.g. only one third of the villages in Tanzania have access to clean water within their villages. Consequently some people have to travel over long distances in search of clean water. Secondly, many villages have no medical facilities including dispensaries and health centres. This situation compels people to search for services from distant places.

Since women are traditionally/ socially responsible for reproductive activities, they accomplish more than 75 percent of socially related transport demand. Apart from transportation of agricultural produce and household needs, rural women are mostly responsible for taking the sick to health centers or hospitals, especially children and expectant mothers. To obtain such facilities women have to travel an average of distance of about 8 kilometers some times by vehicles (pickups and land lovers) but usually on foot. These communities have remained comparatively poorer compared to communities with better access to basic social services. Travel time and effort used in accessing such service could be used in other economical and income generating activities. This also seems to be the prevailing situation in Tanzania. Where in most cases female-headed households about 30%; (Bureau of Statistics 1995) are the most affected since they have lower total income and lack access to IMTs.

Measures to alleviate rural transport problems and improve rural access

Given the fact that rural roads only provide essential access, lack of resources and poor planning at the local level results into poor transport network in rural areas and hence economic stagnation. Therefore it is extremely important to examine the possible ways of meeting the basic movement needs of rural communities. A critical consideration of the relationship between transport and social economical development that is derived from transport investment patterns at the local level is required.

The Tanzania's Rural Development Strategy (RDS) as well as the National Transport Policy recognize an increased accessibility and mobility as a pre-requisite for rural development. These two policies have rural roads sub-sector strategy that welcomes rural communities to engage in supporting self-help schemes designed to improve local transport infrastructure. It is strategically emphasized that decentralization of rural road network is required in order to promote the capacity strengthening of local authorities to plan and better manage their road network.

The Village Travel and Transport Programme (VTTP) is among several initiatives in which address the rural access issues Tanzania . The Government of Tanzania in collaboration with the Sub-Sahara African Transport Programme (SSATP) formulated the programme in 1994 under the

Integrated Road Project (IRP). The VTT Programme is currently being implemented in seven (7) pilot districts in Tanzania and receiving financial support from five development partners/donors.

The overall goal of VTTP is to improve the livelihood of the rural population through making sustainable improvements in rural travel and transport situations. The program takes a holistic approach in solving community travel and transport problems through three key interventions including:

- Community participation in rehabilitation and maintenance of community roads/footpaths and tracks;
- Community participation in rehabilitation and maintenance of basic service such as water sources, grinding mills and establishment of wood lots; and
- Wide spread use of Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs).

The program adopts the participatory mechanism in the road sector improvement . This involves the participation of male and female beneficiaries in the infrastructure selection, planning, design, financing, implementation and maintenance of sub projects. Participation is emphasized from the start of the project when meetings are organized with stakeholders such as rural communities, local governments and related government and non-governmental organizations.. In general, communities and villagers are sensitized to realize their important role in contributing to infrastructure planning, design, construction and maintenance. Through the VTTP project rural communities have been able to benefit in several ways and eventually improve rural basic access.

▪ **Rehabilitation and maintenance of community Infrastructure (Roads, footpaths and crossings)**

Community participation in road works has resulted in construction and maintenance of 200 km of community roads in pilot districts. This achievement has substantially increased and improved rural access to women and men. For instance improvement of a community road and access bridge in one district has resulted in a reduction of 100km to 3km. Today the

distance is been reduced to only 3 km., which has made accessibility and transportation between two communities much easier, safer and cheaper.

Regarding the division of labor, both men and women participate in implementation of activities; and there has been improved implementation process due to involvement of both men and women. Moreover in some villages remarkable success in bridge building is being witnessed where various sized bridges ranging from 30 to 130m long have been constructed as a result of the project.

