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International Forum for Rural Transport and Development*

# **A rapid assessment of rural transport services in Iringa 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 Iringa 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, organizing 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, as the culprits will be left loose after giving a bribe to the enforcing persons. However, the amounts involved are not significant and the operators do not complain much about them.

Iringa region is located in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania with varying topographical conditions ranging from flat low lands (altitude 500 m) to mountainous highlands (altitude above 2,500 m). Average annual rainfall ranges between 500mm (in the lowlands) to 2000mm (in the highlands). A detailed survey on rural transport services was done in Kilolo 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 6,730 km. About 50% of the network is in poor condition. Motorized transport in rural areas of Iringa is limited and provided by old vehicles (buses, 4x4s pick-ups and station wagons, and lorries). The fares charged differ depending on condition of roads and distance (USD 1.5 for 35 km on rough road vs USD 2.0 for 65 km on good road).

Farmers transport their produce in small quantities using animal drawn carts, bicycles and head loading to village centers. Traders in villages use bicycles to transport commodities from the district centers to their shops. Sick people are transported on bicycles and stretchers

to health centers and if referred to higher-level hospital then they have to use public transport from the nearest village where there are public transport services. The teachers working in remote areas walk for many hours to reach the schools and so do the other staff such as agriculture extension officers and health workers. Most of them gave a reason of low income for failing to own a means of transport such as a bicycle or a motorcycle selling for between USD 65 and 85 for bicycles and USD 1,400 to 2,000 for cheapest motorcycles (Chinese make- 125cc).

Bicycles are used for long travel of up to 50 km by men mostly. Very few women use bicycles and the reasons given include cultural and the 'inbuilt feeling' that the bicycles are properties of men. Interview with some women revealed that they would use them if they owned them.

Walking is very common to both women and men. The distances they walk range between 5 km to 20 km but in rare cases the distance can be up to 40 km. Reasons for walking even on roads that have motorized transport was given as low income.

Animal drawn carts are common in the low lands where the terrain is flat and rolling. These are programmes funded by donors to promote animal drawn carts and the progress in the last four years of the programme is encouraging. However, there are incidences of miscommunication that have led to abandonment of the carts in some villages (near Ilula market centre).

Pack animals (donkeys) are used in certain areas of Iringa region (Makete district). They were introduced some 20 years back through a donor funded project and have increased from about 120 in mid 90's to 600 at the moment. Their demand is increasing.

A railway line passes in some parts of Iringa region (Zambia – Tanzania Railways - TAZARA). There are a few stations in the rural areas but the rural community does not use it for their daily travel needs. They use its service when they wish to travel long distances.

People living along the shores of Lake Nyasa in the southern part of Iringa region use boats to travel along the coastline of the lake. Due to limited time, the study team did not get detailed information on this transport mode.

The findings of the study may be summarized as follows:

- There are clear policy directions on rural transport and they are being implemented in Iringa 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. There is clear supply-side links that can be seen between infrastructure, transport quality, service frequency and cost. The fares charged vary with road quality as well as distance: Communities along the paved trunk roads benefit from relatively frequent minibus services. On poorer roads, only rural taxis (4x4s, pickups), trucks and buses operate. On the most difficult roads, there are often no regular public transport services at all

- The high costs 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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