



## Checks and Balances

*Many of the factors associated with reducing poverty in rural areas, including education, health care and access to markets to sell and buy goods, are linked to the ability to travel which in turn depends on tracks and roads, and often involves vehicles or transport services. There is never enough money to provide all of the roads and transport services that everyone would like to have, but with the money available, are the best possible results being achieved? In most cases, unfortunately, the answer is no, usually as a result of failings in governance.*

*In this issue of Forum News we explore what we mean by governance as it relates to rural transport, and hear from various organisations and initiatives that are tackling this issue on the ground. From Uganda, we hear how NGO awareness raising activities are empowering civil society to make a united stand against poor delivery from the construction sector. We look at how networking is helping IFRTD members in Sri Lanka and Colombia to engage in meaningful dialogue with their governments. The Trail Bridge Support Unit in Nepal addresses the positive impact of decentralisation on good governance and Transparency International and the new CoST initiative share with us their approach to addressing corruption and transparency within the transport sector.*

When people talk about governance, they are usually referring to good governance – getting things right, seeing fair play in how decisions are made, and achieving value for money in any items purchased or work carried out. Good governance is an age old concept, embedded deeply in every culture and language around the world. From a young age, everybody develops a sense of what is right and what is wrong, and that government and management are supposed to be about doing what is right.

So the concept of governance is understood by everyone, rich and poor. Rather different from the technicalities of using computers, or the details of how a road should be constructed and maintained, which are only understood by a more limited section of the world population.

In recent decades, extensive attempts have been made to organise and systemise achieving good governance. There are many different analyses, breaking governance into components such as transparency, accountability, participation, fairness, or social responsibility. These analyses can be useful tools to assist in achieving good governance, but never forget the “big picture” of achieving fair play and value for money. Common sense, practical insight, and an understanding of human nature are as important as any scientific analysis! Good governance is not just a checklist, it is a way of doing things which must evolve as situations change.



*Demonstrations about poor road construction work in Fort Portal, Uganda. (see article page 5)*

### Transparency

One of the most important factors in achieving good governance is whether enough people know the details of what is really happening. What decisions have been taken? How were those decisions made? What facts and figures are available to confirm that the right decisions were made? What money was spent, and what was received in return?

“Transparency” in putting all such information into the public domain has become one of the central requirements of good governance, allowing anyone to review what is happening. The Internet has become a powerful tool for publishing information and providing transparency in what is happening. If anything is wrong, members of the public, or NGOs, or the media can voice concerns, and hopefully action will be taken.

### What goes wrong?

This short article can only give a few selected examples. Unfortunately, it is far too easy to find poor governance in so many situations involving rural transport.

**Poor decisions:** All year access, including the rainy season, is usually far more important to rural communities than the grand and dazzling new road projects that politicians might prefer. Each road should be appropriate to the level of traffic, rather than to repay favours from election time, or to link villages and towns favoured by politicians’ families or business associates.

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Road maintenance is nearly always neglected. Ineffective roadside drains, and water soaking into the road surface through potholes, softens the ground under the road, then overloaded trucks sink into the mud when it rains, and investment is wasted as relatively new roads become impassable.

It is also important to consider who will benefit from any transport improvement. Building roads to rural communities may make it easier to get produce to market, but sometimes such roads may mainly be of benefit to middlemen buying goods directly from farms, rather than the farmers themselves.

**Poor quality work:** Even when the right decisions are made, poor quality of work may lead to rapid deterioration of a road, and failure to see real value for money. Poor quality materials might be used, or the ground may not be compacted properly during road construction. The surface of a gravel road might not be given the proper camber to drain properly, or side drains and culverts might not be cleaned properly during maintenance.

**Corruption:** Unfortunately, corruption of one sort or another frequently makes a less than perfect situation much worse. If the "checks and balances" to make sure that the right things happen are not in place, if actions and expenditure are not transparent and everyone cannot see what is happening, unfortunately the human component of the system frequently fails.

