PARTICIPATORY RURAL PLANNING PROCESS

ILO and SDC (1997)

Objectives of the paper

Abstract

Traditional methods of rural planning have centred around the assumption that road improvements will lead to shorter trip times, cheaper transport costs and, hence, improved livelihoods for all in the rural community. While these approaches may have benefited agricultural communities to some extent, this has not been the case with those communities dependant on other forms of livelihood. Furthermore, the vast majority of rural dwellers do not make use of the road network or motorised transport but travel along tracks in and around the village, transporting items such as water, firewood, farm produce and other goods chiefly by headloading. Men and women are impacted differently by transport interventions as women have substantially more of the transport burden than men.

Participatory Rural Planning makes a more holistic analysis of interventions to enhance livelihoods of rural communities, households and individuals. It is a process which seeks to consult all stakeholders, groups and individuals who are affected to different extents by an intervention. In addition to infrastructure improvements, interventions such as the introduction of Intermediate Means of Transport (IMT), and the siting of amenities, such as water sources, schools, health centres and woodlots are considered.

Key issues

- Accessibility is a major factor in the prosperity of rural communities and individuals.
- Increased accessibility depends on more than improvements in roads.

Key topic areas

- Types of interventions to improve rural accessibility
- Consideration of gender issues in accessibility planning
- Steps in the Participatory Rural Planning process
- Resource issues
- Monitoring and evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The need for a holistic approach to transport interventions

A more holistic view of the transport needs of the rural poor and interventions to improve these is necessary. Participatory Rural Planning (PRP) identifies development needs, problems and priorities which can be addressed by improving access to facilities and services. Improvement of access to these may mean facilitating movement of people to these services, which is basically transport improvement, or, bringing the services closer to the people through carefully rationalised site selection procedures.

Accessibility planning provides a menu of a1ternative solutions. It takes as its starting point the access needs of rural households. Since it has the fundamental concern of improving the economic and social conditions of rural people, it starts by understanding their needs, and the magnitude of their transport activity. This provides a basis to determining priorities for access improvements, and the most effective means of achieving them. PRP is a new approach to planning in rural access. It has been developed and continuously improved as a result of studies and pilot projects in several African and Asian countries. It is a multi-sectoral and integrated approach that considers all aspects of household access needs for subsistence, economic and social purposes.

The approach integrates rural households' mobility needs, the siting of essential social and economic services, and the provision of appropriate transport infrastructure. It involves communities in different stages of planning procedures. It is based on a thorough but easy to execute data collection system which uses households as a focus of the planning process. In the process the approach includes gender issues in its analysis. The approach is simple to use and does not require substantial amount of resources. It emphasizes use of a bottom up approach to planning and links it to the planning structure at the District level. It also gives high priority to the protection of the environment.

Improving the mobility of the rural population and improving their access to employment opportunities and other socio-economic services and facilities, is an effective way to reducing poverty. Thus integrated rural transport fosters an approach which considers a wider range of transport interventions, including paths and tracks, intermediate means of transport and transport services, to complement the conventional interventions in roads and motorised vehicles.

2. THE PARTICIPATORY RURAL PLANNING PROCESS

Rural Accessibility planning defines access needs of rural households in relation to the basic social and economic services a household requires. With respect to mobility needs, it pays attention to:

- The purpose for which people travel,
- The availability of public transport services,

- The condition of the transport infrastructure, i.e. local level roads, footpaths, footbridges, etc.
- The means by which people transport themselves and their goods - foot, bicycles, animal carts, donkeys, wheelbarrows etc. (level of mobility).
- The availability of social and economic services in relation to population density.

This approach argues that poor access to facilities leads to isolation, which is a major factor contribution to poverty.

2.1 Interventions to improve accessibility

Accessibility planning provides a menu of alternative solutions. It takes as its starting point the access needs of rural households. Since it has the fundamental concern of improving the economic and social conditions of rural people, it starts by understanding their needs, and the magnitude of their transport activity.

Key access interventions may be categorised in the following groups;

- Rural Transport Infrastructure improvements
- Rural Transport Mobility improvements
- Improved Enabling Environment for Rural Mobility e.g. through credit facilities and training
- More Accessible Locations/Sites of Facilities and Services e.g. water supplies, schools and health facilities
- Environmentally friendly Measures such as improved ovens and development of wood-lots.

