

## **Good Practice: Gender and Rural Transport Initiative (GRTI)**

### ***Identification of Locality-Specific Differences to Develop Rural Transport Projects***

#### *Need to Identify Unique Conditions in Different Localities*

A problem with numerous development interventions has been that the objectives and strategies of projects have sometimes been formulated without a preliminary study of conditions affecting the target population. In many cases where data have been gathered, projects are designed on the basis of generalized information or aggregated national figures, without consideration for the differences existing from one area to another. As a project is set up to cover a large geographical or administrative territory, little or no provision is made for the socio-cultural, environmental or infrastructural variations between locations. The view that one project concept or one strategy will work everywhere has been found to be invalid.

The case of gender relationships is particularly relevant when considering locality-specific differences. The roles, responsibilities, constraints and potentials of males and females vary from one social group to another, sometimes even within the same community. Access to resources and opportunities may be relatively easy for some groups of women, whereas for others, it may be extremely difficult. To base a project on the assumption that women are unable to participate in group actions may be inappropriate in areas where females may even have greater opportunities to voice their concerns than men. In development projects that seek to benefit women, the specific gender relations in the project area must be known and taken into account in designing interventions. A Good Practice, therefore, is to gather information specific to the locality in which the project will be cited.

#### *Investigating Locality-Specific Differences: The Case of Empirical Studies of GRTI*

The Gender and Rural Transport Initiative (GRTI) carried out activities including workshops, pilot projects and empirical studies. One of the strengths of some of the rural transport studies carried out under GRTI sponsorship was that several areas were sampled. In Burkina Faso, for example, data were gathered from 50 villages located in five different provinces. The study carried out in Cameroon collected information from three different ecological zones, while in Ethiopia, four *kebeles* were sampled from each of the four selected *woredas*. Similarly, the study in Nigeria looked at social and environmental differences with a sampled community from each of the six geo-political zones of the country. In Tanzania, comparison could be made on findings from several of the districts participating in the VTTP, due to the cross-section of localities sampled.

In each of these examples, the selection of several localities for the study allowed an analysis of the effect of variations in socio-cultural characteristics, environmental conditions, livelihood patterns, demographic characteristics and level of infrastructural development upon transport constraints and opportunities for interventions to alleviate transport burdens. In terms of environmental conditions, the study in Burkina Faso

clearly showed that not all IMTs may be suitable for some types of natural terrain and that wheeled means of transport are not appropriate for off-route transport. The study in Cameroon similarly reported that comparison of the three major ecological zones in the country showed significant differences in the degree of relative isolation and level of infrastructural development. The environmental conditions in selected study sites in Ethiopia varied from hilly and mountainous or stony and marshy to relatively plain. In most of the rural areas, use of motorized transport was not common. Use of animal carts was found in all areas, regardless of environmental conditions, however. The study in Nigeria highlighted the transport difficulties imposed by environmental degradation in areas where flooding and erosion are serious problems such as in the southeastern part of the country. Coastal erosion as well as the presence of water weeds was also found to hamper transportation for residents of the riverine and mangrove areas where transport is dependent upon the use of boats and canoe.

Socio-cultural characteristics as they affect gender and rural transport are very significant determinants of what types of transport males and females may have access to, but these social constraints also vary from place to place. In a number of surveyed localities in the GRTI studies, females were not allowed to use some types of transport. In northern, predominantly Muslim areas of Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Cameroon, women are generally not allowed to ride bicycles even though women commonly use bicycles for their own travel as well as to convey loads in southern areas. In one of the sampled districts in Tanzania, no women were initially found that owned IMTs or other productive resources, but due to the intervention of the VTTP, women were voicing out their concerns and demanding the right for ownership.

### *Implications for Project Design*

The variations found from one locality to another are very significant so that generalizations are not made that may result in project designs that may be unsuitable in some localities. It is also important that the challenges of development and improving transportation systems in particular are not over simplified by assuming that the problems faced in one area are the same as those in other places.

It has been highlighted that a few of the GRTI projects carried out a study that led to the formation of a strategy for a pilot project. This was the case in Cameroon, for example, where the study led to three suggested projects, each based on the unique situation found in each area. One of the projects was later implemented. Due to the information obtained from the preliminary study, the project was based on an understanding of the needs, perceptions and conditions affecting the local population.

In the GRTI project in Uganda the previous efforts to introduce the use of donkeys was evaluated. A major conclusion was that no feasibility study had been carried out before the donkeys were introduced in the locality. The evaluation concluded that various dimensions of donkey use that are significant for the impact of the project were overlooked. This reinforces the observation that a Good Practice is to carry out a

preliminary study of the conditions found in the specified locality, before introducing an intervention, particularly for project concepts that are somewhat innovative.