When individuals can see either a way of making money for themselves, or a way of supporting their political ambitions, without being detected, many cannot resist the temptation. Transparency International have identified over forty different ways that corruption may occur on road projects (see article page 3)

Corruption is not restricted only to the construction and maintenance of rural roads. There may also be corrupt practices in the provision of transport services, for instance collusion between transport operators to keep bus fares and freight charges artificially high.

### How can we improve governance?

There is no simple magic solution to improve governance. Whatever sophisticated systems are implemented to improve the situation, clever minds are working on ways of manipulating decisions, evading quality checks, and extracting money through corruption. For instance, if three competitive quotations are needed when purchasing goods, some retailers may keep three different sets of headed notepaper and provide all three quotations.

Improving governance needs a combination of knowledge, transparency and constructive input by the media. Knowledge of stakeholders in transport of what they should be getting, knowledge of politicians and decision makers that their actions are being observed and analysed, transparency of information so that everyone can see what is happening, and an educated press and TV media to know what really matters and to start conversation about it.

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## Engaging with Government on Transport Issues

### Sharing the experiences of two civil society networks

#### Creating Dialogue in Sri Lanka

Many countries, including Sri Lanka, do not have specific policy relating to Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs). IMTs can be motorised or non-motorised, they are comparatively low-cost and suitable for the carriage of small to medium goods loads in rural areas. The Lanka Forum on Rural Transport Development (LFRTD), a civil society network, has engaged in a series of activities to raise awareness of the need for low cost IMTs that meet the transport needs of rural people.

A regional seminar and a mobile exhibition on IMTs, were organised to share experience of the design and use of IMTs and ultimately to influence policy, the adoption of regulations, and explore better use of IMTs. A significant outcome of LFRTD's activities, which brought together transport policy makers and organisations interested in transport issues, was the sum of Rs 10 million allocated by the Ministry of Finance for IMT development in rural areas to the National Transport Commission (NTC), the government regulator for land based passenger transportation.

NTC, in collaboration with LFRTD, used the funds to popularise IMTs. This was achieved through IMT parades in ten districts, each parade finishing at a village gathering where rural people had the opportunity to interact with IMT manufacturers and users, and inspect and discuss the IMTs. It was also an opportunity to train rural lathemen in technical and business skills for IMT manufacture and maintenance.

Another area of particular interest for LFRTD has been the emerging entrepreneurial practice of operating dual-purpose vehicles as intermediate public transport (IPT) in rural areas. These are trucks converted with seats and a temporary head cover that carry passengers and goods for separate fares. LFRTD researched the demand for IPTs, explored the legal status, passenger insurance, and safety aspects, and generated suggestions for their development. The

research revealed the popularity of IPTs in many rural areas where they successfully compete with rural bus services. LFRTD is networking with the Commissioner of Motor Traffic, the NTC and Practical Action (NGO) for the legalisation of IPTs and to improve their safety and comfort levels.

Through participation in the IFRTD Poverty Watch Programme LFRTD hosted a participative workshop on 'The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Rural Transport Policies for Poverty Reduction'. One of the workshop recommendations was to reclassify the rural road network on the basis of functionality and LFRTD is in the process of implementing this. LFRTD has since devoted attention to rural road design, construction and maintenance practice applicable to Sri Lanka. A series of public seminars were held to share and disseminate regional experience on appropriate technology for rural road design and maintenance. One of the outcomes has been the extension of an invitation to LFRTD from the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils to train project personnel of the World Bank funded Rural Roads Development Project.

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Poverty Watch: [www.ifrtld.org/new/proj/pov\\_watch.php](http://www.ifrtld.org/new/proj/pov_watch.php)

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#### Working with Government in Colombia

The IFRTD affiliated Colombia Forum (CF) endeavours to influence key players within the Colombian government who have the power to play a part in reducing problems of access and mobility for poor rural communities in Colombia. The Forum has implemented successful strategies through a process of:

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- i) Identifying key players within the government with whom relationships can be formed, either on a basis of geographical location or through social affinity.
- ii) Presenting a structured proposal outlining the objectives of both the IFRTD and the CF, and how those objectives can be achieved.
- iii) Discipline in honouring commitments that are made.