2.2 Key stages in Participatory Rural Planning

The **PRP methodology** leads to the development of comprehensive information on the location, condition and use of rural infrastructure and services, prioritizes investments and identifies access interventions. PRP further emphasizes the building of local capacity and the use of local resources (material and human) in the implementation and maintenance of locally initiated projects: including the adoption of appropriate technologies and labour intensive methodology. The end result of the PRP process is a set of defined and prioritised interventions that address the access needs of the rural population. In summary the process involves the following steps:

i. Development of a Local Government Transport Masterplan
ii. Identification and consultation of key stakeholders
iii. Define planning objectives
iv. Define rural access needs that relate to these objectives
v. Collect data on relevant access needs and priorities and produce Accessibility Database
vi. Define the main access problems
vii. Define strategy to address access problems
viii. Prioritise locations of specific interventions
ix. Consolidate prioritised interventions to produce action plans

2.2.1 Development of a Local Government Transport Masterplan

In many countries, the requirements for the development of a local government transport master plan (LGTMP) for a rural transport infrastructure network will be set out as part of the national sector policy or as part of an explicit national rural transport policy and strategy. The plans themselves can be prepared by local government planning agencies in collaboration with the communities and assisted by local consultants. Alternatively, the entire process might be contracted out to experienced consultants by local government or community representatives combined in "joint-services" committees. For more information on LGTMP see case study 2:1:b.

2.2.2 Identification and consultation of Key Stakeholders

It is important to establish liaison between those groups of people who have different interests in the project. The social and economic livelihoods of some categories of people (e.g., travellers, market traders and transport operators) will be affected directly by the project. These are the primary stakeholders. Some other interest groups are important in the decision-making process, but their own lives will not be affected directly by the project. These include the District leadership, the District's Works agencies and the Department of Feeder Roads. Because leaders' standpoints can differ significantly from the experiences of "average" village members, it is important for any consultation process to go beyond the leadership. The most significant stakeholders are listed in Box 2.

Box 2: Key Stakeholders in Local Government Rural Transport Infrastructure

The range of stakeholders in transport projects include those actors and beneficiaries who are instrumental in identifying social concerns, determining priorities, and identifying participatory strategies to enhance and better target project benefits and minimize negative impacts.

National Level: Government agencies and their regional and/or district counterparts are usually involved in such projects, e.g., Ministry of Transport, provincial road agency, district road agency, municipal planning organizations, etc;

Transport User Groups: Community groups, farmer’s associations, road user and transport associations, agro-processors, etc;

Transport Provider/Supplier Groups: Local-government service ministries, investors, donors, NGOs, community organizations, private sector (transport suppliers);

Directly affected groups/vulnerable groups: Project-affected persons, for example, possibly resettled populations, indigenous peoples, ethnic groups, squatters, encroachers, street vendors, women, pensioners, the elderly, students, and children, and;

Other Stakeholders: Donors, labor unions, media, chambers of commerce, research institutes, banks or financial institutions.

2.2.3 Define planning objectives

At this stage the purpose is to set the scope, e.g. which sectors to include in the planning and what targets to meet. Major questions to be asked here are who will benefit and whether women's needs will be addressed if the objectives do not spell out that the needs of both men and women have to be considered.

At the district level, various development activities undertaken by Government ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or the private sector aim at providing a certain type of service or good to the immediate community. For some of these goods and services, their value to the community is affected more critically by access factors than for others. The aim of accessibility planning is to minimise the time, cost and effort spent by rural people in getting access to goods and services.

The basic objective of accessibility planning is to ensure that access to essential goods and services of the rural households is improved. Planning for access should be based on an understanding of the goods and services that people need, and the ease or difficulty with which people reach these goods and services. The scope of planning should be within sectors that:

i) Provide services that households need to travel regularly to,
ii) Provide an infrastructure
iii) Facilitate the availability of internal means of transport

Box 3: Questions to be Asked on Policy Objectives

- Who are the intended beneficiaries?
- Do the objectives take into consideration gender differences in travel and transport needs?
- Do they consider all the travel and transport needs or only some e.g., agriculture?
- Will the specific needs and concerns of women be considered if they are not specifically mentioned?