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- **Use of Intermediate Means of Transport**

Rehabilitation and maintenance of rural roads, does not necessarily entail sufficient rural access to basic needs, affordable and appropriate means of transport compliments effective rural transport system. The little use of Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs) in the rural areas is attributed to among other reasons, to low incomes, limited availability, difficult terrain characteristics and sociocultural factors. The problem of lack of cash among rural communities is a hindrance in acquiring the IMTs in Tanzania. In trying to address the problem, VTTP has established credit lines, which operate as a revolving fund. This fund enables qualified members to contribute 10% of the final price and procure various types of IMTs. This example shows us that there is need to address appropriately this situation in order to either introduce or increase the use of IMTs sustainably. Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs) mainly involved the introduction and use of animal power and carts

Awareness and sensitization in the use of various IMTs is used as a strategy in increasing IMT usage. As a result the findings in some villages show that the use of IMTs has transformed the lives of people. Women are now using bicycles and carts to access basic services such as maternal health clinic services and others. There are minimal risks regarding maternal and delivery services. Transport burden, which used to consume most of their efforts has also decreased significantly, as these days they are accessible to markets and marketing, grinding mills, farms, fuel wood, water and other basic services.

On average, women in villages reported to have taken 2 hours on foot to go to access their farms, but now they spend only ½ riding a bicycle.

- **Rehabilitation and maintenance of basic services**

Demand for water services in rural areas is among critical rural access in pilot villages. Prior to VTTP water sources in some villages were virtually scarce and absent in some areas where villagers used to walk 5km to fetch water. However, to date with construction of shallow wells villagers enjoy fetching water closer to their homes. The village officials point out this as a notable achievement as it has improved hygiene of the local people and they have increased the frequency of washing and cleaning

Table 2 and 3 below provide a summary of the improved access

Table 2: Time and effort saved from a small sample in two villages

Item	Before the Program	After the Program	Remarks
Distance	21	4	The distance has been saved by 17 km
Time	6	2	Time has been saved by 4 hours
Effort	2	3	Individuals now go more frequent to the milling machine as it is closer

Source: ERB (2002). The National Pilot Village Travel and Transport Programme: Final Review Report

Table 3 :The impact of VTTP initiative in Chumbi Village in Rufiji District

Type	of	Impact (measured in median)	Remarks
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activity	Situation before	Situation after	
Fetching water (effort)	3.5buckets/day	5 buckets/day	Significant change
Walking to farms (time)	2 hours	2.5 hours on foot and 0.5 with bicycle	Significant change i.e. less time walking to farms
Walking to market place (effort)	2.5 trips/month	3 trips/month	More trips now/month i.e. easier access

Source: ERB (2002). The National Pilot Village Travel and Transport Programme: Final Review Report

Women involvement and gender issues

Gender inequality in transport contributes to the lower welfare and productivity of women. Transport interventions that are more responsive to the transport needs of women can help them expand their income-earning activities, improve their access to social services and participation, promote gender equality and improve their quality of life. To achieve such changes, deliberate efforts should be geared towards rehabilitation and maintenance of social services such as water, health services and milling machines. There is no doubt that women are primary beneficiaries of the road programme given their role in production and marketing. Involvement of women in identification, planning and implementation of road programmes will therefore help to address adequately gender issues.

Conclusion

The main benefit of implementing the VTTP Project has been the reduction of time and effort saved which is expected to be used on economic activities. These in turn will increase rural households incomes, enable them to rest and caring better for the household members. In general the widespread use of IMTs as well as the improvement of rural

roads under VTTP, has as its benefits to the rural communities in terms of increase in all available services such as health and family planning, agriculture extension services, credit postal, education market services, better road facilities, safer movement of school children, easy availability of agricultural inputs, easy access to markets, hospital and reliable transport. Adequate transport is necessary for poverty reduction, and therefore transport policies and investment programmes are an important part of poverty reduction strategy for low-income countries where transport is typically underdeveloped. Transport reduces poverty by supporting economic growth, complementing most poverty-targeted interventions and encouraging the poor to participate in social and political processes. For rural development to be realized therefore, travel and transport are necessary ingredients. As pointed out earlier that the focus of rural development is men and women especially in relation to poverty reduction, transport in this sense is a necessary means in carrying out subsistence and economic activities as well as accessing social services. All these should be major components of poverty reduction strategy. Effectiveness and efficiency in meeting the travel and transport needs are influenced by both the transport infrastructure and means of transport used. For this to be achieved a holistic approach is required.

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