



**Knowledge Demand Assessment for the
Transport and Rural Infrastructure
Services Partnership (TRISP)**

Interim Report

February 2003

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Executive Summary

Background and context

The World Bank/DFID Transport and Rural Infrastructure Services Learning and Sharing Project (TRISP) aims to strengthen the demand for, and improve access to relevant knowledge for stakeholders working in transport and rural utilities in developing countries. The first 'demand assessment' phase seeks to provide insights into the information required and by whom to increase the impact of knowledge in transport and rural utilities in developing countries; the most appropriate way of targeting relevant information, raising awareness of its existence and making it accessible to the relevant stakeholders; and what policies and guidelines already exist which can be developed and disseminated more widely. This document provides some interim results.

The assessment concentrates on transport, and includes a literature review, interviews with key informants in the World Bank, DFID and other organisations working in the sector, and stakeholder workshops in the UK, Peru and Zimbabwe. The results of these activities (which are described in this report) will be supplemented by an electronic questionnaire to a broad group of stakeholders, an e-conference based on information posted on a project web-site, and follow-up dialogue with key staff in DFID and the World Bank.

Existing information and information systems

The literature review found that there is virtually no literature specifically about the demand for information on transport issues in rural areas in developing countries, although there is much tacit knowledge and a substantial volume of knowledge about transport needs and much detailed case-study information is available in the literature or on web sites. There is a general assumption about the demand for and value of information for policy makers and practitioners, and information is recognised as vital for learning about the impact of development interventions in general. Many organisations in the sector have information strategies based on this assumed demand, rather than measured actual demand, and there is much information about methodologies for developing and delivering different sorts of information to different kinds of user, and much factual information about transport infrastructure and constraints, although much of this describes very specific local situations.

DFID and the World Bank are both producers and disseminators of substantial volumes of information about transport and rural infrastructure, though their internal learning mechanisms and external information strategies are very different. The World Bank promotes itself both as a neutral gateway for knowledge while at the same time promoting itself as a primary producer of development knowledge. The focus of the Bank's communication strategy is to push its branded information out to different parts of the bank, as well as to client communities mainly through electronic media. Knowledge processes within DFID's Infrastructure and Urban Development Division on the other hand are contracted out to wide range of internal and external partners, largely under DFID's knowledge and research programme. DFID's information strategy for transport, and other rural infrastructure services, has grown organically, alongside and largely within the research programme, and has focused on printed materials. Over the last 18 months, IUDD's Communications and Information Management Resource Centre has been developing a strategy, and a range of 'Communications Guidance Notes' that identify and promote best practice, to promote greater coherence, particularly for making information available on the internet.

There are an increasing number of initiatives which recognise the important role of making information more accessible although most professionals involved in the study described a growing mismatch between their ongoing – and changing – demands for information to do their jobs effectively, and the information supply. For most of them, this was the first time that they had been asked to think strategically about the role of information in pursuing their development objectives, and they helped identify a wide range of issues of concern including: out of date mailing lists, limited information in languages other than English, low awareness of the information that is available few incentives for staff to produce information, under use of existing information services, poor coordination, inconsistent behaviour of professionals who admit not reading, but still generate long reports; very traditional communication outputs; and little assessment of the impact of information.

What's unique about transport?

Although transport budgets are large, relatively few professionals work in the transport sector, they are fragmented, and there are few effective intermediaries who can pass on information in appropriate

formats for end users. Other sectors (eg water and energy) seem to have developed better systems over the last few years, possibly because it has been easier for them to demonstrate impact on poverty.

What information do people need?

The study looked at the information seeking patterns of a range of stakeholders, through the three workshops, and through the secondary information from information brokers. There is a difference between **expressed** demand, and **latent** demand for information. The former is what information people *are actually saying they want and need* to carry out their professional jobs effectively, and the latter is the information *that they don't yet know that they need* to perform effectively. The study found that the formal systems that are in place within organisations to make information 'user-driven' are generally meeting expressed demand (or the organisation's estimate of what it might be), rather than latent demand. Although some of the assumptions made by information providers about information needs are correct, they focus on technical information whereas in other sectors (eg energy) there is an increasing demand for information on social aspects. It is difficult to assess where the real demand for information is, since information providers tend to describe the demand coming from their existing audiences, and DFID KaR researchers, who describe the primary users of their information as design engineers and planners, are expressing personal opinions rather than empirical study.

Users want to know what kind of information is being presented to them, what it will enable them to do, and what other information is available. They are particularly interested in information relevant to their local situation that 'reflects their reality'. Information from other contexts needs to be 'localised' to be of any use. Workshop participants expressed frustration over content that is: not gender disaggregated; lacks local content; contains the wrong level of detail for their purpose; is out of date; is filtered at source rather than allowing them to decide whether it is useful or not; and the absolute lack of information on water transport, traffic, and micro-level costs.

Since the electronic surveys have not yet been implemented, our understanding of how stakeholders use information on transport and rural infrastructure is largely based on the literature. David Webber's Seven Meanings of Use describes seven different ways that policy makers use social science information: to acquire new knowledge, to solve problems, to build on existing knowledge, to justify political positions, to delay action (by asking for more information), to triangulate with other information and to satisfy their intellectual ambitions. Marketing literature suggests that people are interested in products (or information) that is immediately useful, is packaged interestingly, and stimulates interactive thought. The Rockefeller Foundation's work on Communication for Social Change (CFSC) project concludes that if external agents wish to contribute to the process of communication and social change at local level, need to engage in dialogue and discussion with members of the community rather than simply deliver information.

Information availability and usefulness

The way users access information seems to depend on: existing knowledge about the sources of information, existing levels of information technology, the filters that they consider important, and the type of information they require, and these vary significantly between geographical regions and language groups, and between different users (e.g. technical practitioners, researchers, policy makers). Participants in the workshops obtained information from a very range of sources, but described how they filter out what they think will be useful based on what they know, or can divine about the source - its credibility and reliability, how up to date it is, how much effort it took to obtain, the language and the potential for interaction with the source.

The workshops also shed some light on the ways that different groups access information within a region, and between regions. For example, technical practitioners in Peru found the internet and CD-ROMs the most useful, whereas the same group in sub-Saharan Africa preferred newsletters, workshops and seminars, while those in the UK tended to prefer direct contact with colleagues and fellow-professionals. Government institutions and policy makers worldwide valued World Bank literature, but in Zimbabwe preferred printed versions, though it is often not available, and in Peru, internet versions, though much is not in Spanish. Researchers value a wide range of information, though often find it difficult to get hold of for the same reasons. All groups preferred to read documents on paper than on screen, though the cost of printing is an issue for groups with scarce resources, especially government policy makers and planners at the end of the year. Community groups and poor households were not represented at the workshops, but previous studies show that

social networks that already exist in the community are the main source of information for the poor, along with information brokers that put in place mechanisms to deliver information and communicate with marginalized groups e.g. NGOs working with farmers.

The influence of providers and brokers

International information providers (e.g. World Bank, DFID) are increasingly concentrating on the internet as a means of making information available though internet access is very uneven across the continents. Information providers tend to create their own places to locate information rather than build on what already exists (e.g. CSIR), and this produces duplication and confusion on the part of users, and is unsustainable. In the commercial world, 'takeovers' and 'mergers' build on and strengthen existing products and information without duplication. This could be mimicked for information centres. There is some brokering of information through networks and communities of practice, and through networking events, though it appears that this is biased by users, who tend to associate particular providers with particular kinds of information, and by providers who assume they know what their audience want.