These minimal conditions have enabled the CF to be recognised and engaged in the development of a National Social Policy on Rural Transport. Indirectly the engagement of the CF has facilitated the allocation of budget resources to rural transport issues that has enabled a pilot to be carried out using alternative rather than traditional solutions, furthering the objectives of the policy.

This planning exercise has drawn upon the diverse knowledge and expertise of every member of the CF, located in all regions of Colombia. This has required good communication networks, telephone, virtual, as well as face to face, in order to strengthen the CF network. Support from the IFRTD regional coordinator has been vital in this respect.

Today, as a result of the CF's work on the government document, exchanging ideas with the National Department for Planning, and lobbying of key contacts, the Rural Transport Project for Colombia

has become a reality, part of the National Development Plan (NDP). So what does this mean? It means that the Rural Transport Project is included in national public policy and most importantly it now has guaranteed resources.

As a result of this successful engagement the NDP wants the CF to continue to play an active role in the process and has asked the CF to draft pilot projects with innovative solutions for three rural areas.

Overall the relationship that has been forged between the CF and the Colombian government, which began in 2003, has led to further recognition of the CF. The government called upon the CF to design a manual for the accessing and use of public resources by local authorities and communities who seek to finance projects offering viable, innovative and beneficiary-driven solutions for rural transport problems. In spite of these achievements the CF recognises that it still faces limitations. As a dispersed network with limited resources it remains difficult for members to work together as a team to strengthen and unify their strategy for change.

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## Implementing Anti-Corruption Measures

In developing countries corruption is one of the primary causes of the failure to provide adequate rural transport. Such corruption occurs in the form of bribery and fraud, examples of which include:

- Failure to select projects that would benefit rural populations.
- Misappropriation of funds designated for rural projects.
- Defective works carried out due to corrupt selection of incompetent contractors.
- Defective work carried out by fraudulent contractors.
- Overpricing of work due to corruption in tendering, or as a result of fraudulent contract claims.

The measures taken to date to address such corruption, vary from country to country, but are generally inadequate. There remains a failure to address corruption systematically and to ensure that anti-corruption measures are implemented throughout the whole process of provision and maintenance of infrastructure, and to affect all major participants. Much donor support is budget support with little or no imposition of project anti-corruption measures. Where such measures are required the focus tends to be on the tendering process or retrospective imposition of penalties. During project execution donors may take a hands-off approach, taking the view that the policing of the project (in terms of preventing and monitoring corruption) is not their responsibility. Many governments in developing countries are in the process of improving procurement procedures to address corruption, but such procedures are not yet sufficiently developed or may not be properly implemented. Many contractors fail to adopt internal procedures to limit corruption. Civil society may take the view that the solution is in civil society monitoring. The result is a piecemeal approach to corruption that is in many cases ineffective.

All stakeholders have a part to play. Governments should ensure proper implementation of anti-corruption measures. Donors should take greater responsibility for individual projects from inception through to completion. Contractors should be pro-active in preventing corruption within their organisations. Professional organisations should promote the adoption of anti-corruption codes. Civil society should accept that it may not have sufficient expertise to prevent or identify corruption, and should obtain professional assistance.

It is now regarded as acceptable to introduce project systems and regulations to improve health and safety. A similar approach should be taken to corruption. Stringent anti-corruption measures which impact

on all major project participants should be systematically applied on a project by project basis by whichever party is providing funding – whether it be a donor, lender, national or local government. Such measures should include anti-corruption monitoring by an independent professional person, proper due diligence on the project and its participants, anti-corruption commitments by all participants, raising awareness of the risks of criminal liability for corruption, greater transparency, and proper means for reporting corruption and enforcing the appropriate penalties. Such measures should be tailored to the size of the relevant project. They will add to the cost of individual projects but given the damage caused by corruption this is money well spent. These measures would not exclude the participation of civil society in monitoring projects.

