

Editorial statements

The Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific is a peer-reviewed journal published once a year by the Transport Division (TD) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The main objectives of the Bulletin are to provide a medium for the sharing of knowledge, experience, ideas, policy options and information on the development of transport infrastructure and services in the Asia-Pacific region; to stimulate policy-oriented research; and to increase awareness of transport policy issues and responses. It is hoped that the Bulletin will help to widen and deepen debate on issues of interest and concern in the transport sector.

Studies conducted by international organizations, donor organizations and research institutions in a number of countries, including Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam provide ample empirical evidence of the positive impact of transport (rural roads, in particular) on poverty reduction. Findings from these studies show that investment in rural roads/access improvement can have a positive impact in many areas, including increases in total factor productivity in agriculture, shifts from subsistence farming to higher earning commercial farming, increases in rural wages, growth of non-agricultural employment and better social impact through improved access to basic services.

Recognizing the benefits of investment in rural road development, many countries have considered extensive rural road development programmes in their countries. As a result, vast networks of rural roads have been developed in many developing countries of the region. However, countries have faced a number of challenges in implementing such programmes. The major challenge in rural road development is both to expand road networks in order to provide access to remote areas and to upgrade and maintain already existing roads. The positive experiences of countries that have successfully met these challenges are worth sharing.

In consideration of the importance and interest in the subject, planning for accessibility and rural roads was chosen as the theme for the current issue of the Bulletin. Four articles are included in this issue.

An approach to infrastructure and services planning, known as Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP), has emerged as the result of a series of studies conducted over the years by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank and other agencies in a number of developing countries of Asia and Africa. The quantification technique for determining accessibility to basic facilities and services is the key issue in this approach. A number of quantification techniques have been used in various studies conducted so far. In the first article, an attempt has been made to suggest a modified quantification technique that was applied in an area of India and proved to be simple and practical. The main deviation is in the normalization of the collected data at every stage as well as the suggestion that three different parameters: accessibility index, weighted priority index and village priority index be used to help the decision makers arrive at a decision regarding provision of infrastructure or services. One of the advantages of this method is the use of the weights collected through a participatory questionnaire survey, given to people in different villages and in different sectors, to identify actual accessibility needs.

Providing reliable road access to remote areas is a challenge for many countries. Earthen and gravel surface are commonly used in low volume roads. The second article discusses the use of Otta seal, a low cost road pavement designed to improve reliability and serviceability of unpaved and low traffic roads. Otta seal is an innovative type of bituminous material with characteristics that are quite different from the more traditional types of surface treatment. Otta seal roads have been constructed in many countries including Nepal. The

article outlines the design and construction of Otta seal roads. The various types of Otta seal, the materials required to create it and preparation and application procedures are described. Based on its use in Nepal, its advantages and disadvantages are also detailed.

The third article focuses on issues concerning rural road maintenance. There are many issues to be addressed prior to the successful implementation of rural roads maintenance systems, some of which have been highlighted in the article. It has been suggested that maintenance be considered as part of an overall road asset management system. Considering the complexity of such an endeavour, the author proposes a systematic approach to the problem. A step-by-step outline for developing rural road management in India is presented. An institutional arrangement is also proposed based on the three types of maintenance; routine, periodic and emergency.

Many countries have implemented impressive rural road development programmes. However, often they have not been equally successful in establishing a sustainable maintenance programme, which is vital not only to preserve the value of this important national asset, but essential to provide continuing support to the growth of rural economy. In the Asia-pacific region, China has a high rate of rural road maintenance, with an estimated 90 per cent of rural roads currently maintained. The final article in this issue examines China's rural road maintenance system, and the institutional and financial arrangements that have ensured its success.

The Bulletin welcomes analytical articles on topics that are currently at the forefront of transport development in the region as well as policy analysis and best practices. Articles should be based on original research and should have analytical depth. Empirically based articles should emphasize policy implications emerging from the analysis. Book reviews are also welcome. See the inside back cover for guidelines on contributing articles.

Manuscripts should be addressed to:

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