
Managing and Financing Sub-National Road Networks

Suggested Key Issues for Discussions at
SSATP Annual Meeting, Bamako
November 2005

Background

- Focus so far has rightly been on management and finance of national roads
 - but national road management is being consolidated and it is time to focus on sub-national roads
- Few good practice examples known in Africa
 - Most approaches still muddled and unclear
- Key questions to be answered
 - What network size is affordable and necessary for poverty alleviation? How should these networks be managed?

Key Issues with Sub-National Roads

- Multiple and often weak entities involved
 - Provincial-, regional-, district governments
 - Municipalities
 - Agricultural-, forest-, park authorities
 - Utilities
 - Communities, privates, etc.
- Responsibilities often are not clearly defined
- Typically sub-national networks carry less than 20% of total traffic but extend to more than 80% of total network length
- Lack of information on extent and condition of these networks
 - At the lower end of the network “roads” often are actually tracks and paths

Understanding the Context

- Understand the decentralization status and strategy of the particular country
 - find optimal road management decentralization approach within the general context of decentralization
- Get to know the extent and condition of the sub-national networks
 - use rapid appraisal methods (geo-referenced, rapid survey at about \$20/km)
- Get to know the demand side: population distribution; agricultural production patterns and potentials; strategy for the provision of social services
 - apply participatory integrated planning methods, use GIS
- Get to know the legal context
 - in particular the “ Roads Act” and, if necessary, revise

Key lessons so far

- Allocate clear responsibilities
 - define who does what in the Roads Act
- Strengthen planning capacity at local government level and outsource road management function
- Options for outsourcing are
 - National Roads Agency
 - National Rural Roads Agency
 - Contract management agencies
 - Joint services committees
 - Private sector
- Distinguish between government and community responsibility
 - Leave only a manageable core network under local government responsibility
 - Define balance as “community” roads in the Roads Act and “gazette” them

Key lessons for (low volume) network management

- ❑ Use “basic access” approach which means try to provide reliable all-year access to as many of the rural populations as possible within the available budget
- ❑ Reduce government responsibility to a “core network” which is affordable and necessary to provide basic access
- ❑ Use network and spot improvement approach to the core network to gradually achieve an all-season core network
- ❑ Use total life cycle costs and cost effectiveness (cost per population served) to rank investments
- ❑ Make use of alternative surfacing methods, where necessary and justified
- ❑ On very low volume roads (below 20 vpd) the distinction between rehabilitation, maintenance and upgrading becomes meaningless, a network and spot improvement approach is the way to go

Key lessons for financing of sub-national road networks

- Get (fair) share of road fund and/or budget based on actual needs, tailored to the capacity to spend
- Tie financial resource flow to satisfactory road management process and outcome
- Focus resources on core network
- Encourage co-financing arrangements

Key lessons for community roads, tracks, paths and footbridges

- Focus on within village to field transport infrastructure. However, communities are often by default managers of local government roads
- Due to resource constraints at LG level it is often advisable to involve communities in the management of their access to higher level roads (but restrict to < 5 km)
- Clearly allocate responsibilities (in the LG transport plan)
- Provide TA and resources for spot improvement through social funds, ensure co-financing (in kind)
- It is unlikely that there will be external resources available for maintenance – communities need to be made aware of that