The way in which information is generated and presented, and its content influences how usable or useful it is for the particular purpose of the user. If users are not involved in the analysis of its usefulness they will tend not to accept the analysis or recommendations. Participants in the workshop in Peru felt the available information not only favoured African experience, and was rarely translated into Spanish, but also provided generalised conclusions in a way which made it difficult to relate to their own situation. They needed more information about the African context so that they could filter the conclusions through their own screens of knowledge and expertise to decide if it might be useful for them also.

Conclusions and recommendations for TRISP

Interim conclusions and recommendations focus on:

- § **Increasing demand for information** – through knowledge demand assessments and information components in all transport and rural services projects, awareness campaigns, improved linkages between professional staff, potential users of information, information producers, and systems to assess information user satisfaction.
- § **Increasing availability of useful information** – through better sharing of information among existing information providers (e.g. WIN, SUSTRAN, PIARC, IFRTD and ILO-ASSIST), improved user needs assessment, specialisation of information providers, improved resources, staff development and training in communication skills and wider translation of existing material.
- § **Packaging information to be appropriate to different users** – through user satisfaction systems, creating the right balance between electronic and printed media, and encouraging organisations and information providers involved in transport and rural service issues to link their work to other sectors & issues.
- § **Increasing impact of information** – through making information more widely available, involving users and policy makers in generating and sharing the information, and improved marketing.
- § **Marketing information more strategically to priority users** – through a specialised Search Engine on the internet for information on transport, the establishment of outlets for hard copies near to users, promotion through appropriate networks, incorporation of information into other DFID publications, encouraging information providers to adopt clear 'acquisitions and deletions policies', and improved internal mechanisms to keep staff informed about what material is available.
- § **Improving organisational learning and sharing systems** – through interactive programmes involving professionals, users and communicators, advisory groups, improved internal knowledge and learning systems in organisations involved in this sector, with appropriate incentives for staff.

Next steps

Further activities over the next few weeks to complete this Knowledge Demand Assessment will include an e-mail questionnaire to transport and rural service specialists to collect empirical information about what information they need and how they use it; an e-discussion among transport and rural service specialists and mini-workshops will be held at DFID and the World Bank.

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1. Background and context

The TRISP demand assessment phase and Knowledge Demand Assessment Project

The World Bank/DFID Transport and Rural Infrastructure Services Learning and Sharing Project (TRISP) aims to strengthen the demand for, and improve access to relevant knowledge for stakeholders working in transport and rural utilities in developing countries. The first 'demand assessment' phase seeks to provide insights into three sets of questions:

1. *What information* is required and *by whom* to increase the impact of knowledge in transport and rural utilities in developing countries?
2. What is the most appropriate way of targeting relevant information, raising awareness of its existence and making it accessible to the relevant stakeholders?
3. What policies and guidelines already exist which can be developed and disseminated more widely?

This document provides some interim results from the on-going Knowledge Demand Assessment Project, a participatory investigation to:

- § Review of what is known about patterns and processes of knowledge demand from the literature, and what are the gaps in this understanding;
- § Assessment of the expressed and latent demand for information and knowledge by different categories of the stakeholder community dealing with transport issues;
- § Patterns of information use by each category of stakeholder, and constraints to effective access and uptake;
- § Map of the knowledge and learning environments in the World Bank and DFID and their transport information products with intended audiences, circulation and evidence of impact

The study

To make it manageable, the study concentrates on transport, rather than the more general rural infrastructure services such as water, energy, small-scale technologies etc, since the focus on the 'demand for information' rather than 'demand for actual services' will identify issues relevant across all sectors. The study will include:

- § a literature review,
- § interviews with key informants in the World Bank, DFID and other organisations working in the sector
- § an electronic questionnaire to a broad group of stakeholders
- § stakeholder workshops in the UK, Peru and Zimbabwe
- § correspondence with the main transport information providers
- § an e-conference based on information posted on a project web-site, and
- § follow-up dialogue with key staff in DFID and the World Bank

Urban transport, and its related infrastructure issues such as environmental safety and emissions etc., and the public campaigns that have featured in that arena have not been tackled in this study.

Constraints & Limitations

Although conceived in early 2002, and activities commenced in May, a contract for the study was not received until mid-November, causing considerable disruption to the original plan for implementation. In particular the e-mail surveys which should have been implemented before, and contributed to discussions at the stakeholder workshops, and the web-site which should have provided information to stimulate discussions with key stakeholders have not yet been completed.

This report will provide an overview of what has been learned to date, and indicate areas where further information is expected before the study is complete.

2. Existing information and information systems

Literature review

The literature review found that there is virtually no literature specifically about the demand for information on transport issues in rural areas in developing countries, although there is much tacit knowledge and a substantial volume of knowledge about transport needs and much detailed case-

study information is available in the literature or on web sites¹. There is a general assumption about the demand for and value of information for policy makers and practitioners², and information is recognised as vital for learning about the impact of development interventions in general³. The dissemination of information is one of the aims of many of the institutions working in this sector and the importance of knowledge sharing is emphasised in their institutional strategies⁴. Some of these institutions have undertaken an analysis of the information needs of their target audiences to develop their information strategies⁵, although these are only described in internal documents and have not been made available to the public. Most of these strategies seem to be based on the outputs from transport research programmes, rather than an assessment of the information needs of potential users⁶. There are some new initiatives on information sharing in rural transport issues, which could contribute substantially to any future dissemination strategies⁷. There are many analyses of information constraints in the appraisal of rural transport projects, and this is used by some authors to justify the development of alternative models based on local information⁸. There are also many methodologies, guides and articles describing the kind of information needed for transport planning, for example, sectoral approaches⁹; participatory rural planning¹⁰; integrated rural accessibility planning¹¹; and for environmental impact assessment of transport projects¹². Most authors agree that information needs are highly context specific, and an attempt to systematise knowledge about information needs¹³ and provision¹⁴ failed to identify any general gaps and opportunities. However, there does seem to be more information about roads than other modes of transport, and more on transport technology than social and economic factors.

The review identified a number of categories of information developed and used by different institutions in the infrastructure sector. This spectrum of information supply is in part-response to information demand, but is also a reflection of the kinds of activities being undertaken, chronicled and disseminated by actors in the transport sector.

1. **Transport Needs**¹⁵, access and mobility needs.
2. **Rural Transport Planning**¹⁶, policy, planning, strategies, design, appraisal, management, implementation, financing.
3. **Urban Transport Planning**¹⁷, policy, planning, strategies, design, appraisal, management, implementation, financing.
4. **Politics**¹⁸, institutional issues, transport and politics, national transport policies, regulatory framework
5. **Economic Issues**¹⁹, Costs, Public vs. Private, Transport and Trade – Regional, Financing of Transport
6. **Social and Environmental Issues**²⁰, Poverty alleviation, Sustainability, Gender, Cultural issues
7. **Transport Technologies**²¹, Railways, Port and Logistics, Roads and Highways, Air Transport, Inland Waterways.
8. **Transport Operations and Services**²², IMT, Public Transport, Vehicles

(The full literature review is available on a temporary web site at http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/R0106_TRISP_Literature_Review/index.html)

WB, DFID and existing information and learning systems

DFID and the World Bank are both producers and disseminators of substantial volumes of information about transport and rural infrastructure, though their internal learning mechanisms and external information strategies are very different.