Box 4: Operational Objectives

- To **facilitate access to women and men in the rural areas to goods and services** required to satisfy basic needs.
- To **reduce the need for walking and human porterage** for both women and men in all of their activities; productive, reproductive and social;
- To **improve the quality of life** for rural women and men by greater access to better means of travel and transport by addressing technical, economic and cultural constraints;
- To **involve rural women and men in the planning, implementation and maintenance** of rural transport.

2.2.4 Defining rural access needs relating to planning objectives

People need to travel for different purposes. For rural development all needs should be considered, while if only certain sectors are involved fewer access needs would be assessed.

Baseline data collection is a foundation in the accessibility planning procedure. However, its importance, as a basis for decision making, depends on its reliability and accuracy. Baseline data provides the main source of information in identifying priorities for interventions in order to improve transport and access to services and facilities.

2.2.5 Data collection and compilation

Information needs to be collected on an array of possible access needs. Most data required relates directly to the accessibility of rural households to facilities, goods and services. A baseline survey should help in building up an "Accessibility Data Base" at two levels, i.e., district level and village level. The purpose of collecting data at these levels is discussed below:

2.2.6 District level data

Data is collected on the following aspects:

- Basic characteristics (total population, population distribution and demography)
- Economic activities (Agriculture and other areas of income generation)
- Distribution of facilities (health facilities, schools, etc.) within the district
- Transport infrastructure (distribution of road network and current condition)
- Transport services (numbers and types of vehicle, routes, frequency of operation, fare structure, availability of IMT)
- Development activities (planned/ongoing projects and groups active within the District)

The aim of data collection at the District level is to:

i) define socio-economic conditions within the district that relate to transport and accessibility for the whole of the district.
ii) allow findings from village surveys to be placed within a wider context, and enable comparisons with conditions in other parts of the district.
iii) to provide a basic crosscheck on certain items of village level data.
iv) to provide the background against which, lessons drawn from interventions in a particular area, can be used modified for application in other project areas.

2.2.7 Village level data

The district level data is complemented by village level data. Though secondary data collected at the district level gives some indication of accessibility conditions of an area, the bulk of the information should be collected from the communities. Primary data is useful in giving a picture of actual needs in the rural areas The aim of collecting data at this level is to;

i) Get a picture of the basic physical and socioeconomic characteristics of each village.
ii) Obtain data on the magnitude and pattern of rural household transport demand, including:

- Amount of time taken to get to a facility or service
- Frequency of trips to a facility/ service
- Mode of transport used for different trip purpose
- Distribution of various transport responsibilities within the household among men, women and children

iii) Get an indication of the existing state of rural transport facilities, and of the present level of access to goods and services for each village.

2.2.8 Data compilation and analysis

The data is compiled in the form of averages, tables and maps and a descriptive report, showing for instance;

- Background information on economic, geographic and demographic characteristics,
- Main economic activities in villages and the entire district,
- Extent and quality of transport infrastructure,
- The average time taken to each facility/ service for each village,
- Location of various facilities on a map,
- Average ownership of various means of transport in each village, and level of transport services,
- Needs and priorities as expressed by the community.

The aggregation of the data at the village and district levels allows each district, ward and village to be classified using Accessibility Indicators. Accessibility Indicators relate to the number of households and their level of access to goods and services, the distance communities are from services and the time it takes to reach the services and facilities.

2.2.9 Defining the main access problems

The aggregation of data collected at the district and village level, and classifying the level of access to various goods and services in the villages within a district allows for identification of main access problems, and prioritization of interventions.

Quantitative assessments, Accessibility Indicators, are made which show the difficulty or ease with which households have access to goods and services. Accessibility indicators are normally defined for the following access needs; water, fuelwood, land for crop production, crop processing, education, health, agricultural inputs and markets, retail and small industries.

Calculating accessibility indicators simply relates the number of households who need access to services/facilities to the time it presently takes to get to them. The basic formulation accessibility indicator is:

H x T, where;

H = Number of households that need access to a certain service facility/ service, and
T = The amount of time it takes to reach the service/facility.

For instance, if there are 40 households in a village who have to travel to get water, and the average time for a return trip is 120 minutes, then the accessibility indicator

for water in that village would be 40 x 120 = 4,800. From the district planning point of view, the accessibility indicators will show which villages have more access problems for specific needs. For instance, different villages will have a different score for a certain service. A village scoring highly on water will mean that amount of time taken to get water is more, or there are more people who have to travel to get water, or both of these. It would therefore have a higher priority for improving access relative to another village with a smaller score.