Unless a comprehensive and systematic approach is taken there will be no significant reduction in corruption, funds will continue to be mis-spent, and the poor will remain the main victims. The imposition of such measures is therefore both a moral and legal duty for donors and governments who are in a position to require the implementation of such measures on the projects they fund.

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## The 45 Faces of Corruption

Transparency International have identified 45 ways in which corruption may occur on road projects. These are available at the global Transport Knowledge Partnership (gTKP) website: [www.gtkp.com](http://www.gtkp.com) > gTKP focus area: Governance in Transport > Controlling corruption > Related Theme: How does corruption occur on road projects?



## Decentralisation and Good Governance in Trail Bridge Building

How do we define good governance in the Trail Bridge Support Unit? It is not easy to provide a succinct answer to this question. Good governance is not a static notion but one that changes as time goes on. What was considered 'good' 30 years ago could be considered bad today.

The context in Nepal has changed considerably even during this millennium. A decade old democracy in 2000, a royal massacre wiping out the king and his family in 2001, persistent maoist insurgency until recently, locally elected leaders replaced by civil servants appointed from the centre in 2003, a king seizing power in 2005, a new budget in 2007 that allocated nothing to the palace. This brief history is complex and confusing and its problems ongoing, leaving the implementation of 'good governance' a next to impossible task.

Genuine decentralisation always seems to be one of the most important pre-requisites to enhance democratisation. A decentralisation policy that was in place in 2000, known as the Local Self Governance Act (LSGA), had and retains many flaws and as such has been subject to much criticism. Nevertheless the Trail Bridge Support Unit (TBSU) chose to echo the spirit of the act and decentralise its trail bridge support to Local Governments (DDCs) in the hope of setting a good example. DDCs where the conflict was bearable (eg. Ilam, Panchtar, Dolakha, Ramechhap and Kavre) were inevitably chosen for support over DDCs in which conflict has made it impossible to work (eg. Rukum, Rolpa, Salyan and Karnali).

Decentralisation and its inevitable companion, 'capacity building' have proven to yield more dividends than penalties. Decentralisation has enabled TBSU to delegate bridge building to DDCs, which has resulted in the construction of an unprecedented number of bridges. 200 bridges per year became the norm.

Decentralisation put communities in the driving seat and gave them the power to determine where bridges were built. This is an unorthodox approach, as infrastructure is usually planned by either Central or Local Government. However, importantly, communities were able to take responsibility for negotiating the need for the bridge and bringing all parts to the site with the warring factions, enabling TBSU to work in areas where the conflict was bearable (ie not absent!).

Another important aspect of TBSU's decentralisation approach is 'farming out'. With a two year placement in a DDC considered long for civil servants, the farming out of support mechanisms for communities to local NGOs or the private sector enables continuity of the work, despite the high turnover of personnel within DDCs.

The entire approach has been formally adopted by the government and is expressed in a national policy, the 'Trail Bridge Strategy' that forms an integral component of the 'Local Infrastructure Development Policy' (TBS/LIDP). The standards, norms, technologies, management procedures, community organisation procedures, all expressed in various manuals, are at the core of the TBS/LIDP. It is compulsory for any bridge builder, be they private, local or central government, to follow the policy (and inherent manuals) that TBSU has developed. The policy comprises work spanning 5 years, and the Manuals some 40 years of Helvetas' experience in Nepal.

To ensure that the breadth of actors involved, including DDCs, private sector, and local NGOs, are fully conversant with the policy and Manuals, TBSU has developed an associated curriculum. The curriculum is geared to different levels of staff; engineers, technologists, technicians, and so-called 'Bridgecraftspersons'. It has been developed in collaboration with educational institutes; universities, colleges and vocational schools. Today, not TBSU but the educational institutions are building the capacity of future trail bridge personnel.

