

**Stimulating the use of the bicycle to alleviate poverty and to spur
growth in Kenya**
“If there is space for cars there is space for bicycles”



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ABSTRACT

In Kenya, cyclists have increased in the past five years and have contributed to economic growth and poverty reduction. Bicycle taxis, commonly referred to as *boda boda* are among the least supported enterprises in Kenya although they make a contribution as a key mode of transport in urban and rural areas as well as a source of livelihood for many Kenyans in towns. With increasing and growing urban population, majority of whom constitute marketers and traders navigating from one part of the city to the other, the government has to consider non motorized transport (NMT) infrastructure as an integral part of poverty reduction strategies. Given that preference has traditionally favoured motorized modes, the argument is that *if there is space for cars there is space for bicycles*. This statement suggests that within existing urban plans, Engineers and Town Planners must endeavour to include facilities for the bicycle and other NMT users, including pedestrians. Although there is renewed interest to support this mode, the challenge remains budgetary allocation for proposed bicycle facilities and institutional mainstreaming such that cyclists receive the kind of support accorded to motorists. This paper reviews and analyses transport policies in Kenya and the extent to which NMTs have been catered for. It brings out the Kenyan experience with a stakeholder empowerment process in promoting transport services for the poor. The paper highlights the efforts made towards provision of NMTs bringing out some of the institutional issues, by citing experiences from selected towns where integration of NMTs is taking place. Lessons learnt, and the policy and planning requirements that will facilitate effective integration of NMTs are summarized.

SECTION 1: THEORETICAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

A successful transport system as envisioned by numerous studies is capable of increasing commercial and labour-market efficiency, expanding access to amenities, and facilitating changes in the scale and form of urban agglomerations without unduly causing adverse environmental effects (KIPPRA 2004). With regard to transport services, many urban poor walk to their destinations and in Sub Saharan Africa, it is estimated that over 50 percent of all trips are by walking. This can be partly attributed to the failure of public transport and the associated high fares (Daily nation April 14 2003). The physical distance to market centres is a function of the state of existing road infrastructure and existence of means of transport. In Kenya, following the safety regulations imposed by Government over two years ago, many more people are turning to transport services provided by bicycles and other intermediate modes of transport. In response to this reality, the government of Kenya aims to provide increased mobility and improved accessibility to safe and secure road transport services as part of its efforts towards wealth creation. Secondly, a more long term objective, is the promotion of environmental protection and resource conservation including reduction of vehicle congestion in towns and pollution caused by exhaust fumes.

Non-motorized transport (NMT) plays a dominant role as an affordable, but sometimes unpleasant and dangerous, main mode of transport, especially in medium size towns. Unfortunately, although the mode contributes significantly towards a safe, efficient, cost-effective sustainable urban transport, it is frequently associated with poverty, low-technology and not innovative. It is regarded as something that countries aim to develop out of! It is beginning to play an increasing role, albeit usually as a convenient and non-polluting local distribution mode in multi-modal systems. A strategy has to be developed on both economic and environmental grounds to deal with increasing congestion in the big towns such as Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. Progress will however be undermined unless there is focus on institutional capacity building and public awareness on road safety and implementation of necessary pedestrian and cycling infrastructure which must be central to mobility policies and planning.

1.1 TRANSPORT AND POVERTY

Analysis of the poverty reduction strategies in Kenya and in Sub-Saharan Africa reveals a very huge gap between road infrastructure development and poverty reduction. Issues of mobility and accessibility have for a long time been ignored and yet, walking and cycling have common interests in claiming a treatment as fully-fledged modes of transport and therefore ask for good planning and facilities. The Government of Kenya recognizes the transport sector as a facilitator of rapid economic growth and reconstruction, poverty eradication and wealth creation for the country. In the “**Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-2007**”, the transport sector has been identified as a third pillar of the economic recovery effort. It aims at achieving a planned average annual GDP growth rate of 4.7% per annum between 2003-2007, during which the transport sector is expected to

grow at an annual rate of 6.26 %. Subsequently, it is expected that the GDP will grow at a sustained rate of 6.0% per annum. Further, the sector is expected to remain a key component in tackling such challenges as reduction of poverty by half by the year 2015 and overall improvement in the general welfare of the population.