In order to bring out the gender perspective these scores should be differentiated by women and men. They should also be weighted according to the means of transport used since, for example, a longer trip by bus would score lower, in accessibility problems, than a shorter distance travelled on foot over steep hills. Such an accessibility would be based on:

Number of women x time taken x score for means of transport
Number of men x time taken x score for means of transport

The more difficult the means of transport the higher the score, e.g.:

walking on steep hills = 5;
walking on flat roads = 3;
using donkeys = 2;
using motorised vehicles = 1.

2.2.10 Defining strategies for addressing rural access problems

The main aim of the accessibility planning is to reduce time, cost and effort needed by rural people to gain access to essential services and facilities. Strategies for addressing rural access problems can be grouped into two categories:

i) Closer proximity to essential services
ii) Increasing the accessibility to services by improving the transport system

Accessibility planning looks at the whole range of possible solutions and provides an opportunity for selecting one or a combination of the most appropriate ones

2.2.11 Prioritisation of locations for specific interventions

This stage deals with the question of where interventions are going to be introduced. It concerns identification and selection of roads, villages and wards for specific measures. Accessibility Indicators will have given an overview of the access situation both in terms of; degree to which different sectors are affected by access problems, and the degree to which a village is affected by a particular access need.

2.2.12 Integrating Prioritised Interventions into Existing Development Plans

Information for defining and prioritising strategies for addressing rural access problems has to be packaged and integrated into an overall plan of action or development plan.

The responsibility of formulating plans and proposals for a programme of work lies with the District planner, in consultation with officers from the concerned sectors. Because accessibility planning uses a common procedure for identifying problems

and offering solutions, it offers a common framework for all sectors to plan together for implementation,

Many interventions can benefit more than one sector and therefore the translation of the interventions into plans is best done with all the sectorial departments planning together. In addition, representatives from NGOs and other organisations involved in providing goods and services can also be invited.

It is important that analysed results be discussed together in a meeting by the relevant sectors in the district, While this would offer all district officials some new insight into the nature of access problems in different areas in their district, it would also involve them in preparation of a coherent plan of action for their district.

3. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 Policy issues in accessibility planning

Rural accessibility is a concern that cuts across many sectors, in particular key sectors such as water, health, and education. Service provision in these is defined using targets of distance and catchment population. For example:

- There should be a primary school for every village with 250 households. Maximum distance to the facility should not exceed 3km.
- A clean water supply should be installed for every 200-250 people. By the year 2002, distance to safe drinking water should not exceed 400m.
- A wooldot should be available for every household.

3.2 Organisational issues in accessibility planning

The organisational structure for accessibility planning will vary from country to country and the process of PRP will have to be adapted to suit each. However, the following example from Tanzania provides a fairly typical example.

There are three tiers of local development planning:

i) the Village Council,
ii) the Ward Development Committee and
iii) the District Council.

The purpose of establishing these structures was to decentralise power and devolve decision making powers to representative institutions within the district.

3.2.1 The Village Council

A Village Council has between 17 and 25 members depending on the size of the village and has executive powers for all affairs in the village. It has committees for; Finance, Planning and Economic Affairs, Social Services and Self-Help Activities, and Domestic Security. Other committees may be established as required. The village body initiates proposals for development projects in its own area and sends them upward through the government planning hierarchy.

3.2.2 The Ward Development Committee

This is composed of the elected members of the district representing the ward (Councillor), public officers seconded to the ward, chairpersons and secretaries of all Villages Development Committees within the ward and the Ward Executive Officer. Its functions include making decisions over development activities within the ward, and ensuring their implementation.

3.2.3 The District Council

The District Councils is composed of:

elected member from each ward in the district;
three members elected by the minister responsible for local government, and member(s) of parliament representing constituencies within the district.

Other members elected by the district council from among the chairpersons of village councils include the District Executive Director who is secretary to the council. The broad function of the District Council is to promote the social and economic welfare of all residents in a district, subject to the national policy for rural and urban development.