The World Bank

The World Bank promotes itself both as a neutral gateway for knowledge while at the same time promoting itself as a primary producer of development knowledge. The Bank's knowledge management (km) or knowledge sharing (ks) concept is based upon the conviction that the organisation carries out vast quantities of analytical work much of which remains relevant to future challenges but becomes inaccessible. It may be trapped in the heads of individuals or embedded in report that might be in the public domain but are not known. Knowledge exists (within the Bank) it just needs to be effectively networked. The knowledge sharing programme has since moved out of its original home in the operational and core services, to the World Bank Institute (WBI) which is more client oriented and should encourage greater focus on external knowledge sharing activities.

The focus of the Bank's communication strategy is to push its (branded?) information out to different parts of the bank, as well as to client communities. It utilizes a complementary mix of activities and tools, including: thematic groups and communities of practice, advisory services, a development forum that brings together practitioners from a range of stakeholder institutions, internal and external websites, internships, and a range of information sharing products: practice notes, staff debriefings and learning events. For those involved in the production of transport related knowledge, in the World Bank the main information sharing tools seem to be electronic: the thematic groups, the websites and the technical papers that are available to be bought through the Bank's info shop, or through involvement in the Transport Research Board and the World Bank's Transport Forum.

DFID

Knowledge processes within DFID's Infrastructure and Urban Development Division on the other hand are contracted out to a wide range of internal and external partners, largely under DFID's knowledge and research programme. These include, knowledge about public private initiatives and sustainable livelihoods through other DFID Departments, employment related work with the ILO and initiatives exploring poor peoples' access to technology and information with ITDG. In the transport sector in particular, IUDD has partnerships with the World Road Association, the World Bank, IFRTD the SSATP, the GRSP and TRL for increasing the flow of information. The transport-links website developed by TRL aims to be a comprehensive broker of transport information for users.

In contrast to the Bank's emphasis on electronic information tools and products, DFID has concentrated on traditional print-based products. Of around 770 transport research titles produced by TRL for DFID since 1990, 700 have been made available as paper copies only. Less than five of each of videos, software, slide sets, posters have been produced in that time. CD-ROMs are increasingly being produced as a cost-effective way of distributing bulky materials such as books, and training manuals etc. e.g. Rural Transport Knowledge Base, Road Engineering for Development, DFID Sourcebook on Institutional Development for Utilities and Infrastructure.

DFID's information strategy for transport, and other rural infrastructure services, has grown organically to include the various marketing activities of the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), the DFID Transport Programme as well as indirectly through the programmes and institutions supported financially or through staff secondment by DFID (e.g. PIARC and WIN etc.), and through direct programme and research activities carried out in the south. The Transport Newsletter and new Transport Links website stimulates demand for products, which is handled by TRL. Technical Enquiries are handled by a consortium of agencies making up the Resource Centre, although this is a new formation and the referral system is not yet perfect. Over the last 18 months, IUDD's Communications and Information Management Resource Centre has been developing a strategy, and a range of 'Communications Guidance Notes' that identify and promote best practice, to promote greater coherence, particularly for making information available on the internet.

Other initiatives and general issues

There are an increasing number of initiatives which recognise the important role of making information more accessible (such as WIN, SUSTRAN, PIARC Technical Transfer Centres, and an strengthened profile of information brokerage services such as IFRTD and ILO-ASIST) and most professionals who were asked to participate in the study welcomed the opportunity to analyse and articulate the mismatch between their ongoing – and changing – demands for information to do their jobs effectively, and the information supply. They also welcomed the World Bank's implicit intention (in funding the study) to strengthen the quality and quantity of information available to those working in the sector. With few exceptions, the more than 100 people participating in the study through workshops, literature search, interviews, said that this was the first time that they had been asked to think strategically about the role of information in pursuing their development objectives.

The study's investigation of existing information systems and services is not yet complete, but a range of issues are emerging which undermine their efficiency and effectiveness.

These include:

- § *Out of date mailing lists* – TRL's mailing list contains more than 3,800 names, but this has not been significantly edited for more than ten years.
- § *Translation* – many useful documents are not translated to make them accessible to wider audiences (though PIARC translates some of the TRL publications such as the International Road

Maintenance Handbook for its members according to demand and assessed suitability), or if they are, they are not made available to all relevant stakeholders (e.g. Mozambique Government funded translation of Overseas Road Notes into Portuguese is not available in Brazil).

- § *Awareness among staff* - within larger organisations, staff are often unaware of the full range of information that is available for dissemination, and are often unwilling to take the responsibility for promoting it when they travel.
- § *Incentives* - staff do not prioritise information or even acknowledge it as an important part of their jobs. There are inadequate systems in place to either incentivise or authorise staff to carry out this role as part of the organisation's broader Information and Communication Strategy.
- § *Under use* – some organisations (such as TRL, WB Help Desk etc) have systems in place (e.g. databases, technical enquiry services etc.) that **could** provide valuable information on what is the current and anticipated demand for information from a variety of stakeholders, but these are not being employed for this purpose and opportunities are being lost.
- § *Coordination* - there is a general lack of awareness of what is an organisation's niche (as an information provider) within the broader spectrum of information on transport and rural infrastructure, i.e. how they complement other organisations in delivering a portfolio of information to users. This leads to lack of co-ordination and referral between suppliers such as IFRTD, TRL, ILO-ASIST, WB etc.; possible duplication of information provision; and confusion on the part of users about where to go for what kind of information.
- § *Personal behaviour* - professionals working in the transport sector do not make connections between their behaviour as information consumers - the lack of time to read long documents - and the way that they disseminate information themselves – often through long documents.
- § *Traditionalism* – few organisations either encourage staff to involve information users in research, or to develop effective communication materials, and donors are unwilling to fund the range of techniques that have been shown to be 'communications best practice'.
- § *Impact assessment* – there are few attempts and fewer tools to evaluate the impact of information activities. Some organisations track the delivery of information outputs, but most assume that so long as the information reaches the right people their objectives have been met, and much (especially DFID) information is unbranded, making it difficult to estimate impact from user surveys.

3. What's unique about transport

Although transport budgets in many bilateral and multilateral agencies can be large (e.g. biggest single budget in the European Community, £2m in DFID 2001-2002), the community working on transport and mobility issues is relatively small, and fragmented. For example, collaboration between TRL, IFRTD, ILO-ASIST is not as well developed as it could be, and there are no formal systems that provide a brokerage service of information products and services (except the recent Resource Centre Scheme funded by DFID which includes TRL, IFRTD, NRI and ITDG and is set up to enable specific project activities and Technical Enquiries to take place for DFID's Transport Programme).

