



Activity Sheet 54

A market approach from Malawi

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to reflect on the experiences of the project from Malawi, and to consider how the transport issues may be addressed so as to meet the marketing needs of rural farmers.

Three key issues areas are explored: -

- ③ Transport infrastructure
- ③ Means of transport
- ③ Access to information

Group Work

1. Read the extract from the case study (attached). Your group needs to work on ONLY one of the key issue areas listed above (allocated by your trainer).
2. Discuss the following question:

What recommendations would you make to address transport issues to meet marketing needs for agriculture?

3. Prepare your findings on flip chart and to elect a person to present the group's findings.



1

Transport Infrastructure and Agricultural Marketing

Surveys in four districts (Chitipa, Nsanje, Mangochi and Rumphu) revealed that poor roads, lack of means of transportation, lack of market information, and inadequate markets (i.e. lack of infrastructure and distance) are the main constraints to market access in remote areas.

The road network in Malawi is classified into the main, secondary, tertiary, district and other unclassified roads. Over 90% of the total road network consists of seasonal (earth) roads that become impassable during the rainy season. Most of the seasonal roads connect urban to rural areas and during the rainy season access to rural areas is drastically affected.

Major factors contributing to poor road network include lack of maintenance funds as a result of the change in government policy towards road maintenance, poor road and bridge design coupled with excessive truck overloading exceeding design limits; and the reduction of community self-help spirit which used to be important for the rehabilitation and maintenance of village access roads.

Extract from: Community access to marketing opportunities: Malawi case study. By U. Kleih, Natural Resources Institute (1999)



2

Means of Transport and Agricultural Marketing Motorised Transport

During the course of the survey, lack of means of transportation was also identified as a key constraint to agricultural marketing in all districts. The availability of transport provides the poor with better physical access to markets and other social amenities such as education and health services. There is ample evidence that the availability of transport enhances agricultural productivity by addressing the spatial dislocation and any distributionally unacceptable consequences associated with lack of adequate means of transport particularly for the rural poor (World Bank, 1999).

In most rural areas of Malawi, the most common means of transport is walking and headloading. Many people (i.e. mostly women, by virtue of their dual responsibility for social reproduction and economic production), can carry on average up to 30 kg which is equivalent to 50–60 % of the average weight of a woman.

Motorised transport:

Motorised transport needs a minimum of rural road infrastructure, yet the standard of roads in remote rural areas is often unsatisfactory. It is widely acknowledged that trunk roads have an important role to play in opening up an agricultural region. However, the exact requirements for motorable feeder and community access roads are less well known.

Despite the rapid growth of some vehicle fleets in the recent past, the number of goods vehicles is insufficient to satisfy the transport demands of agricultural producers, especially in a country where a large proportion of the population lives in rural areas. Many factors were cited to contribute to this including the unavailability of trucks due to lack of credit facilities to purchase these vehicles. Furthermore, importation of trucks is discouraged by the relatively high duties (on average between 20 – 30%). Apart from the poor road conditions, which considerably increase operational costs to truck owners, the other problems include lack of a clear policy and government attention to rural transport problems, the insufficient development of appropriate technologies and the uncoordinated institutional framework regarding rural transport in Malawi.

Extract from: Community access to marketing opportunities: Malawi case study. By U. Kleih, Natural Resources Institute (1999)

3

Means of Transport and Agricultural Marketing Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs)

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Intermediate Means of Transportation (IMTs):

Given the limited quantities which can be transported, the speed involved and the maximum distances to be covered, head-loading is one of the most expensive means of transportation. At the other end of the spectrum, motorised transport (e.g. trucks, tractor-trailers) is often not profitable in isolated villages. As a consequence, it has been argued that Intermediate Means of Transportation (IMT) have an important role to play in this context. For example, Sieber (1997) argues that the shift from headload to donkey cart can reduce the transport costs by 60%, and the shift to an ox-cart by nearly 90%.

The best cost efficiency for transporting agricultural produce is achieved when a combination of animal traction is used with truck transport (Sieber, 1997). Ox carts can transport loads on poor roads to collection points, where trucks carry bigger, aggregated loads to the marketing centres.

The main constraint to access to IMT for resource poor households is the initial capital expenditure. Appropriate credit schemes are necessary for households to be able to pay for donkeys/carts etc. Evidence from Kenya showed that farmers were able to pay off their loans for ox carts after only one harvesting period (IT Transport, 1996). Potential manufacturers of IMTs require training and credit for setting-up a business. (e.g service delivery, parts and repair workshops, etc.)

Extract from: Community access to marketing opportunities: Malawi case study. By U. Kleih, Natural Resources Institute (1999)



4

Access to Information and Agricultural Marketing

Lack of information is another characteristic of remote areas. This is often influenced by poor roads and low traffic volumes, in particular, in areas where there is no telephone or other communication infrastructure. The central Market Information Service has had limited impact.

Extract from: Community access to marketing opportunities: Malawi case study. By U. Kleih, Natural Resources Institute (1999)