Conceptually, the statistics would be realized in a situation where urban growth was systematically regulated. The growth in size and function of Kenya's urban centres accompanied with ever-increasing proportion of urbanized population continue to place a heavy burden on social and economic service delivery (KIPPRA 2004). In the big cities, the results of these growth is congestion, pollution, poor safety and security and run down and inadequate infrastructure, particularly in the informal settlements where planning is very weak. Where cycling facilities have been made available in parts of Nairobi City and other towns such as Eldoret, the local authorities have not been able to maintain the facilities which are under-utilised and in some cases abandoned altogether. At the national planning levels the rhetoric is that the new road improvements have taken care of the NMT users. In reality, there exists an incoherence of the road designs, showing a lack of integration of the various modes, which should be developed through a consultative process with users. It is also critical to involve all other sectors in planning for transport services. For instance, the access to markets and services such as health centres, education institutions and trading centres is a critical consideration. Standards of the local innovations and other social aspects of the NMTs will enhance the desired transport systems that give efficient services towards poverty reduction.

A key paradigm shift is to move away from a supply to a demand side orientation, as illustrated by the recently concluded study process on the Master Plan for Urban Transport in the Nairobi Metropolitan Area, completed in August 2005. This study ignited a consultative process that was fairly inclusive of those users of the transport services including the non motorized modes. The study found out that there is no explicit government policy for the non-motorized transport system. Most of the roads in the metropolitan lack sidewalks and where they exist, a lot of the space has been taken up by small businesses. Cycling paths and man-drawn handcarts are not separated from the motorized transport. From a wealth creation perspective, provision of convenience of pedestrians should greatly increase their psychological comfort that would in turn contribute indirectly to raising economic productivity in general (JICA 2005).

Within the framework established through the study mentioned above, the civil society will continue pressurizing government to conduct further studies on the benefits of cycling. There is perhaps a lack of internalisation of the importance of an integrated transport policy for the city and for the nation at large. By paying more attention to users, it is hoped that a broader menu of policies that respond to the needs of the majority and in this case the poor can be formulated. A common feature of the kind of planning required is represented by the phenomena where street trading and other small business

are harmonized in the designs since they compete for the limited road spaces. 49 percent, a significant section of Nairobi residents, use NMT (KIPPRA 2004 pg 11). There is need to understand the link between transport and poverty and thereafter develop instruments that will stimulate deeper links in support of non motorized infrastructure. Support to this level of services will stimulate economic growth, which in Kenya is dominated by the informal sector who ordinarily walk or use bicycles.

SECTION 2: EFFORTS TOWARDS PROVISION OF NMT FACILITIES

It has been demonstrated in other countries that productivity can increase with improvements in NMT modes, used predominantly by the poor. In Kenya, these improvements began with the implementation of NMT facilities in Nairobi and Eldoret between 1995-1999. These pilots were meant to be practical tests of NMT measures and policies, institutional development and capacity building in local authorities as well as training for professional staff (Scott Wilson 2002). Typical NMT improvements include improvement of road shoulders to facilitate pedestrians, segregated cycling ways, traffic calming measures to enhance road safety. Household surveys carried out in Nairobi indicate that 48 percent of residents walk to work, over 40 percent use various means of public transport and about 7 percent use private cars. The remaining 5 percent, use railway services and bicycles. (KIPPRA 2004 p.12). Sessions organized by ITDG for cyclists highlighted lack of infrastructure as the main deterrent to using the bicycle in Nairobi. For the medium size towns such as Kisumu and Kitale, the preference for cycling increases as the phenomenon of boda bodas grows. Safety is one of the main obstacles due to the non-provision of separated lanes and designated parking facilities.

2.1: ENHANCING NMT TRANSPORT SERVICES

The draft integrated transport policy explicitly recognizes NMTs as a legitimate part of the wider transport sector and also with need for inadequate attention. The role of the NMTs is particularly explained within the urban and rural transport domains. In the urban sector, the policy advances the argument that they are potentially helpful in contributing to the public transit, reduction of poverty and reduction of pollution. As far as infrastructure is concerned, the policy document explicitly mentions the need for non-motorized transport infrastructure instead of subsuming it into the generality of road infrastructure. This is a departure from the past problem that interpreted transport infrastructure to mean roads infrastructure. Experience has shown that beyond policy pronouncement, success of integrated transport management schemes depends to a large extent on the political and administrative structure. Kenya in the last five years has been pursuing decentralization of both planning functions and administrative responsibilities. The decentralization reforms brought in the Local Area Transfer Fund (LATF) - set up by an Act of Parliament in 1998 to provide the means for funding community initiatives to improve local services. Funds have been dispersed to the local authorities each year since 2000. The objectives embraced by all local governments included improving local service delivery, enhancing economic governance and alleviating poverty. It is