DFID research into the dissemination of energy knowledge²³ points out that '*The need for energy is peculiar in that it is a derived demand, i.e. people want cooked food, light and ways of reducing the effort/time to perform daily tasks – not energy in itself, but things requiring it. This has implications for the entry points to introduce energy knowledge. The issues that concern poor people should determine these entry points.*' The need for transport is also a derived demand: people want to be able to get to markets more easily; to access health clinics and get their sick to the nearest doctor faster; to get from point A to point B more safely; to have deliveries of a wider range of services into the community. So, '*Energy (and transport) knowledge would also be of benefit to decision-makers, professionals and intermediaries who are working to meet poor people's needs in these areas*',

A recent study²⁴ concluded that poor men and women searching for appropriate technology solutions to livelihood problems are greatly dependent upon the social networks that exist in their communities, and are often 'missed out' by those disseminating information through traditional channels unless they are explicitly targeted by those institutions. The study revealed weaknesses in the assumptions made by many information disseminators, that if they get the information to 'intermediaries' who are working with the poor, that the information is efficiently and effectively re-purposed and repackaged for the end target audience. Intermediary organisations suffer from the same lack of skills and resources that larger, global organisations do in designing communications strategies that identify and satisfy the

information and knowledge needs of their constituents (arguably they have more excuses for their failure than do the bigger organisations with more resources).

Other sectors e.g. water, energy have been able to gain a higher profile inside the development community, though its not clear whether they have been more successful in disseminating knowledge to the poor women and men searching for appropriate technology solutions. This could be explained by:

- § Better networking and connections between water service delivery and policy influence (e.g. through forums, lobby groups etc.)
- § More tangible connections can be made with poverty alleviation and therefore general development organisations find it easier to create programmes of work in that sector;
- § Ability to make linkages with ‘issues of the day’ e.g. gender, environment, participation and have succeeded in getting ‘their’ subject taken up by a separate community of development professionals;

It seems that the transport sector still has a lot of work to do to ‘demystify’ the technical aspects of transport provision, develop links with and market access and mobility issues to, other actors in the development sector.

4. What information do people need?

The study looked at the information seeking patterns of a range of stakeholders, through the three workshops, and through the secondary information from information brokers. The participants in the workshops ranged from private consultants and academics (UK); to government, academic and international agency personnel involved in research, brokering information, training, planning and implementing transport programmes (Zimbabwe); to engineers and social scientists, working as researchers, consultants, in government and in international organisations (Peru). On the other hand, many of the information requests to TRL and to the Transport Help Desk of the World Bank come from students in both developing and developed countries. TRL estimates that 47% of its requests are from Africa, mainly from Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia.

There is a difference between **expressed** demand, and **latent** demand for information. The former is what information people *are actually saying they want and need* to carry out their professional jobs effectively, and the latter is the information *that they don't yet know that they need* to perform effectively. Expressed demand is easier to satisfy, because the user can define what s/he needs, when and how. Satisfying latent information is more difficult. First the supplier has to anticipate needs and make information available – then ‘sell’ it to an unaware consumer, usually through some kind of advocacy activity (e.g. current IFRTD work to highlight the importance of water transport within marginalized communities and to influence policymakers to consider it in transport planning). Another example would be the road safety lobby who need to advocate for safety to be taken up as an issue that requires laws and budgets to enforce.

The study found that the formal systems that are in place within organisations to make information ‘user-driven’ are generally meeting expressed demand (or the organisation’s estimate of what it might be, rather than latent demand.

While not yet complete, interim results from the study indicate that people’s search for information depends on:

- § What type of activities they are involved in (e.g. research, planning a programme of work, building a road)
- § the intention for those activities (influencing motorcycle taxis to drive more safely, raising a communities awareness of load carrying options, making policy choices between different kinds of transport interventions)
- § what they already know

They will look for

- § facts and evidence
- § approaches used elsewhere to trigger new ways of working which might solve old problems
- § “cutting edge thinking” that might indicate new trends for those wishing to be ahead of the competition

Different stakeholders will look for information that varies in both content (i.e. subject matter, factual information) and scope (i.e. what is being done with the facts). Stakeholders may be looking for information on children and transport (for a 'state of the art' piece of academic research); water transport (to feed into an international workshop with the intention of influencing policies), mobility statistics (as part of a Situational Analysis which forms the background for a planned transport intervention); or animal traction (looking for options to include in a publication). Other examples can be found in the individual workshop reports.

Even the systems that find out what people **want** don't tackle the issue of what they **need** to know to achieve the wider objectives of poverty eradication, safe travel etc. So, for example, policy makers in government ministries responsible for putting together rural transport budgets might not be seeking information on making transport safe for women, but that doesn't mean that they don't need this information to make enlightened decisions.

Who needs information on transport and rural infrastructure services?

The complexity of information seeking behaviour means there is no way of clearly determining who will be looking for what information at any particular time. We do know that most audiences are looking for practical information related to their local environment, but the content or scope of this information will depend on the work they are engaged in and its objectives. This means that organisations providing information must make assumptions about what information is needed. These assumptions are usually based on a range of informal and implicit ways of assessing knowledge demand and personal intuition.

Results from the study so far indicate that some of the assumptions made about some kinds of people are correct e.g. practitioners wanting practical information. However, classification of people and assumptions of what they want, sometimes based on the information they have wanted in the past because of the kind of work that they've been working on does not allow for changes in demand in response to changing environments. For example assuming that people in CSIR only want technical information would be to ignore the rapidly changing development context in which they may also need to know about transport and its relationship to the millennium development goals!.

In the non-transport sectors, there is an increased demand for information on the social aspects of energy²⁵ and less demand for technical information. Similar trends are reported for technology, along with increased demand for information about technology options rather than simply the promotion of particular solutions²⁶. In the workshops, the frustration with the lack of gender disaggregated data, indicates a similar shift in the transport sector towards non-technical information.

Sampling actual requests for information gives some insight into where the demand is coming from, but may also simply be a reflection of where the products are best known and most actively promoted. For TRL's technical information, requests come mainly from English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia and sometimes Tanzania. Occasional requests are also received from India, Pakistan, Nepal, but rarely from South or Central America, the Caribbean, or East Asia. A large proportion of these users were students in universities who use the publications as text books, and by junior people in government who have responsibility for implementing projects. TRL receives few requests for non-technical information, but this could be a result of how TRL is perceived by prospective seekers of information (i.e. they do not know that TRL produces information on 'softer' issues). Nearly one third of ITDG's total 933 enquiries originated in Eastern and Southern Africa, followed by one quarter in West and Central Africa and 10% in South Asia. Individuals made up the bulk of enquirers (52%) followed by NGOs and the commercial sector (18% and 16% respectively). Less than 10% of enquirers originated from local development agencies. However, ITDG's enquiry service reports that only 4% of its enquires are for transport.

In a review of audiences for DFID KaR research on transport (disseminated through Transport Research Laboratory) since 1990, the **primary** users of the research were seen to be design engineers or other technology professionals; planners, and community level agents for change. At the next level of importance were policy-level decision-makers, researchers, and NGOs active in technical interventions (where they exist); and least important users were trainers of trainers. Poor households were not considered to be users of the research information. TRL staff thought the kind of users of information had not changed much over the ten years being reviewed. Respondents to a survey on the 19 publications in the Overseas Road Notes series, drawn from TRL's database of existing

contacts, showed the highest demand for the engineering titles (4/5 titles cited as having been read by 48% of respondents), followed by traffic and transport titles.

The study identified many examples of demand being stimulated by 'enthusiasts' such as ex-staff moving overseas, having an understanding of what information is available and promoting it. In-country offices **can** also raise awareness of information and stimulate demand, but evidence from TRL's Zimbabwe office suggests that this isn't a guaranteed result. Demand for information from 'international' information brokers may also reflect demand that is not being satisfied by local research and information,

The picture of demand for transport sector information that is emerging from this study is in marked contrast to the energy sector where it is reported that there has been a substantial shift in the last 10 years from technology specialists looking for technical information to communities/households, planners and policy makers looking for a broader range of information.

