

ROLE PLAY ON RURAL TRANSPORT PLANNING

P. Fernando, IFRTD

Objectives of the role play

The role play is designed to help understand how different stakeholders interact and how different interests can be resolved. It allows transport practitioners to take on the roles of community members who represent different interest groups, each with their own particular agenda. The role play facilitates discussion about the transport requirements and constraints of different stakeholders, and how best to counteract problems which exacerbate their vulnerability. It should yield potential problems and possible solutions.

At the end of the role play the facilitator should encourage participants to discuss:

- Conflicts of interest that may have arisen between stakeholders
- Role of the MP and District Planner in imparting information that might promote community development, specifically relating to transport improvements, for example infrastructure and services.
- Role of community members in participatory decision making
- Role of women in decision making, and in implementing transport interventions (for example labour based practices)
- Ways in which conflict can be resolved without compromising the needs of any stakeholder groups

THE SCENARIO

The district (lowest local government unit) is making its transport plan. The district planner has called a village assembly comprising all stakeholders of one village in the district. The goal of the meeting is to carry out a rural participatory appraisal of the transport demands.

The following persons participate at the meeting:

1. Chairman: District Planner
2. Honourable Guest: Member of Parliament representing the District
3. Regional Engineer (Representative from next authority above the district)
4. Extension Worker
5. Local Shop Keeper
6. Female Trader
7. Male Commercial Farmer
8. Young Rural Male
9. Old Rural Male
10. Female Single Household Farmer
11. Representative of the Women's group

DESCRIPTION OF THE REGION

The morphology of the region is fairly flat. Two rainy seasons allow the villagers to harvest twice per year. Soils have moderate fertility and allow the production of millet, maize, bananas and tubers.

About 25-30 inhabitants per sq km are living in the area. The village has 200 households with an average of 5 persons per household. There is a high male out-migration due to lack of alternative income sources and low agricultural productivity. Farmers are primarily producing for their subsistence and only a smaller share of the crops is marketed. There are practically no other sources for cash income.

The village has no public facilities. Only a small shop is selling basic products like soap and kerosene. The distance to water sources are 20 minutes walk (one way) in the rainy season and 40 minutes in the dry season. Firewood has to be transported for 80 minutes. The average walking distance to the fields is 1 hour. A primary school is located in the next village, accessed by the footpath which leads to the market town. Children have to walk 90 minutes to get to this school.

The market town can only be reached by a footpath on 3-4 hours walk. Two other villages are situated along the path. The last 2km of the trip is a road which is in a bad state of repair. The market town has the following facilities: District market, health station, church, agricultural extension services, transport services to the regional capital.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERS

1. District Planner - Samson Maganya

The district planner is chairing the meeting. His goal is to develop a district transport plan. For this purpose he called the meeting to assess the transport demands of the villagers in a rural participatory appraisal. He is not very happy about this procedure, but has to use it because it is in fashion. Anyway, he is confident he can convince the villagers.

One of his most ambitious plans is to build a road that will connect the village to the market town. He states this very openly at the beginning of the meeting by explaining the advantages of the road.

He has the information that the local minister of parliament for the area will find some funds to construct the road. He has no finances for the regular maintenance works. He would like the villagers to do this in self help. He makes this proposal to the villagers and asks for the responses.

2. Member of Parliament - Mr. Odero

The member of parliament is the elected representative for the district. The next elections will be in one year. He wants to raise his profile in the village and therefore has found the funds to construct a road to the village. His personal interest is to extend the road for another kilometre to the hamlet of his parents, where he plans to built his retirement villa. Of course he will not openly reveal his personal interests during the meeting. He is very hard to persuade to raise the funds for anything else other than the road.

3. Regional Engineer - Mr. Joseph Agevi

The regional engineer wants a road from the market to the village. The first reason is that he expects in the long run to extend the road to the neighbouring district centre (another 20km) and thus create a new regional road under his supervision. For the time being he cannot mobilise sufficient funds for the extension. However he is able to finance 20% of the planned road.

The personal interest of the regional engineer is that his brother has a construction company that is very interested in obtaining the contract to carry out the construction works. The company usually constructs by using heavy machinery with few labour inputs. The regional engineer is interested to overdesign the planned road, because it might carry more traffic in future (after the completion of the regional road extension) and also the profits of his brother will be bigger.

4. Extension Worker - David

The extension worker is living in the village and knows a lot about the demands of the people. He thinks that most of the people of his village want to get access to

- the market
- agricultural extension services
- health services
- educational facilities

He also knows that women and children spend a great deal of time collecting water and firewood.

He is in favour of a low-cost road to the market town, where these services are available but he knows that the road will be only of value to the village, if transport services are available. He will emphasise this matter at the meeting.

Because he knows that the villagers, especially the young people, need cash, he is in favour of labour intensive construction and maintenance of the road. On top of that the lower construction costs would save some money which can be used for other purposes (e.g. a credit scheme for intermediate means of transport).

He knows about the transport problems of farmers in marketing their produce. He is in favour of a credit scheme, which enables the farmers to purchase Ox-carts. He has no idea how to organise this.

He knows as well that the Member of Parliament is pushing for the road, because of his personal interest. The MP wants to extend the road for another kilometre to the hamlet of his parents, where he plans to built his retirement villa. Of course the MP will not openly talk about his personal interests during the meeting. The extension worker would like to expose the MP's hidden agenda.

5. Local Shop Keeper (male) - Kenneth

The shopkeeper is doing some subsistence agriculture and runs a small shop, which sells produce for the daily needs, like soap, toothpaste, medicine, batteries etc. He owns a bicycle, but does not use it to transport his products from the market town, because a bridge is missing on the footpath. An upgrading of the footpath would enable him to save a lot of time for his travels.