expected that the LATF will be used to address planning and implementation of the NMT interventions along side other interventions. Unfortunately, to date, the number of local authorities that prioritise this as a channel for poverty reduction is minimal. For those areas where the NMT plans have been implemented, utilization has remained low due to the limited consultation of the users by the authorities. This is largely attributed to a lack of corporate knowledge on the mobility needs at the level of local authorities. Departmental fragmentation and the absence of a common strategic urban plan exacerbate the mobility problems. At the policy decision- making levels, elected councillors tend to look at development in terms of the benefit to their individual wards and not necessarily from the perspective of strategic development of the whole town. With opportunities such as the LATF, it is important to re-orient local authorities to address mobility planning that put road users at the centre of planning process. The sustainability of any improvements will depend on the local authorities and users occupying the centre of the implementation framework.

SECTION 3: ITDG's EXPERIENCE IN FACILITATING NMT PLANNING

It is against the scenario described above that Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) with support from the Interface Cycling Expertise Low Cost Mobility Initiatives sought to explore possibilities of working with partners in the major capital City, Nairobi and other medium size towns such as Kisumu and Kitale. The goal has been to influence the government to initiate integrated transport planning that takes care of the growing boda boda cyclists and pedestrians. The focus is development of appropriate policy and regulatory framework for urban transport with emphasis on improving access and mobility for cyclists and pedestrians. The process began with a situation analysis in two areas – Nairobi City and Kitale Municipal Council in Western Kenya. ITDG's role is to facilitate dialogue between the cyclists and other stakeholders and to assist with integrated transport planning that emphasizes the facilitation of cyclists. These joint efforts have pressurized government to develop appropriate policy and regulatory framework for cyclists and other road users. At the national level, the demonstration projects have paved way for other town planners in Kenya to adapt modes of transport that address accessibility for the poor.

Hitherto, the attitude by the local authorities towards the cyclists has been that of enforcement and control. There exists in Kitale, a good modal mix of both motorized and non-motorized that service different business needs. Cycling is also taking an increasing share of the transport services. In spite of this, segregated traffic facilities for pedestrians and NMT are mostly non-existent. The council issued threats and formal notices instructing cyclists not to operate in the Central Business District, particularly at sensitive areas such as banks, the law courts and the post office as well as supermarkets and shops. Enforcement was seen as the main solution to reducing the increasing number of cyclists, particularly in the centre of town but this has not worked. Instead, there is a growth of the cyclists, which increases during the school holidays when young boys join in to earn some money. The police

department on its part is concern about orderly driving, free from obstruction and less accidents involving cyclists. 45 accidents involving the boda bodas reported between January and March 2004! From the perspective of law enforcers, traffic management is the priority but the local authority is then expected to bear the cost of improving facilities that enhance smooth flow of traffic. This situation acted as a window of opportunity for dialogue with the different actors.

Over the past two years, the council has held consultations with cyclists' association with a view to creating order in the central business district. This relationship has gradually shifted from one of top down instructions to more dialogue towards accommodating cyclists, now estimated at about 3000. Among the associations themselves there has been an effort to set membership and operations regulations. Each operator must register with the local administration and also belong to a group for accountability purposes. Identification badges and organization of routes has been another attempt in bettering the operations as well as strengthening the cyclists into a strong lobby group.

The collaboration has worked towards facilitating a demand-driven integrated transport master plan for Kitale town. In the case of Nairobi, a more complex and bigger place, the milestones are having a different orientation by the city planners in getting them to recognize cyclists and pedestrians as core players in the economic growth and the importance of integrating their needs in the infrastructure plans. Training has been conducted for key staff who are now convinced that the integration will only facilitate cycling if it is designed along the existing car network. This has been a long road to change the attitude of the council to accommodate cyclists, but one that will bear fruit.

