

Country Report 3: Cote d'Ivoire

GRTI Activities in Cote d'Ivoire

The country project in Cote d'Ivoire was a pilot project, carried out in the third phase of GRTI. The project was entitled *Monitor and Reinforce Gender Awareness among the target populations for the Eased Rural Transport Project (TRA – Transport Rural Aise) in Cote d'Ivoire*. It was carried out by an NGO called Promotion of Health and Women (PROSAF) (Promotion de la Sante et de la Femme).

Background to the Project

The TRA project was designed as a rural transport initiative aimed at ensuring the mobility of populations in general, and of women in particular, through the use of IMTs. For cultural reasons, women in this locality are not expected to be riding a bicycle. Only men and boys are given that privilege. A typical picture in the rural areas was to see a man riding a bicycle with his son at the back and the woman walking with her daughter(s) and carrying loads on her head and maybe a baby on her back.

The general objective of the project was to improve the conditions of rural transport with a gender perspective. The specific objectives were:

- to build the capacity of women and men in participatory rural transport development;
- to encourage the full participation of rural community-based associations in managing the IMT program as the alternative solution to their transport problems; and
- to establish a monitoring and evaluation program of the TRA.

The project took place in five remote rural communities of the Worodougou Region, namely Kounahiri, Gbotopla, Trafesso, Bakopla and Leasso. This area is located 450 km. from Abidjan. Each village was provided with one motorized tricycle.

Designing an Appropriate IMT for the Project

The project was based upon the use of motorized tricycles adapted to the travel and transport conditions of the local population, involving the design of models that corresponded with their needs. The motor tricycle had to be adapted to the particular needs of the local population. The initial version of the motor tricycle had a back cabin that was only adequate for the transport of goods without any protection. This version was the only pattern sold by the company.

The final pattern of the motor tricycles used in TRA project was designed with a covered back cabin. This modification was necessary as the result of the need for the communities to:

- ❑ Assist children from the two villages without schools, Gbetepa and Gbewa to attend Kounahiri's primary schools, 8 and 4 km away respectively;
- ❑ Meet people's needs in covering long distances to and from farms or local and central markets for various transactions and collection crops, firewood and water;
- ❑ Evacuate emergency cases of the ill and pregnant women to health centers in Kounahiri; and
- ❑ Cover other villages and neighbouring cities for various social interactions.

Improved Transportation and Poverty Alleviation

The project emphasized the need to provide the rural population with low cost IMTs as a means of responding appropriately to their travel problems. The project was based upon the transport-related conditions of the local population. The local residents were totally dependent upon the arrival of irregularly scheduled conventional transport vehicles. In case those vehicles failed to show up, the rural dwellers were compelled to cover their trips on foot and most of the time with loads on their heads. Women carried water over long distances when the village wells dried up from November to March. They also carried cash and food crops from their farms to villages and from villages to markets with a high level of risk of damage or loss. This situation worsened their poverty by limiting their outside interactions with other villages.

In the long-term, the project would help the members of the rural communities to fight poverty through attaining the following objectives:

- easy access to potable water,
- guaranteed movement and transportation of goods from the field to the villages and towns and vice versa,
- easy movement of produce to rural and urban markets,
- transportation of children to school, for villages without schools,
- transportation of pregnant women and the sick to health centers and traditional healers.

Promoting Community Participation

The project identified the need to promote community participation in the development of a local transport system. People were not actually aware of the importance of their own contribution to the road maintenance. Meetings in the different villages were held to focus on the importance of a participatory rural transport system and specifically for the present project based on the use of motor tricycles to alleviate burdens mainly carried by women and girls. Participating members of the community expressed the same concerns and promised their complete cooperation for the initiative. After the information and sensitization phase of the meetings, five local project management and implementation units were set up in the identified villages within existing CBOs in partnership with PROSAF. The project benefits from the partnership between PROSAF, RTTP, the company promoting the motorized tricycles, an insurance company and the target

community. The local CBO was responsible for the use of the IMTs and for setting reasonable prices to mobilize funds to buy additional tricycles.

Capacity-Building for Local Management

One of the major strengths of the GRTI activities in Cote d'Ivoire was the special attention given to capacity building. This was to ensure that the members of the local population who were to participate in the management of the transport service were properly trained to carry out their functions. This is a very important component to ensure the sustainability of any intervention. The following types of training were provided to build stakeholders' capacity for project implementation:

- ❑ Gender and rural transport training materials: A series of training aids and support materials specifically adapted to the level of the stakeholders were provided for the purpose of training. This training was to provide the stakeholders with collaborative attitudes and values to be used in the project and their social lives.
- ❑ Training for driving the motor bikes: A training manual was provided to the field partners to teach the drivers of the motor tricycle systematic driving principles and skills.
- ❑ Training for the maintenance of the motorbikes: Selected motor mechanics had to get used to the specific technology to be able to carry out their maintenance.
- ❑ Training for community participatory development: Community participation is the key to ownership of the project. Nobody can better implement the project than the communities themselves. This training helped them to be aware of the importance of their participation to establish and sustain the system and be able to replicate it.
- ❑ Training at feeder road maintenance: This training came to challenge the attitude of members of the communities that tended to expect any development initiatives to come from the Government. Through this training, the local residents developed the sense of commitment to take good of their own roads.
- ❑ Training for the management of the project. Training on project management was one of the crucial issues to address. Human, financial and material dimensions of managing a project were the main points presented through a training manual and guide for the managers of the project. This training component was made more effective as it was based on the use of a proverbs and situations inspired from the local tradition and culture.

Those trained included ten persons in driving (four women and six men); two male mechanics; 32 persons made up of all members of the committee in rural transport management and financial management; and ten people in roads and tracks maintenance (five female and five male members of the CBOs) in roads and tracks maintenance.

Benefits from the Project

According to the report on the project activities, there were several benefits from the project. Although it is still early to be able to know the long term benefits of the project, it is possible to identify some of the initial gains for the local population. One benefit was skill development and employment opportunities. Two local residents, including both male and female, were chosen from each of the respective villages and trained as drivers. This provided employment for 10 persons. Two local mechanics were also trained in vehicle maintenance, expanding their skills and income-generating capability. More agricultural produce can be transported to market more easily and cheaply. This also helped income generation and alleviate poverty.

Other benefits were of a social nature. In the area of education, children from two of the target villages where there were no schools are now able to attend school in another village. Health care is also more easily available for rural dwellers who need to travel to another community to attend clinic.

The long-term benefits of the project will depend upon the ability of the local committees to sustain the transport system on their own. The pilot project needs to be monitored to see what lessons can be learned so that similar interventions can be built upon their experiences.