What information users need

Users want to know what kind of information is being presented to them and, importantly what the information will enable them to do. An engineer working in Kenya said that he wanted to know whether the document he was about to read was going to tell him 'how to build a road, or how Nepalese engineers managed to build a road in the Himalayas, or how the road that you build can be maintained at low cost'. Only if the document contained reliable information on the last topic would he bother to read it.

Users across all categories also want an overview of what other information is available and where from, so that they can select and pursue what information they need **at that particular time**, having filtered it using their own criteria (e.g. judgement of source organisation; place of origination; date of generation etc.). Researchers want to see what has been done elsewhere so that they can incorporate existing knowledge, into their own research and thereby build on knowledge and join the international debate (Zimbabwe researchers), as well as not 'reinvent the wheel' (UK engineers).

All users want information that reflects local realities and is practically useful.

Information that reflects local realities

People from all continents want information that describes their local environment, e.g. the state of the rural road infrastructure in Colombia; access to local markets for women in Tanzania; availability of manufacturing capacity in Zimbabwe to construct IMTs etc. For example, the Colombian case study written for the Literature Search concluded that 'at the national level there is lack of reliable information about the conditions and needs of rural transport infrastructure. Policy decisions are therefore taken on 'best estimates'. Engineers in Peru complained that, even where primary census data exists, no statistical projections based on this data exist.

Users also want information that 'reflects their reality' (Zimbabwe workshop). This could include research that tackles problems that have been identified by the transport community on the ground (vs. by researchers in the funding agency's country); that uses analytical tools familiar to people who are experiencing the problems; that uses local consultants – either on their own or in conjunction with 'northern' consultants; and that acknowledges and integrates previous research work carried out in the south.

Recent research conducted by FAO (Information for Sustainable Livelihoods)²⁷ confirmed that people do not find information useful that has not been localised (a process which they call 'acculturation'), in both the way that it has been re-purposed and packaged, and the content developed to be relevant to their local circumstances. Technical practitioners, researchers, and some policymakers at the workshops – particularly in Peru and Zimbabwe – also said that they were reluctant to apply information and analysis conducted in one country outside of their region, to their own circumstances. The Peruvians said that there was too much information produced about Africa and not enough about Latin America. The Colombian case study also confirmed that professionals working in the Ministry were unable to secure data about their own country, and were unable to use statistics from outside

An evaluation of IFRTD's newsletter, Forum News, carried out in 2000/2001 shows that the most useful issues were the one on Sustainable Rural Livelihoods and on Gender and Transport. This

could be because Forum News readers use the newsletter mainly for getting fresh ideas, understanding particular issues or as a source of information for research.

Information that is practically useful

Different people want to 'dip into' these subjects with different nets. Examples of specific information needs which came up during the study included: transport systems meeting the needs of children in South East Asia vs. sub-Saharan Africa; animal traction figures in central America now vs. ten years ago; inclusion of transport in PRSPs; transport improvement processes in specific areas; and detailed rural infrastructure statistics.

Institutions providing technical information report that the highest expressed demand is for practical information "*that enables people to go away and do something as a result*". Overseas Road Notes, written for practising engineers, and students who are training to become engineers, accounted for half all demand for information products from the Transport Research Laboratory between April 1995 and March 1998. (but this could be because TRL has established itself as a centre of technical excellence for roads over many years, and people therefore do not request any other kinds of information from them.)

As well as looking for information on different subjects, users also often want to find different 'takes' on the same subject (e.g. educational impact of children being employed in road construction; participative processes used to engage children's views on transport options; appropriate transport designs for children etc.) At the three workshops, participants gave examples of looking for information on processes that can be employed to influence the World Bank; of evaluations of performance and impact that can inform future work; of guidelines for project implementation; and technical procedures.

Current Frustrations

Workshop participants expressed frustration over content that is:

- § Not gender disaggregated
- § Lacks local content
- § Contains the wrong level of detail for their purpose
- § Is out of date
- § Is filtered at source rather than allowing them to decide whether it is useful or not
- § The absolute lack of information on water transport, traffic, and micro-level costs.

How it's used

The electronic surveys to gather information about how stakeholders use information on transport and rural infrastructure have not yet been implemented, so it is not possible to say much about how information is used at this stage. However, we do know that the way they plan to use the information has some bearing on the content and scope of the information that they are looking for. The literature provides some insights.

David Webber's Seven Meanings of Use²⁸ describes seven different ways that policy makers use social science information. These are:

1. **Knowledge-driven:** application of basic research; this model assumes that basic research provides an opportunity for policy-relevant research which can then be applied.
2. **Problem-solving:** communication of research on an 'agreed-upon-problem' to the policy-maker; this model implies that there is consensus between the researchers and the policy makers on the solution or end-state.
3. **Enlightenment:** education of the policy maker; that with time the accumulation of research will influence policy by educating the policy maker.
4. **Political:** rationalization for previously arrived at decision; used by policy makers to bolster support or provide ammunition for opposition.
5. **Tactical:** requesting additional information to delay action; often used by government agencies or other organizations as a response to a problem or issue.
6. **Interactive:** competing information sources; this implies that policy makers are actively searching for policy relevant information that is not based on social science research; this type of use is considered to be more realistic of how policy makers use information in the policy process.
7. **Intellectual enterprise:** policy research is just one type of many intellectual pursuits.

The literature on marketing provides three important insights. The first is that people buy products to solve immediate problems.²⁹ Policymakers will be more likely to take note of and remember pieces of evidence if they are convinced that the evidence is actually addressing a specific problem. Secondly, people's reaction to new products or ideas is often determined by explicit or hidden images and associations on, or evoked by the packaging rather than the product or idea itself.³⁰ This highlights the need to know your audience, in order to find the right packaging so that the idea can be taken note of and remembered. Thirdly, if people can be encouraged to think about a product or idea, they are far more likely to remember and buy it. Kotler *et al*³¹ have identified several mechanisms to encourage this including rational arguments (putting forward a cost/benefit analysis), emotional factors (stirring up positive or negative emotions), and moral dimensions (appealing to a sense of right and wrong). Advertisers have developed skill in drawing on these three types of appeals while tapping on the motivations that drive human consumption: functional, pleasure, self-identity, image, admiration, and altruism. If these are invoked in the right way the target audience will respond, and following on from a response they may start identifying with and using the new product/idea.

The Rockefeller Foundation's work on Communication for Social Change (CFSC) examines how communication processes might be used at a community level to bring about social change.³² Communication in this respect is defined as the act of people coming together to decide who they are, what they want, and how they will obtain what they want. The rationale behind CFSC is that social change will be more sustainable if the affected community owns not just the physical inputs and outputs, but also owns the process and content of the communication involved. The paper argues that if any external agents wish to contribute to the process of communication and social change, they should shift their approach away from persuasion and one-way transmission of information, and instead engage in dialogue and discussion with members of the community.

The FAO/DFID/ODI Study: Livelihoods Approaches to Information and Communication in support of Rural Poverty Elimination and Food Security²⁷ found that the most effective mechanisms to deliver information to poor rural households were through systems which integrated new internet-based information systems with existing mass media systems including rural radio and newspapers.