It is subdivided into the following standing subcommittees;

- finance and planning
- administration and establishment
- social services
- education affairs
- economic services

Rural accessibility planning needs to be institutionalised within the present district planning structure. This process entails building of capacity within the village, ward and district for identification of access problems and formulation of solutions to the identified problems.

4. RESOURCE ISSUES

Resources cover the broad category of inputs required to initiate and sustain an activity. They therefore define the limits of what can be achieved, and the extent to which it can be achieved. An important element of the planning process is identification of resource requirement for an intervention, and trying to relate that to available resources. A planner should therefore have adequate information on;

- available funds
- personnel and skills
- equipment
- ability and willingness of villages to pay for interventions.

The major source of revenue for villages and districts is from central government. However, allocation from this source is usually arbitrary, or is based on allocations in the previous year. The funding largely goes to meet recurrent expenditure of the

District Council, leaving little for investment in new activities or operation of already existing ones, To prevent this from happening in accessibility planning;

1. Proposals at each level should be screened to ensure that they are not based on unavailable resources.

2. Districts planners should seek the contribution of other actors in the development process. These include NGOs, the private sector and local groups.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The purpose of monitoring is to provide the District Planning Officer with information which will enable him/her assess progress of implementation and changes taking place in the environment so that timely decisions can be made. Monitoring covers two broad elements;

i) Progress of the process of implementation which covers such things as efficiency in delivery and use of inputs, while,
ii) Progress against defined targets refers to the physical outputs of the activities, and the impact they have had on target communities.

5.1 Monitoring and evaluation at the planning stage

At the planning stage consideration of gender issues is something that must be carefully monitored, identifying, from the data, accessibility factors and prioritising interventions. The quality of the data has to be monitored with respect to:

- Disaggregation of data by gender.
- Participation of women in the information gathering process as informants.
- Carefulness in getting the opinions of both gender on the most serious access problems.
- Special constraints of women in access to transport interventions.
- Gender sensitisation needs at district and local level.
- Institutional needs such as Transport Committees at ward and village level in which there is a fair representation of both genders.
- Identified training needs and who are the targets.

Accessibility Indicators help in determining the nature, scope and magnitude of the problem, and defining the desired situation. If for example access to water scores very high on the Indicator, access improvement measures would aim at lowering the indicator by a set target level.

5.2 Monitoring and evaluation at the Implementation Stage

At this stage three aspects are monitored:

i) Progress in the implementation in terms of physical outputs according to the planned schedule of work.

ii) Whether the defined priorities, and targets are being met through the physical outputs of the activities.
iii) Whether the interventions have the desired objective of reducing the time and effort that rural dwellers specially the women, spend in travel and transport.

While the first two are easy to assess against set plans of actions and schedules of work, the last is complex because women might increase the visits to a facility if it is conveniently closer. It has been found, for instance, that when a water supply point is located in the village, women tend to collect more water. The benefit therefore is not in terms of the time saved but in better sanitation and health.

5.3 Monitoring the impact of the intervention on Women

Positive impacts on women may include:
- Potential increases in income as a result of the time saved used on productive/social activities;
- Reducing headloads carried;
- Redistribution of women's workload e.g. an animal-drawn cart is used by men to carry water or take the grain to the mill.

Negative impacts on women:
- Increased women's travel time and transport, e.g. afforestation/ agro-forestry projects because the work is not equitably divided among women and men.
- Ignored women's preferences (e.g., the prioritised access, need was for path improvement to the fields; what was being, done was the path leading to a district road (men's preference).
- Impact on women's travel and transport load need/ headloading due to their inability to afford to purchase/ hire the transport facilities.

5.4 Ability to respond to data from monitoring and evaluation

If implementation of the intervention is having a negative impact planning must be flexible with several alternative strategies available. For example, if donkeys are not available for sale to take the produce to the market, would it not help to improve the village access road in order to induce motorised transport to come to the village? In some cases, there is no better alternative and relevant district personnel will have to visit the site and find ways with the villagers concerned to keep the project on track or involve women fully as was agreed at the start of the intervention, or enable a more equitable sharing of the tasks between men and women, so that all the free labour is not provided by the women alone.

Monitoring and planning are linked through a feedback mechanism. Plans should be reviewed in the light of information generated from actual implementation. Evidence of need to adjust plans or to make them more flexible is provided through monitoring. On the other hand, a good plan should define activities, objectives and targets that are easy to monitor.

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