

# THE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND FINANCING OF NON-CLASSIFIED ROADS – EXPERIENCE FROM VTTP MOROGORO RURAL DISTRICT.

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## Abstract

The managers and financers of non-classified roads are at a junction. Behind them a centralised, poorly funded and pot holed past, in front new exciting turnings? From the highly signposted poverty reducing decentralised model of management, to the well worn path of access planning to the dusty signpost that reads 'More opportunities for corrupt local officials'. It is indeed an interesting and exciting time to be a policy maker, roads planner or executor of improvements to non-classified roads. This paper explores some of these directions based on the experience of the Village Travel and Transport Project (VTTP) in Morogoro Rural District, Tanzania. This SDC funded project is essentially in two parts, firstly empowering communities and secondly facilitating them and their partners to improve infrastructure.

The VTTP has in its three years supported and embraced the principles of Tanzania's Poverty Reduction Strategy. This has meant a partnership approach to the project, supporting communities and supplying organisations such as the District Council and Private Companies. The empowerment of communities has focused on a civic education process called UJWAMA. This has given people their rights in the constitution and the Local Government Act, as well as the responsibilities of Village and District Councils. This has been an eye opener for community members and Village Councillors, who did not know what was written in many of these documents. This process has been most valuable to the beneficiaries. The project also has a transport focus and has supported communities in the improvement of infrastructure such as roads and footbridges and means of transport such as donkeys. The majority have been through partners rather than the project. The concept being to ensure these organisations are there for communities in the future. To enable the sustainability of Village Councils the project is currently supporting them to raise revenues they

previously through were the jurisdiction of the District Council, until the read the Local Government Act.

## Introduction

The managers and financiers of non-classified roads are at a junction. Behind them a centralised, poorly funded and pot holed past, in front new exciting turnings? From the highly signposted poverty reducing decentralised model of management, to the well worn path of access planning to the dusty signpost that reads 'More opportunities for corrupt local officials'. It is indeed an interesting and exciting time to be a policy maker, roads planner or executor of improvements to non-classified roads. In an increasingly pro-poor environment envisioned by Poverty Reduction Strategies the lower parts of the road network are becoming increasingly important with governments and funding agencies realising their improvement is part of the solution to alleviating poverty.

This paper explores some of these new directions drawing on experiences from the SDC funded Village Travel and Transport Project (VTTP) in the Morogoro Region of Tanzania. The paper focuses on the community management of non-classified roads, essentially minor roads, paths and tracks. They can be characterised as roads that are often in poor condition and carry low levels of motorised traffic but high levels of non-motorised traffic. They are often the most used by villagers for basic travel and transport needs and provide the vital link from the household to the essential social and economic services - sick people to hospital, children to school, crops to market, etc. The quality of the management and financing that provides these key roads has a significant impact on the livelihood of their users.

This paper is based on an evaluation of the VTTP in Morogoro Rural District in Tanzania, funded by SDC and conducted by I.T. Transport in November 2002. The paper starts with a brief description of the VTTP and then breaks down its experience into the areas of policy and strategy, project planning, implementation of activities; and finally comments on the sustainability of the project and the groups it has supported.

## Morogoro Rural District, VTTP

The VTTP is an innovative and progressive transport programme that is within the National Village Travel and Transport Programme (NVTTP). This SDC funded element has two integral parts over three years (starting in 1999). Firstly, the project aims to empower village groups, councils and local service providers to improve the delivery of transport infrastructure. Secondly, the programme provides support to these organisations to use their newly found strengths. The majority of these organisations are in the mountainous area of Mgeta and Matandao wards in Morogoro Rural District. The movement of goods and people is difficult and in the rainy season roads and paths are often impassable. Times for accessing social and economic services vary, however, they are significant and moreover journeys can be dangerous due to slippery slopes. For intra village services such as water there are short journey times as water is easily available, however, quality is an issue in some places. When this is taken into account journey times increase. Other household needs such as firewood have greater trip times and due to scarcity, journey times can be as high as 4 hours. Other services such as health centres vary from village to village, however, the majority of the villages where VTTP is working do not have a health centre and so trip times are long (greater than 2 hours). The majority of villages have a primary school but due to dispersed settlement patterns children can walk up to 2 hours to get to school.