Box 1: THE SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY (SUM) PROJECT

This is a collaborative project of the Municipal Council of Kisumu (MCK), the Sustainable Cities Programme of UN-HABITAT and UNEP, the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), and the International Institute for Infrastructure Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering (IHE). The project aims at strengthening the ability of the Council and the stakeholders to address mobility issues in a participatory manner targeting especially the NMT modes. The project has a two-fold objective; i) to strengthen the technical capacity of the MCK in SUM, and ii) to promote and strengthen stakeholder participation in SUM. The bicycles' contribution is felt in the way it facilitates relatively short trips between the Central Business District and residential areas. Once the improvements proposed by stakeholders are done, the council needs to embrace the concept and further it to the other parts of the city for the full impact to be felt.

Outcomes:

- Increased awareness creation on the relevance of low-cost urban transport policies and practically translating these policies into concrete implementation.

- Formation of working groups and involvement of key users in planning for physical interventions through several city consultations. A common understanding of the issues involved in the provision of urban transport, particularly, NMT was realized.
- Appreciation by politicians, who remain prime movers of development, of the need to allocate financial and human resources to address the growing mobility problems in the town. The council will exploit existing private-public partnership opportunities to up-scale the demonstration projects.
- A stretch of about 2 kilometres identified through stakeholder consultations for improvements. This demonstrates that a positive attitude towards support of the sector prevails and such opportunities need to be pursued to the level of tangible results.

From all the above experiences, it is clear that there is an effort to support sustainable mobility by addressing the needs of the low cost mobility users. The future steps will call for documenting the lessons and perhaps developing a toolkit for planners and engineers, that among other things addresses the socio-cultural perspectives of low cost mobility. This will require the joint input of both technical experts but also the practical experience in those towns, where the initiative was started.

SECTION 4: LESSONS FROM NMT INITIATIVES IN KENYA

For purposes of deepening the impact realized through the SUM initiative and those in Kitale and Nairobi, recognition that transport services make a significant contribution to local and national poverty alleviation strategies is a starting point but not sufficient ground to make any firm conclusions. Mobility planning using the stakeholder approach will facilitate and support the development of citywide integrated transport systems. Creating investment in partnerships, with private and public agencies to accelerate implementation, will further this. For these initiatives to be sustained, local authorities need to maintain links established with local private sector. Specifically, the provision of quality bicycles that withstand the terrain is an important consideration for Kenya. There is at the moment a sense of apathy by cyclists and the business private sector to get involved with local authority that does not deliver on its expectations. More needs to be done in terms of making available cycling facilities and also planning with the users to move away from the conventional top-down planning. The long road to getting the town to accept the bicycle taxis (boda bodas) as an integral part of the town is yet to bear fruit. For the past two years, stakeholders' sessions have been conducted to create awareness on the need to integrate and provide financial resources in support of this income generating activity. The planning process so far has helped in exploring the potential that exists between improved means of transportation and livelihoods development.

Exposure to a new environment with new innovative ideas that include planning for cycling by Kenyan cities requires the support from the perspective of technical engineering capacity. Understanding the role of local stakeholders in the entire process is equally important. The general tendency is for planners to relegate cyclists to outside the central business district, leaving the main roads for motorized transport. Therefore, conflict between the non-motorized and motorized transport is real and needs to be addressed in designing interventions. For the two to co-exist the role of improved road infrastructure taking into consideration the cyclists and pedestrians should inform renewed urban planning. Influencing key policy and planning processes that more and more integrate transport planning into urban plans and in a consultative manner is desirable. Integration of road safety measures especially for cyclists and pedestrians should become part of the mainstreaming process.

Currently, financial resource allocation through the road maintenance funds and other mechanisms such as LATF has improved. As planners and engineers are exposed to the socio-cultural issues around the bicycle and its potential to generate increased income, incremental funding for quality paved NMT infrastructure should be given priority.

As a way forward, ITDG recommends that mechanisms be discussed and possibilities of up scaling and replicating this experience in other urban areas with a view to popularising more such modes as a means to address poverty reduction. Some of the linkages include the policy reforms in the transport sector that have recognized and included the role of NMTs. In the implementation strategy all stakeholders will need to jointly address the operational and institutional strategies for pro poor policies that encompass NMT modes.

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