However, he is in favour of a road to the market town, which would reduce the time and costs for his transports. He would like that the road is built by using labour intensive methods, which he observed in another village. He believes that an increased income of the villagers, stemming from their employment during the construction would generate a higher demand for his produce sold. If a good road stimulated the villagers to buy bicycles then maybe he could start a repair shop as a sideline.

He knows that the regional engineer has personal interest in a capital intensive construction of the road. The brother of the Engineer has a construction company, which is very interested to conduct the construction works. The company usually constructs by using heavy machinery with few inputs of manpower.

6. Female trader - Josephine

This dynamic women makes a living from buying agricultural produce from the farmers and selling them at the market town. She carries 20kg per walking trip, which is 3-4 hours long. She is in favour of a road to the market. She hopes that the road will generate transport services on market days and that she can transport the produce by Pick-up to the market. This way she will be able to sell more products per trip and hopes to increase her income. On the other hand, she is afraid that other traders might come into the village and make her redundant.

If she had any mode of wheeled transport, she would be in favour of improving the footpath and building the bridge. She knows she will never be able to afford to buy a motor vehicle or to run one. What she would really like to purchase is an all-purpose cart, which she could use as well to fetch water and firewood. She thinks she will require a donkey cart because she has not the financial means to purchase a bicycle with trailer and the paths to market, water supply and firewood are unsuitable for that type of transport. She is also concerned that the neighbours would look at her curiously when they see her riding the bike. Maybe they would not anymore sell their products to her. Another option would be an oxcart, but men do not like women working with oxen.

7. Male commercial farmer - Mr Mutharia

This dynamic farmer is producing annually 2 tons of crops. Half of these crops are consumed by his family and half of them are sold in the district market. Transport of crops from the field and to the market is a severe constraint:

- From the field: $2 \text{ ton} \times 4 \text{ km} = 8 \text{ tkm} \Rightarrow 100 \text{ trips with } 20\text{kg headload}$
- To the market: $1 \text{ ton} \times 12 \text{ km} = 12 \text{ tkm} \Rightarrow 50 \text{ trips with } 20\text{kg headload}$

This calculation makes it obvious that the farmer is not able to expand his production without improved transport. A road to the market would reduce the transport burden but not solve his problems. He would be reluctant to sell his produce to traders, who pay him much less than he receives on the district market.

He would like to purchase an oxcart, which enables him to produce and market much more. Unfortunately the oxcart costs him 5 times his annual marketing revenues. He could easily repay a debt by the increased income, but he has no access to credit because he has no collateral. He has heard of a new community based credit scheme and would like to check out its availability from the extension officer.

8. Young rural male - Lui

This man is 18 years old, finished his primary school and does not know, what to do. He does not own any land and he is reluctant to work on the fields of his parents, where he receives no money. He is desperately in need of cash because he intends to marry in two years. He would warmly welcome a labour based road project, which gives him at least some temporary employment and income. May be later on he can join the company...

He would also like to have a beautiful bicycle to show off in front of his mates and his fiancée. A credit scheme for intermediate means of transport (IMT) would be very welcome, even if he does not know how to repay the debt.

9. Old rural male - Jeremiah

This man has been living in the village for 60 years and lives on subsistence farming and occasional transfers from his children in the town. He still remembers the colonialists and their fantastic engineers. They built a road in the neighbouring district, which is still used today. He thinks that low cost roads are not durable and thus a waste of effort. Anyhow he would like to have no road at all, because

- all the young men are leaving the village,
- the girls are getting spoilt by invading strangers and
- diseases are spreading.

10. Female Household Head Farmer - Evelyn

This woman manages to feed herself and her three children by subsistence farming. Since her husband has died, she has to manage the household tasks by herself. She carries enormous amounts of water and firewood, which leaves her little time to work on the fields. She produces almost no surplus that can be sold. Any improvement of her transport tasks would give her more time for income generating activities or household chores. She does not think she will ever be able to afford a handcart, an animal cart or a bicycle.

She wishes to improve the life of her children by sending them to school, by providing them with the proper immunisation and transporting them to hospital if they are sick. However, even if there would be a road to the district town, she would not have the means to pay for the transport service.

She doesn't see how she can contribute to a discussion on the road. If the government has money she would prefer it if they provided a regular maternal and child care clinic in the village and that they drilled a bore hole closer to her home so she would not have to waste so much time fetching water.

11. Representative of the Women's group - Harriet

The women's group in the village was started about twenty years ago when Harriet was a teenager. Now Harriet is the President. Being part of the group gave Harriet many opportunities to travel and to learn new things. But now that she has three children she cannot leave the home. Harriet's husband is working in the city. He sends money home but not regularly. He used to come home more often in the past and attend to the agricultural work. Now Harriet has taken over the farming. She ploughs with oxen. The men in her family do not approve but she doesn't care. Harriet also started a "merry-go-round" savings and credit scheme in her women's group. It is very popular. Women used the money to buy kitchen utensils and to repair their houses. At a recent gathering of women's group representatives Harriet learned that another women's group had used their "merry-go-round" scheme to purchase donkeys. This had helped them reduce their transport burden and given them a lot more time to engage in making handicrafts for sale. The scheme was given a 50% subsidy by a non-governmental organisation working with the women's group.

Harriet thinks that some money should be allocated to her women's group to subsidise their savings scheme so they too can buy donkeys. Many of the women in the village are like Evelyn and herself, either widows or de facto female heads of households, existing at subsistence level. The amount of time they spend on household tasks stops them from doing anything to earn extra income. She will do her best to argue on behalf of the women at this meeting.