## Policy

The Government of Tanzania has an Interim - Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that is grounded in a number of studies and an extensive consultation process. This process is on going and the PRSP is expected soon. When the VTTP was designed the PRSP was not conceived, however, as the project evolved it took on the elements of the PRSP that were not already in its design. Key actions in the PRSP that the VTTP holds core include:

1. Local communities will play a more active role in rebuilding and maintaining rural roads and in developing irrigated farming (as far as possible with the help of the Government).
2. The Government will limit itself to supporting people in the rural areas through working with non government organisations, local banks and international partners to provide training and other forms of support to local communities and groups.
3. Improve the performance of the government in delivering public services. This is monitored with the indicator of a government system that is efficiently and effectively decentralised.
4. Improve the way in which incentives lead to better quality work.
5. Minimise the 'leakage' of funds and strengthen systems for holding government officials responsible for what they do with them.<sup>1</sup>

The VTTP has taken on many of these activities and so its approach is consistent with the PRSP. Furthermore the project continues to inform the PRSP through its involvement with the National Village Travel and Transport Programme. These core elements are coupled with the VTTP philosophy that the project will be a facilitator for the improvement of rural access. It will work with private, NGO and government partners to achieve these improvements. This philosophy is taken forward into the planning with communities and partners.

## Planning with communities and partners

The VTTP planning process is progressive in its approach toward empowering and giving responsibilities to community groups and partners. For the communities the process can be best described as one of civic education, which has been given the Swahili acronym of U UWAMA. U UWAMA has a participatory methodology that has a number of steps:

1. Initial introduction to the community and its leaders of the process by project, government, non-government and private facilitators.
2. Teaching of the Tanzanian constitution and Local Government Laws (which have been translated into Swahili for the first time by the project) to make people aware of their rights and the responsibilities of the Village and District Councils toward them.
3. Identification of the strengths of the community and its leadership.
4. Identification of institutional and development issues for the community.
5. Ways to combine their strengths and draw in those of organisations around them to synergic action.

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<sup>1</sup> Interim PRSP of the Government of Tanzania

A most significant part of this process is the translation of the constitution into Swahili that has enabled non-English speakers to know their rights. In all the participatory sessions held as part of the evaluation of this project, someone would always bring their copy of the Constitution and on one occasion recite certain sections. Knowing their rights in law has given people the strength to: remove a corrupt village chairman; force four headmasters to repay funds that had been collected from villagers for a bogus classroom project; secure money from the council for the improvement of a clinic; and, form a Village Council Alliance that is the bridge between the village and district councils. Many of these actions have been without project intervention apart from the initial U UWAMA process.

These non transport interventions are testament to the strength of the U UWAMA process not being just a project orientated activity to develop roads but an empowerment activity for un-empowered and under-represented communities. Saying this, the project also has money to invest in the improvement of access. During the U UWAMA process the issue of poor access usually comes up as one of the top three development issues. This is then discussed further and the crux of the issue is brought out, be it poor roads or footpaths, or means of transport or poor District Council Management. The activities to resolve these issues are then discussed with the groups and or the Village Council. The Village Council then has to meet and approve the improvements and organise the labour and contracts. The project will then contact other partners, such as the District Council Engineer, to assist with designs or supervision.

Through this process 76 village councils have become involved, 36 civil society groups have been established and are working, three Community Road Boards that will link with District Road Boards have been set up and a number of interventions have been planned and implemented by village groups or related organisations

## **Implementation successes**

Throughout the implementation of activities the need for partnership is stressed. For roads and paths improvement there are a number of activities including design, mobilisation and organisation of labour, sourcing and collection of materials and supervision of works. For all these the project has identified and connected partners to the communities.