5. Information availability and usefulness

How users access information

In order to answer the question 'what is the most appropriate way of targeting information to meet people's needs', it is important to understand something about how different users currently access information, and how they *would like* to access information. Although not yet complete, the study indicates that the way users access information seems to depend on:

- § existing knowledge about the sources of information
- § existing levels of information technology i.e. availability of state of the art computers, internet connections etc
- § the filters that they consider important
- § the type of information they require (which we have seen depends largely on what they are engaged in, and how they are going to use it)

This varies significantly between geographical regions and language groups, and between different users (e.g. technical practitioners, researchers, policy makers)

Workshop participants in the UK, Zimbabwe and Peru all expressed the desire to have an **overview** of different information products, and their organisational source and place of storage (to look at the products, if they cannot have/afford copies of their own), so that they can choose products that meet their information needs *at that moment in time*.

Different stakeholder groups cite different reasons for not being able to source materials themselves, ranging from NGOs not working in the transport field not knowing which institutions are knowledge generators and knowledge providers; policymakers not having the time to go from place to place looking for the right kinds of materials; and academics not having the communications infrastructure (e.g. internet access with reliable connections) to find out who holds what information

Personal contacts, and participation in workshops and meetings, where people could engage with and influence the production of different information products, rated very highly as a way of accessing

information among all participants. Printed documents were also considered highly desirable, particularly where information technology equipment was not easily available.

Filtering

People use a range of criteria to filter and quality control information. Participants in the workshops obtained information from a very range of sources from personal to the anonymous sources such as websites accessed through general search engine, and described the criteria the use to select and filter information so that it becomes useful for their purpose. These included:

- § *Awareness of the source* (you cannot go to a place for information if you aren't aware that it exists). Workshop participants in the UK said that they prioritised sources that were recommended by colleagues that they trusted, over sources that came to them 'anonymously'.
- § *Credibility* (does the organisation have a reputation or employ renowned individual specialists in that area? Workshop participants in the UK said that they check a recommended source of information with a trusted source – e.g. respected colleague - before using it).
- § *Reliability* (i.e. is the information accurate and real, and is the analysis sound, rigorous and objective? Interviews with university researchers in Zimbabwe showed that if the bias of the source organisation or author is known, then this can be 'stripped' from the information to make it useful.)
- § *Reputation* (satisfaction levels from previous use): has this source been used before and did the information provided meet expressed needs?
- § *Trust* (particularly with an individual, is the information being recommended, or the advice being issued, likely to satisfy and not mislead the user?),
- § *Timeliness* in two senses of the word, both is the information up-to-date enough to suit the user's purposes? Participants at the UK workshop pointed out that data doesn't have to be current to be useful, but it does have to be explicit about when the data was collected/analysis conducted; response rates need to be swift e.g. to an enquiry, for the user to bother asking the question of that institution or individual. For example, the World Bank was regarded as a useful source of information but took so long to answer requests for further information or supplementary information, that users didn't bother asking them.
- § *Cost* (actual money handed over as well as the time taken by the person to locate, download, travel to find etc. the information). The costs that a user is willing to pay for information varies according to ability to pay (e.g. policymakers are considered 'rich' but workshop participants in Zimbabwe pointed out that their Ministry budget for information is often very small and quickly spent), and 'free' information is sometimes thought to have less 'value' than information that carries a price (UK consultant).
- § *Interactivity of source*: i.e. what potential is there for the user to interact with the author or originating organisation (either by feedback mechanism on a website, or name and institutional contacts on a document that can be written to for further information). There were a large number of World Bank products/channels of communications that the participants felt they could not influence, particularly the grey literature and the internal restricted documents, the newsletters (email and printed), the press releases, the videos and the websites, and, to a lesser extent, the published reports and the seminars/workshops. They felt that the only ways in which World Bank communications/information products could be influenced was through individual contacts, networks of advisors, and email forums/discussion lists. On the other had, the ranking indicated that the potential to influence DFID's information products/channels of communication seemed to be greater. Email forums/discussion lists and the printed newsletter had a high potential to be influenced. Participants felt also that they could influence the networks of advisors, DFID seminars and workshops, the press releases and CD ROMs, the websites and individual contacts.
- § *Identifiable*: users are nervous about anonymous information because they cannot use the filters normally used, e.g. is the author credible, what bias will probably be in the analysis because of the organisational politics etc.
- § *Language*, both vernacular and level of jargon/technical detail/prior knowledge assumed by the document. Users in both Zimbabwe and the UK said that they wanted to know *for whom* the document/information product has been generated because this gives them insight into its usefulness before time and money is spent getting hold of the information.

Language

Choices of access are also influenced by the language of the content. Spanish speakers in Peru pointed out that ITDG's website was only in English, they wouldn't bother to look there for information. The quality of language is also important (i.e. whether it is technical, jargony or too simple etc.) also influences choice to where to look. Study participants recognised and welcomed the fact that some organisations translate documents, but pointed out that although the World Bank claims to make information available in French Spanish and English, the amount of information in the first two languages is very limited compared to the range in English. Where rural transport is a new development area (e.g. Latin America) there is no local literature and little information from elsewhere is translated into Spanish.

Stakeholder/geographical variations

The workshops also shed some light on the ways that different groups access information within a region, and between regions. For example, **technical practitioners** – engineers, technical advisors etc. – in Peru found the World Bank website and email discussions most accessible and useful, and CD-ROMs better than Internet because you can share it with others at home and they are easier to carry. In contrast, this group in sub-Saharan Africa rated CD-ROMs of low usefulness and only medium accessibility because they do not have the equipment to read the technology. They used newsletters as a valuable source of reference to locate other information, and ranked workshops and seminars very highly because they gave access to other individuals (both from peer groups across the world, and the likely funders of future work). In the UK, the consultants who worked as both practitioners and advisors in their consultancy role, also found the networks and meetings to which they belonged or were invited to be the most useful form of communication. In common with their colleagues from other regions, they valued the information derived from personal contact with WB and DFID staff but complained that this source was not particularly accessible.

The workshops showed that **government institutions/policy makers** in Zimbabwe found nothing that the World Bank produced very accessible, and cited Country Reports, grey literature and training manuals as highly useful but inaccessible. Peruvian policy makers, on the other hand, found websites and email discussions to be both extremely accessible and useful, but complained that books were inaccessible because they were in English.

Researchers in Peru found many materials to be highly useful but particularly the DFID newsletter, World Bank reports, working papers and discussion papers although the last four products they found to be very difficult to get hold of (language?). Researchers gathered in Zimbabwe however cited databases as the most useful and accessible source of information.

All groups liked to read documents on paper in preference to reading on the screen, and the costs involved in printing out grey literature (if they are downloaded or shared through CD-Rom) becomes an issue for some groups with scarce resources: this includes government policy makers and planners especially at the end of financial year-ends (Zimbabwe).

Community groups and poor households were not represented at the workshops, but studies show³³ that social networks that already exist in the community are the main source of information for the poor, along with information brokers that put in place mechanisms to deliver information and communicate with marginalized groups e.g. NGOs working with farmers.

6. The influence of providers and brokers

International information providers (e.g. World Bank, DFID) are increasingly concentrating on the internet as a means of making information increasingly available (e.g. websites, full text documents available as download PDF files; searchable databases for past research funded by DFID through Transport Links; World Bank virtual Helpdesk, WIN Technical Enquiry Service etc.) but as the following table shows, internet access is very uneven across the continents.

