



## Activity Sheet 23

# Case study Rural Transport Policy Development Process in Malawi

### Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to examine the role of the Rural Travel and Transport Program (RTTP) in Malawi and their attempts to address issues on the rural transport sector. This activity also aims to investigate the institutional framework of rural transport activities in Malawi, and to draw out lessons that could be applied to other countries.

The case study sheets attached describe the *existing* context and institutional framework in Malawi. It is in this scenario that the new policy process is being developed.

### Group Activity

1. Read the case study sheet provided (pages 2 and 3).
2. Discuss the following questions:
  - A. *What recommendations would you give to the Government of Malawi for implementing a new pro-poor transport policy based on decentralisation?*
  - B. *Suggest possible strategies for addressing the contextual issues related to capacity and existing planning structures.*
3. Note your points on flipchart.
4. Prepare to present your findings to the plenary.



## Case study

# Rural Transport Policy Development Process in Malawi

### Background

In Malawi, it has been established that there are several factors that have limited the impact of efforts aimed at addressing rural travel and transport problems, including:

- i) lack of clear policies for authority to address rural transport problems;
- ii) insufficient development of appropriate technologies;
- iii) inadequate priority to the rural travel and transport sector;
- iv) inadequate planning and financing,
- v) weak institutional framework;
- vi) underdevelopment of the sector in terms of infrastructure and means; and the lack of co-ordination.

The Government of Malawi (GoM) and the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Program (SSATP) entered into an agreement to jointly undertake a series of activities aimed at improving the travel and transport situation and livelihoods of rural communities in Malawi.

The Malawi Rural Travel and Transport Program (MRTTP) is a new development initiative, established in 1999 to address issues in the transport sub-sector in a coherent manner. The goal of the MRTTP is to contribute to poverty reduction through the improvement of accessibility to socio-economic goods, services and facilities by rural communities.

Prior to the new policy document drafted in 1996, most of the rural transport interventions were initiated, planned and executed by respective line ministries and other organisations without proper co-ordination and complementarity.



### **Institutional Framework**

The rural travel and transport sub-sector encompasses transport infrastructure (rural roads, tracks, trails, river crossings and paths), motor vehicles and transport services, and non-motorised means of transport. It also incorporates the physical access of rural people to basic goods, services and facilities. Rural transport activities are carried out by various institutions in both Government and the private sector.

At the district level line ministries/departments implement rural transport strategies through their district offices and also through District Development Committees (DDC), Area Development Committees (ADC) and Village Development Committees (VDC) which are local level planning and implementation units. The latter units also facilitate community participation in the planning and implementation of development projects.

### **Capacity Issues affecting the implementation of new policy measures**

Capacity at the district level for decentralisation and increasing community participation is very limited.

Investment in the transport sector in Malawi has traditionally concentrated on the building of infrastructure for road, air and rail services serving commercial, urban and district centres with little attention to the improvement of rural transport systems. This has led to an imbalance in investment in the transport industry. Rural transport has been marginalised hence the lack of financing for the sub-sector.

The Government recognises that the lack of adequate funds to finance RTT programmes is one of the many factors impeding progress in redressing the imbalance and more specifically the development of the RTT sub-sector. To date, assistance has been provided by some donors and collaborating partners to set on course any substantial improvements and investments in the sub-sector. However, sustainability remains a problem because of lack of capacity and reliable sources of revenue for maintenance of the roads and transport infrastructure.

There is a lack of appropriate representation at the grass-root level to adequately articulate rural travel and transport problems and to build local capacity on a sustainable basis.

### **Current top-down centralised planning structure**

Existing structures may affect implementation of new policy:

- Transport needs and requirements at the community level are diverse and central planners find it difficult to appreciate these divergent needs and aggregate them to satisfy the general rural transport requirements.
- Because of the complexity of the rural transport network, it is difficult for central government to gather and process information for planning purposes.
- Resources take a long time to move from central government to the community level and this affects effectiveness of the programmes.
- Where non-transport interventions are required to improve accessibility, such issues may not be easily recognised at the central level because of ineffective and inefficient inter-sectoral consultations.