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International Forum for Rural Transport and Development*

A rapid assessment of rural transport services in Singida Region, Tanzania

by

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rapid assessment of rural transport services



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sub-Saharan African Transport Policy Program (SSATP), administered by the World Bank, is developing a methodology for rapid assessment of rural transport situation in a country to analyze the affordability of the rural transport services and the institutional and legal environment for the provision of such services, the target being passenger and freight transport for distances of 5-200 km, encompassing much rural transport, but excluding within-village transport and long-distance national transport and international corridors.

The British-based consultancy firm Practical Action Consulting (formerly ITC) working in association with WSP and members of the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) was assigned to develop the methodology and test it in four countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Tanzania and Zambia). The methodologies developed by the consultants include interviews with stakeholders (transport users, providers, suppliers and national authorities), and traffic and movement surveys in selected parts of the countries.

This report contains the findings of a study undertaken in Singida region of Tanzania to test the methodology.

The country's policy on Rural Transport includes improvement of rural transport infrastructure, promoting the use of non-motorised transport, organising the rural households to contribute (through participatory approach) to improvement of the infrastructure and encouraging the private sector to participate in the provision of competitive and affordable rural transport services to rural communities.

The legal and regulatory framework exists for rural transport services and includes annual inspection and licensing of all types of vehicles mandatory insurance and timetable for passenger service vehicles. Speed limits have been set at 50km/hr and 80km/hr for buses in the urban and rural areas respectively. The enforcement of the regulations is weak. Barriers are found on certain places for checking adherence to regulations but on many instances they are ineffective, and bribes (in many instances small amounts of TShs 500 to 1000 equivalent to USD 0.4 to 1.0) are given to clear the way. These amounts are not significant and the operators do not complain much about them.

Singida region is located in central part of Tanzania with a large plateau of an average elevation of 1000 meters extending from the centre towards the south and south west of Singida township (regional headquarters), while in the north west of the region, the Iramba plateau rises to an elevation of about 1,500 meters above sea level. A detailed survey on rural transport services was done in Iramba district but the study covered the whole region in terms of obtaining (in estimates) basic information of rural transport services.

Rural transport infrastructure includes regional, district, feeder and unclassified roads with a total of 3,744 km. About 50% of the network is in poor condition. Motorised transport in some parts of rural areas of Singida is provided by old vehicles (buses, 4x4s pick-ups and station wagons, and lorries/trucks). The fares charged for a distance of 30 km on a bus/lorry/pick up is TShs. 2500 equivalent to USD 2.2. Similar journey on good roads in nearby regions could cost about TShs 1000 equivalent to USD 0.9.

Transport in most rural areas is done mostly by using bicycles, animal drawn carts and walking. Loads weighing between 5 to 20 kg are carried on heads or using donkeys as pack animals while

bicycles carry loads of up to 100 kg. Heavier loads are transported using oxen/donkey carts or very rarely on pick up trucks. Traders in villages use bicycles to transport commodities from the district centres to their shops. Sick people are transported on bicycles and stretchers to health centres and, if referred to higher-level hospital, then they have to be taken to the nearest village where there are public transport or ambulance services. Teachers and other extension staff working in rural remote areas walk for many hours to reach their duty stations. They can not afford to own their own means of transport such as a bicycle or a motorcycle selling for between USD 55 and 80 for bicycles (available in many small town centres) and USD.1500 to 2000 for motorcycles (Chinese make- 125cc available in Dar es Salaam) as the salaries paid to them are low and there are no credit schemes to enable them pay in instalments.

Bicycles are used for travelling long distances with a typical journey length being 10 km. Occasionally they are used for longer distances. Men mostly use them but few women also use them for travelling short distances.

Walking is very common and both men and women walk between 5 km to 20 km. In rare cases the distance can be longer. Low income is given as reasons for walking even where there are motorised transport services.

Animal drawn carts are common in the plateau area where the terrain is flat and rolling. There have been initiatives of improving the carts by introducing brakes so as to try and use them on hilly terrains.

Pack animals (donkeys) are used in certain areas of Singida region. They have been in existence for many years but their use is still minimal.

A central railway line from Dar es Salaam to Tabora crosses Singida region. There are a few railway stations in the rural areas but the rural community does not use it for their daily travel needs. The frequency of the passenger train is low (thrice per week). They use it when they wish to travel long distances.

People living along the shores of Lake Kitangiri in the northwest part of Singida region use boats and canoes to travel to the neighbouring region of Shinyanga and for fishing activities. Due to limited time, the study team did not get detailed information on this transport mode.

The findings of the study may be summarised as follows:

- There are clear policy directions on rural transport and they are being implemented in Singida region to a certain scale.
- There is a legal, regulatory and institutional framework controlling rural transport services. However, the enforcement of the regulations is weak.
- The low income of the rural community impacts on affordability of the transport services in the rural areas.
- Bad road conditions discourage the private sector to provide rural transport services. The high operation cost of the vehicles due to the bad condition of roads makes the business unprofitable.
- The high cost of bicycles and motorcycles compared to the income of the workers has resulted in low ownership levels of bicycles and motorcycles amongst the workers in the rural areas. Prices could go down considerably if the import duties and VAT charged on them (25% and 20% respectively) will be abolished or lowered.

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