



Forum News

Transport safety: is it a rural issue?

Developing countries are confronted with a traffic safety crisis manifesting itself in traffic accidents. One million lives are lost and 20 million casualties are registered annually worldwide. 75 per cent of the crashes are in developing countries, yet they account for only 32 per cent of the vehicle population. The World Bank estimates that accidents cost developing countries nearly \$ 100 billion. This is equivalent to double the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) given to these countries – a huge economic loss. Improving traffic safety is therefore not a marginal consideration. Savings from safety improvements can be used for poverty reduction and development programmes.

Unfortunately, the issue of safety is usually marginalised. Instead, transport investments are exclusively used for infrastructure development – yet improved infrastructure permits higher operating speeds, leading to more accidents.

Policy makers are reluctant to devote more resources to promoting safety, arguing that accidents are unpredictable. The Government of Uganda, for instance, allocates a meagre \$6600 to the National Road Safety Council annually for Traffic Safety promotion countrywide.

Indeed the performance of public bodies in tackling accidents has been disappointing. In addition to limited resources, the institutional or bureaucratic set up of these safety agencies inhibits their performance.

Donor intervention in the traffic safety crisis has had limited success. Their emphasis on safety audits outside of the wider



Tipping the safety balance? A dangerous angle for a bus in Ghana

sociological framework partly explains the failure of some projects. They also downplay the problem of corruption. The most important weakness, however, is that donor safety programmes are neither financially nor institutionally sustainable and usually collapse as soon as the project ends.

Is safety a rural issue?

Due to the fact that the volume of traffic in rural travel is usually small and speeds tend to be low, transport experts debate whether safety is a rural transport issue at all. But safety in rural transport deserves attention, because:

- concern over safety is one of the reasons inhibiting IMT promotion in rural travel. The risk of being involved in accidents puts off potential users.
- vehicles (especially IMTs) involved in rural travel have poor safety standards and are usually in a dangerous mechanical state, yet are overloaded.

- accident rescue networks in rural areas are poor. Accident victims take several hours to receive emergency treatment. This increases accident severity.
- using inland water transport, accidents are common. This area of rural transport is disadvantaged because the vessels are often not of the required safety standards and are often overloaded.

A major problem when looking at rural safety, however, is the scarcity of the accident data with which to assess the size of the problem. Rural safety data is poor, just as police and medical surveillance is poor.

The gender factor

Accidents affect men and women differently. Statistics reveal that men are more often involved in accidents than women. This is partly because men take more risks. In Malawi, for instance,

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Resources

Gender

Gender and rural transport initiative

November 2000 saw the participants and supporters of the Gender and Rural Transport Initiative (GRTI) of the World Bank's Rural Travel and Transport Programme (RTTP), convene in Nairobi to discuss progress so far, the next phase of the initiative, and the issues arising from the task of mainstreaming gender into rural transport policy.

For more information about GRTI please contact: Ezra Mbogori at MWENGO, Fax: +2634 333 422. email: ezra@mwengo.org.zw

IFRTD Gender resources

A key issue highlighted in Nairobi was the availability and accessibility of

existing information in this field. Various commitments currently under development by the international and national forum networks should address this gap.

In particular the Secretariat has made a commitment to develop the gender aspect of the IFRTD website, with designated gender pages. In particular, these will focus on the *Balancing the Load* programme, and any gender-related activities of the NFGs. They will also provide links to other gender resources and to the IFRTD library database which contains a considerable amount of gender and rural transport literature. With the input and assistance of IFRTD members, the Secretariat hopes to build a solid resource that will make existing gender and rural

transport research more visible and accessible.

The Secretariat is also in the final stages of editing a book based on the *Balancing the Load* programme of 1999. This will be published before the end of the year and more information will be given in forthcoming editions of Forum News.

email list

Virtual Forum for Latin America

The Latin America Forum is pioneering an email discussion group for spanish speakers. This virtual forum will provide a focal point for the discussion of issues relating to rural transport and development.

If you would like to join this E-list or find out more about the Latin America

Forum please email Ana Bravo at: ana.bravo@cwcom.net

Safety

Safety workshop

As part of the annual action plan of the Orissa Regional Forum for Rural Transport and Development (ORFRTD) it has been proposed to hold a three day national workshop on road safety in Bhubaneswar in mid-late 2001. The programme aims to involve all stakeholders and to seek collaboration and support from international and national organisations.

For further information please contact: Mr P K Pattanaik, Co-venor ORFRTD, Fax: + 91 674 552496, email: osvswa@redriffmail.com or osvswa@hotmail.com

Secretariat update

Priyanthi Fernando, Executive Secretary

The next issue of Forum News will include some changes. In November last year, NFG Co-ordinators formed 'editorial committees' around key themes that they felt the newsletter should deal with. They will take greater responsibility for commissioning and writing the articles. This will be co-ordinated by the Secretariat, and Kate Czuczman will take over as editor from Ros Patching. Ros has been editing the newsletter for the last five years, and played a major role in making *Forum News* the popular, easy-to-read, informative newsletter you told us it was! Thank you Ros for your enthusiasm and commitment to the Forum's work, and for your patience with our frequently over-length articles and missed deadlines!

You may also see some design changes. The

Secretariat update will no longer be a regular column, but if you need to know what we are doing, don't hesitate to contact us – in any of the ways listed below.

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This issue: Edited by Ros Patching Typeset by My Word!

Forum News evaluation

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the *Forum News* evaluation questionnaire that we sent out with the newsletter last year. Congratulations to Bishnu Kumar Bamma, (Nepal), Uton Rusan (Indonesia) and Mike McCall (The Netherlands) who were the winners of the book vouchers.

After more than 3 years of publication the Secretariat wanted to assess the impact of the newsletter and identify ways in which it could be improved or changed. Ana Bravo has now analysed the results and combined these with other methods of enquiry to produce an evaluative report of *Forum News* and how it provides a means for IFRTD to share information and stimulate networking.

Some of the main findings were as follows:

- Readership is 3.5 times the number of members on the mailing list due to people sharing the newsletters with

colleagues or placing it in libraries.

- Although the newsletter currently serves as both an information sharing and a networking tool, the networking aspect could still be developed. This is being addressed in part by the introduction of the resources column.
- The international perspective of the newsletter is valued, thematic issues are of more interest to readers than regional issues.
- Readers would like a longer newsletter in order to examine the issues in greater depth. The current capacity and funding levels of the Secretariat restrict this. However a suggestion could be to follow each issue with an email discussion to encourage debate on the issues raised.

For a full copy of the Forum News Evaluation report please contact the IFRTD Secretariat.