Table 1: Internet Provision and Users

	Internet			Estimated PCs		
	Hosts Total 2001	Hosts per 10,000 inhabitants	Users (k)	Users per 10,000 inhabitants	Total (k)	Per 100 inhabitants
AFRICA	274,742	3.45	6,781.20	85.09	7,605	1.06
Americas (excl USA)	6,302,776	113.74	40119.3	724.01	41,905	7.56
USA	106,193,339	3728.74	142823	5014.91	178,000	62.5
Asia	10,554,632	29.23	156897.8	434.12	117,933	3.33
Europe	15,324,765	191.43	147269	1840.02	143,611	18.23
Oceania	2,731,944	876.38	8467	2720.49	11,945	39.39
WORLD	141,382,198	232.59	502357.6	826.1	500,977	8.51

Source ITU Dec 2002

Where users live in countries with good communications infrastructure and the equipment and resources to maintain it. (e.g. in Latin America, Asia) this information is accessible. Where they do not, users are hugely disadvantaged. In all the workshops there was the perception that this concentration on the Internet disadvantages those who still need to rely on 'traditional' communications media such as books, paper documents etc., both because the information budgets prioritise electronic communication and do not invest in the traditional modes, and because the Internet doesn't require the information provider to 'bespoke' information so that it is suitable for different users.

Information providers tend to create their own places to locate information rather than build on what already exists (e.g. CSIR), possibly because of issues of control, or because the existing sites aren't well known/don't operate effectively. But this produces duplication and confusion on the part of users (too many storage sites each one without a distinct and complementary 'niche') and is not sustainable both because there aren't enough funds for all of them, nor enough users to justify the services). In the commercial world 'takeovers' and 'mergers' happen where a new operator moves in and keeps what is good about the old company, strengthens what is weak, adds shiny bells and whistles that have been shown to work (make a profit) elsewhere, and launches a re-branded product. This could be mimicked for information centres.

Information brokers exist and are accessed by users, who could be 'stereotyping' them as suppliers of particular types of e.g. TRL for technical information, ILO ASIST for information on labour based methods IFRTD for information on people working on transport in the south. (This could partly explain why even though participants in the workshops were all aware of all these sources, they were not cited as such)

The 'stereotyping' is exacerbated by biases in what organisations think different stakeholders want, so they don't bother to let them know 'what else is on offer'. Internet provides some brokerage and creates awareness and demand for non-electronic information (e.g. paper documents) It helps users know what is out there. But for the non-internet world they are still victims of what others think they want. Brokers also tend to promote certain kinds of information over others. e.g. the IFRTD website discusses issues and documentation related to those issues rather than a general overview of transport information. Information that is brokered tends to originate in the 'international community' rather than be located in the local discourse.

There is some brokering of information at a national level though networks and communities of practice, particularly in countries like India and Indonesia, and through networking events organised by the Animal Traction Network of Eastern and Southern Africa or IFRTD. However, the extent to which this happens was not captured by the work carried out in this study.

Cost has been an issue for some organisations where charges are made for information. There are also hidden costs in accessing internet information (or even hard copy information in different locations). For accessing internet based information these are associated with costs of internet surfing or downloading times, printing costs and time costs due to difficult connections. Locating hard

copy may also require transport and other costs to access libraries and resource centres, and costs of photocopying relevant material.

Engineers and trainers in particular (Zimbabwe and UK) build up contacts and their own 'yellow pages' of information suppliers –i.e. where to go to find what information across the spectrum of knowledge to do their jobs. Individuals indicated that they use trusted contacts who are specialists in their subject as a point of entry when looking for new information (e.g. UK consultants from both NGO and engineering groups phoning people they know, or emailing known colleagues; information networks in Harare asking members for other references etc). Making information available to one group therefore will also 'open the gates' into other communities.

Making information 'usable' and useful

The way in which information is generated and presented, and its content influences how usable or useful it is for the particular purpose of the user (e.g. do they want to raise Awareness of an issue; increase Knowledge; change Attitudes, or influence Behaviour – the AKAB model)

If users are not involved in the analysis of their own environment, they will tend not to have ownership of the analysis or recommendations. This has important implications for the way that knowledge is generated. Many participants in the workshops felt that there was little information about their own contexts. The Latin Americans in particular, found that the body of transport knowledge had a very strong African bias, was focused on roads and on urban issues rather than rural Language both vernacular (and the way that words are used to describe reality or an analysis of it will either make it communicate with the audience or fail to convey the message. We need therefore to write information clearly. For the Latin American participants in the workshops, the dearth of materials in Spanish means that although the English-speaking professionals can access the full range of materials in the public domain, they are unable to share it with colleagues. This inhibits the initiation of a local discourse or 'mainstreaming' of transport into other sectors. The implications include lack of collaborative work across infrastructure sectors and potentially lack of uptake of mobility issues by general development community.

Users also tend to bring their own knowledge, experiences and biases to their understanding of information. This needs to be recognised, though it cannot always be anticipated.

Where information is produced for specific audiences, it isn't made clear who the intended audience is. Participants at the Peru workshop said that this raises expectations (of those who get hold of the information thinking it will inform them, but doesn't) and wastes time (accessing and then reading it without learning anything of value).

Usefulness of information is also limited by information providers generalising information so that is useful to many audiences, but this loses the specificity and practicality of the information. Participants felt that information would be more useful if it is written for a specified audience. Other information users can then use their own filters, or express demand for generating similar information in their own context. Waiting for a 'generic' information product, can limit the wider dissemination of useful information. For instance, work on Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning is taking place across three regions (Asia, Africa and Latin America) but little of the information is shared, since it is felt that work in one region may not be directly relevant to the others. But It is important not to underestimate users' ability to apply and filter information from one place and to assume that we (as information generators) can do what the users can't i.e. screen and filter.

We should do with information like IKEA do with furniture. They generate a concept and produce the basic components, then consumers build it, paint it, make it perfect for themselves.

7. Conclusions and recommendations for TRISP

In the absence of data on specific information needs and use from the e-mail questionnaire these conclusions and recommendations are rather general. It will be possible to provide more specific recommendations once the study is complete.

Increasing demand for information

Awareness of the availability of information on transport and rural services from the World Bank, DFID and others is relatively low. Increasing awareness will stimulate demand. Mechanisms for TRISP to do this could include:

- § Introducing knowledge demand assessments and information components in all transport and rural services projects.
- § Awareness campaigns through personal contacts, and information distributed through in-country offices, by visiting staff and through local media.
- § Improved linkages between professional staff who travel overseas and meet potential users of information, and the staff who edit information products (e.g. newsletters) and manage the mailings lists (e.g. databases).
- § Systems to assess how satisfied users are with information already provided (e.g. semi-structured interviews, assisted with one-page questionnaire), as well as for profiling what kinds of information they would like to receive in the future.

