

## CONSULTATION AND CONSENSUS BUILDING

### 1.1 IDENTIFYING TRANSPORT AS THE PRIORITY SECTOR

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**Problem:** Decisions on which sector is of priority for intervention (ie. Health, education, agriculture, water, transport) can lead to wasted investment if undertaken without consulting communities from the outset

**Solution:** Prior to undertaking surveys to identify the ‘problem statement’ communities need to be consulted in prioritising transport as a precedence for intervention

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#### BACKGROUND

Consultation with potential beneficiaries of intervention is critical from the outset of policy design. As with any appraisal technique, consultation should be a continuing activity over the lifetime of a project or programme, from conception to implementation and monitoring. First and foremost, key stakeholders should be included in a dialogue with local authority and donor representatives before a project of intervention is planned, to ensure that the design of the project involves the most appropriate sectors. Whilst planning for development should be holistic and multi-sectoral, in reality the budgets from which interventions are funded tend to be sectoral. Therefore, whilst the requirements of a community may overlap different sectors, the funding of implementation comes from very distinct sources. For this reason, it is important to identify as accurately as possible the priority sectors for intervention. This is especially true for the transport sector which is the ‘lynchpin’ of other service sectors and cuts across a much wider geographical catchment, as well as being one of the most capital intensive areas of intervention.

#### THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement in planning and policy development is usually associated with local issues. However, in principle there is no reason why stakeholders should not be involved in planning and policy development at any level of government, be it national, regional, local or community. In practice, the form of involvement may vary between these different levels. For example, at the national level of policy debate it may be harder, for logistical reasons, to involve the individual; collective lobbying and input from representative bodies is more easily accommodated. With the development of more powerful means of communication (electronic media, radio and television), it may be possible for national debates to become more inclusive of the individual view.

#### WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?

Transport almost certainly impacts on every facet of rural life in some way. In this context, the stakeholders of rural transport are the whole rural community. Furthermore, because of the role of the rural sector in national development (through rural-urban and rural-external linkages), there are many others outside the rural context who also have an interest in the development of rural transport.



Categorisation of rural transport stakeholders would include the following:

- Direct transport users (e.g. travelling public, shippers, distributive industry)
- Indirect transport users (e.g. households, consumers, agricultural producers, health-care providers, education providers)
- Transport facilitators (e.g. regulators, roads administrators)
- Transport providers (e.g. freight and public transport operators, road construction companies)
- Urban community (e.g. consumers, users of rural facilities)
- National community (e.g. defence and geo-political interests)
- External community (e.g. importers of rural produce, multi-national manufacturers and trading companies, tourists).

The impact of transport on gender relations, poverty relief and 'excluded' elements of society adds further dimension to the categorisation of stakeholders.

### INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS

Many stakeholders have the automatic right to involvement in the policy and planning process indirectly through the democratic political process. But many observers see a need for more interactive participation in the process because the political process:



- Excludes many sections of society
- Presents voters with a broad range of policies, many of which may be too general and non-specific to individual interests and concerns
- Gives most voters (apart from those who have involved themselves in party policy development) little sense of ownership in what is happening
- Is too remote (particularly at the national level) from local aspirations and desires
- Depends too much on the administrative role of civil servants for execution of policies

One mechanism for greater stakeholder involvement is lobbying. Another is more widespread and formalised use of consultation with stakeholders and community (in its widest sense) involvement (see Section 1.2).

### LOBBYING

The traditional method of influencing policy development is through the lobbying of politicians and policy-makers by representatives of interest groups. This system is prone to flaws: it lacks transparency, and it is dominated by powerful interests which have the resources to promote their campaigns. NGOs and consumer interest groups have become more proficient in this process in recent times, but the voice of the individual and minority groups is overlooked. The system of lobbying also fails to engender community ownership and interest.

#### KEY REFERENCE

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