The first step to enabling access is the opening of tracks to roads. The majority of this work is done by the communities who are trained by VTTP staff or engineers within the District in labour based techniques. Resources for the construction of the project (such as advanced tools – wheelbarrows, etc, - not usually within the communities financial means) are provided by the project, however, the Village Council overseen by the Community Road Board have to source buy and transport the tools, before the project reimburses them. The Labour is given by the community as a form of taxation. As a council would tax people to provide a service, the people in villages are taxed (per household) though labour or if people do not want to work they are required to pay another household the equivalent in minimum wages to do their labour. This is organised by the Village Council and all people who were part of the informal and formal evaluation sessions felt the system was fair for the benefits they received. The supervision of the construction is done by the District Engineers staff if it is a district road, if it is a village road the project has to supply supervision. With recent changes in the decentralisation of Tanzania's administration a Regional Administrative Secretary's

Engineer has been created. He has the remit to support and monitor all levels of road activities. Thus he has stepped into this supervisory role. He is currently working with the VTTP mainly on the supervision of bridges for footpaths and roads.

The improvement of vital footpaths is organised in a similar way to above. In the mountainous areas footpaths are often more effective solutions to building roads where the majority of traffic is pedestrian or bicycle. In many cases the Village Councils have built a bridge or stabilised a steep section that enables the footpaths to be used during the rainy season. The RAS Engineer is currently assisting the VTTP in the design of bridges and footpaths that were not part of the Government Standard designs. However, following approval the designs will be taken as standard for the whole VTTP.

In other examples the project has employed supervisors from the private sector on behalf of the community groups where there is no supervision available from government sources.

The improvement of means of transport has also been a focus of the project. It contacted a local Massi group and developed a business plan for the introduction of donkeys into the area. The Massi group started with 30 donkeys donated by the project and started to sell them to people in the mountains. Two years on over 100 donkeys have been sold and the Massi group continue to profit from the sale of donkeys.

## **Sustainability**

There are a number of projects that have formed project committees and used them as a medium for the project's planning exercises and then organisation for implementation. Too often these project based committees live as long as the projects and have no lasting benefit for the community. Secondly, with the death of the committees there is little hope of maintenance of works, ensured by the ownership of communities. Is this the case with the committees supported through the VTTP?

Firstly, the committees that the VTTP works with are either Village Council Committees so part of an established administration or user/interest groups. The Village Council Committees are as sustainable as the Government of Tanzania. The skills they have learned will be maintained within the council members. Although there may be changes during election time it is unusual to have a wholesale change. Interest groups such as the CRBs are comprised of a mixture of people from private businesses, NGOs and Government sector. Each has a vested interest in improving and maintaining roads. Evidence from both the established and newly formed groups, suggests they are meeting regularly and taking actions forward without project intervention.

Secondly, from the beginning the project has presented its self as a facilitator in a process of change. They have shown the groups their rights within civil society and shown them how to exercise these rights. The UJWAMA process has been invaluable to the extent that neighbouring villages have now contracted existing groups to take them through the UJWAMA process. The project has only been requested to supply the materials and the translated copies of the Constitution and Laws.

Thirdly, in their roles as a facilitator the project has as much as possible let the committees organise and negotiate activities with other partners. Intervening when materials are required or supervision can not be found, etc. This has enabled the groups to do the work themselves there have been mistakes, but it has been a sound learning process.

Fourthly, and most importantly, project based committees will only last as long as the project often because there is no money to do any works. Through studying the Local Government Act the Village Committees have found that they have the right to collect tax if they can show development plans on how they are going to spend it. The project has supported the Village Councils in developing these plans and estimating the amounts of tax they can collect. The District Council has also supported this by bringing the District Lawyer to draft the necessary laws.

These four elements combine to make empowered, experienced and funded groups with a central purpose that can articulate and negotiate their needs. This puts the groups in a very strong position to continue. The project principles (if not under the VTTP name), will be continuing for a further year and then through to another 5 year programme. During this phase the project will completely withdraw any involvement from the area, bar a monitoring role to assess group sustainability. More information on this project can be obtained from Hans Mhalila Project Co-ordinator ([vttpmoro@morogoro.net](mailto:vttpmoro@morogoro.net)) or the Author and Member of the Project Evaluation Team, Marcus Wattam from I.T. Transport Ltd. ([itt@ittransport.co.uk](mailto:itt@ittransport.co.uk)).