Increasing availability of useful information

There is a lot of information available in printed and electronic form, but much of it is not accessible or in the right format for potential users. There are also many useful initiatives seeking to improve information availability (e.g. WIN, SUSTRAN, PIARC, IFRTD and ILO-ASSIST) It may be better improve information sharing between these than new institutions. Mechanisms to do this could include:

- § To have in place interactive systems that continuously update information provider's knowledge of users' changing requirements for information. This includes not only monitoring systems that record the information being sought by users, but processes that communicate the nature of this demand to information providers, and those designing projects and commissioning research, i.e. that the data is analysed and acted upon.
- § Encouraging organisations to define their 'niche', and particularly their unique information products (which should be reflected in the research that they generate);
- § Ensuring organisations have the resources, capacity and systems to be able to respond quickly to changing information needs (content and form);
- § Improved systems and networks between organisations so they can share information, and re-package it to their specific audience's needs.
- § Ensuring that funding organisations translate their rhetoric (e.g. about knowledge being the key to poverty alleviation) into activities and support for innovative communications approaches that meet people's information needs.
- § Encouraging staff development and training within organisations involved in transport and other rural services to promote more effective internal and external communication.
- § Encouraging the translation of existing material rather than new material.

Packaging information to be appropriate to different users

TRISP could improve the packaging of information to make it more valuable to a wider audience by:

- § Building M&E and user satisfaction systems into information activities to assess how satisfied users are with the information provided and determine what kinds of information they would like to receive in the future.
- § Create the right balance between electronic and printed media. This will be region and country specific. Efficient subsidised outlets for printed material will be necessary in countries with poor internet connectivity.
- § Encouraging organisations and information providers involved in transport and rural service issues to link their work to other sectors & issues (PRSPs, Rights Based Approaches, Rural Livelihoods, Health etc, Participation, Environment) and take advantage of their information services.

Increasing impact of information

Information on transport and rural services could have more impact if:

- § More, more appropriate information is more widely available (see above).
- § Users and policy makers are involved in generating and sharing the information.
- § Information providers and brokers learn from communications and marketing specialists how to sell their information more effectively (see below)

Marketing information more strategically to priority users

Opportunities to market information more strategically include:

- § A specialised Search Engine for the Internet on transport (a suggestion from the Peru workshop).
- § Put hard copies of materials in decentralised locations near to users (i.e. the south) with clear procedures for access (Peru and Zimbabwe workshops).
- § Identify the networks that actively promote information to the desired target groups of each institution (e.g. professional engineering bodies etc.) in the ten priority countries (e.g. highest expenditure, largest on-the-ground presence that could act as enthusiasts/champions to follow-up information?) and target them as pilot. Track patterns of raised profile information products/increased uptake and evaluate after 24 months.
- § Feed information into general DFID publications to raise profile of contributions of transport to the broader aid effort, and to raise awareness of the strategic importance of increased mobility as a precursor to reaching other development goals (e.g. marketing products to generate income, increasing employment options, raising health profiles through reaching clinics etc.)
- § An 'acquisitions policy' which describes how new names will be added to mailing lists, and old ones edited out, is useful to ensure audiences are the right ones for information being produced (and vice versa).
- § Improved internal mechanisms to keep staff informed about what material is available.

Improving organisational learning and sharing systems

Mechanisms identified by the study to improve organisational learning and sharing in particular in the World Bank and DFID include:

- § Having programmes that interact with the target audience, and that actively solicit information about what information (e.g. from that programme) they would like to see as outputs, using what communications methods (e.g. policy briefs, web updates, joining communities of practice etc.) and implementing strategies that respond to the expressed information needs;
- § Advisory Groups that inform particular aspects of the organisation's work (e.g. Editorial Committees for newsletters e.g. consultative forums for designing research work; invitations to tender for doing research with clear instructions and equal access to all to apply e.g. DFID KaR now that it's untied; etc.)
- § An Acquisitions Policy that describes a system for staff 'bringing back' to the organisation names of contacts made during overseas workshops, conferences, training courses, research work that can be added to a Contacts Database which is used for mailing new information, seeking participation in research, 'testing the water' on new work, pre-testing materials etc. Incentives should be provided for bringing names back, and it should be enshrined in organisational procedures and job descriptions to build professional constituencies and service their information needs;

8. Where next

Further activities over the next few weeks to complete this Knowledge Demand Assessment will include:

- § An e-mail questionnaire to transport and rural service specialists to collect empirical information about what information they need and how they use it;
- § This paper and the literature review will be published on the website and will form the basis of an e-discussion among transport and rural service specialists.
- § Mini-workshops will be held at DFID and the World Bank where staff and invited information providers and users will discuss the key findings.

9. Notes and References

(Not yet complete)

- ¹ The World Bank, Transport Links
- ² DFID Transport Newsletter May 2001
- ³ Thin, Good & Hodgson 1997
- ⁴ IFRTD, DFID
- ⁵ IFRTD, DFID
- ⁶ TRL 2000
- ⁷ World Interchange Network, SUSTRAN, IFRTD
- ⁸ Balla 2000, Van de Walle 2000, Lebo and Schelling 2001
- ⁹ EU 2002
- ¹⁰ ILO/SDC 1997
- ¹¹ Dixon-Fyle 1998, Dingen 2000
- ¹² UN 2001
- ¹³ UN 2001
- ¹⁴ based on an internet search
- ¹⁵ WB, DFID
- ¹⁶ WB, DFID – Transport Links, Planning Rural Roads, ASIST (accessibility planning), IFRTD, EU (guidelines), SSATP (RTTP): guidelines, models, research findings, papers, etc.
- ¹⁷ WB, ASIST (Accessibility planning), SUSTRAN (sustainable transport), EU (guidelines), SSATP, ECLAC.
- ¹⁸ WB, DFID, IFRT
- ¹⁹ WB, Planning Rural Roads (financing), ESCAW (regional transport), ECLAC (financing and regional), ESCAP (regional and trade), SSATP (trade and transport)
- ²⁰ WTPP (journal), papers (environment), ITDP (sustainable transport), SUSTRAN (sustainable urban transport), ITDG (transport and poverty), ESCAP(sustainable transport), WB (poverty, sustainability, gender)
- ²¹ TRB (models roads), PIARC (roads), SSATP (rail restructuring), WB, Transport Links
- ²² ANTESA (IMT), ITDP (IMT), SSATP (IMT)
- ²³ Dissemination of Energy Knowledge: a scoping study by Clive Caffell, for ETSU, September 2000
- ²⁴ Making Knowledge Networks work for the poor, report in preparation for ITDG, 2003
- ²⁵ Interview with Future Energy Solutions, 2002
- ²⁶ ITDG Knowledge Sharing Group
- ²⁷ FAO/DFID/ODI Study: Livelihoods Approaches to Information and Communication for Rural Poverty Elimination and Food Security: <http://www.fao.org/waicent/portal/outreach/livelihoods/index-en.html>
- ²⁸ *The distribution and use of policy knowledge in the policy process*, in *Knowledge and Policy* 4 (4): pp 6-36 by Webber, David J.
- ²⁹ Lambin, J., 1996, *Strategic Marketing Management*, McGraw-Hill.
- ³⁰ Williamson, J., 1996, 'Decoding Advertisements,' in Marris, P. & Thornham, S. (eds) *Media Studies, A Reader*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- ³¹ Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Saunders, J. & Wong, V., 1999, *Principles of Marketing*, Prentice Hall Europe.
- ³² Figueroa, M.W., *et al*, 2002, 'Communication for Social Change: An Integrated Model for Measuring the Process and Its Outcomes.' *The Communication for Social Change Working Paper Series* No 1, Rockefeller Foundation, New York. (Available at www.comminit.com/stcfscindicators/sld-5997.html).
- ³³ *Knowledge and Information Systems of the poor*, ITDG KaR project, 2002, *Making Knowledge Networks work for the poor*, report in preparation for ITDG, 2003