TBSU's role is shifting from facilitation to monitoring. Monitoring encompasses technical, financial and social aspects, and procedures



TBSU 2007

*Decentralisation puts communities in the driving seat*

have been developed for the conduct of monitoring as well as public audits. These procedures are very cumbersome and demanding, and only become more complex as both the conflict continues and expectations increase.

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### **To access the TBS/LIDP and associated Manuals:**

TBSU Website: [www.NepalTrailBridges.org](http://www.NepalTrailBridges.org)  
Nepal Trail Bridge Forum (NTBF): [www.NepalTrailBridgeForum.org](http://www.NepalTrailBridgeForum.org)

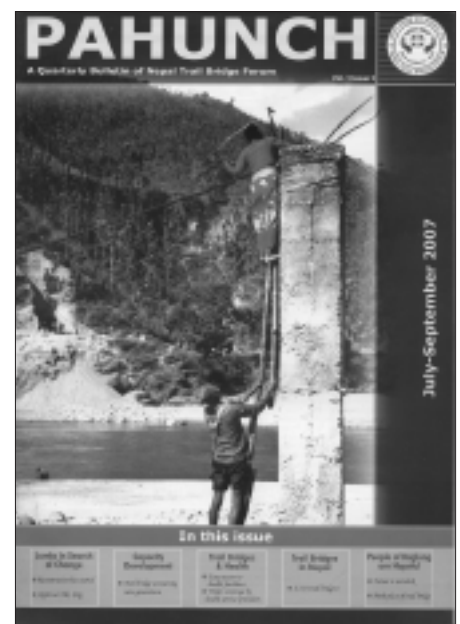
## Introducing Pahunch

Pahunch is a new quarterly bulletin from the Nepal Trail Bridge Forum (NTBF), an independent network of individuals and organisations involved in trail bridge building. Pahunch (Access) is published in English and Nepali and addresses work, progress and activities in the trail bridge sector with a view to encouraging transparency.

Pahunch is available for free download at:  
[www.nepaltrailbridgeforum.org/pahunch.htm](http://www.nepaltrailbridgeforum.org/pahunch.htm)

Or contact:

Nepal Trail Bridge  
Forum, PO Box 81, District Post Office, Patandhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal  
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# Roads to Nowhere? CoST seeks to improve transparency in the construction sector

The construction sector, of which roads is the largest sub-sector, plays a vital role in supporting social and economic development, yet is consistently ranked as one of the most corrupt areas of economic activity. For the rural poor, corruption can result in unnecessary, unsuitable, poor quality or dangerous projects, which are often subject to severe delays. Typically, this can result in “building roads to nowhere”.

The effects of corruption are especially severe on the vulnerable in society, who are most reliant on the timely and cost-effective provision of public services, are least able to pay the extra costs associated with bribery, fraud, extortion and other forms of corruption, and are often most severely affected by defective and poor quality construction.

In general, the rural poor lack the voice to express their dissatisfaction about the poor choice, inappropriate design or poor quality of construction projects. They have limited avenues through which they can complain. Importantly, citizens often do not have adequate information about the scope and nature of the intended works to be able to assess whether the outcome has been satisfactory and achieved value for money. This lack of information and lack of opportunity to voice their complaints leaves people powerless to change the status quo.

A new initiative funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) seeks to change this situation by improving transparency and accountability in the construction sector through enabling greater scrutiny over public spending. The Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), aims to make information available to stakeholders to enable them to make informed judgements about the cost and quality of the infrastructure constructed. The core concept is “get what you pay for”. CoST takes its lead from a similar initiative in the

extractive industries (EITI), which has achieved a measure of success and promoted civil society scrutiny of company payments and government receipts.

Although the starting point is for countries to recognise the value of transparency at all stages of the construction cycle, the main focus of CoST is on contract award through to final build. The complexity of the causes and types of corruption in the construction sector are such that they cannot be addressed by a single initiative. CoST will therefore build upon, and not duplicate, country and international initiatives that exist already to increase transparency and reduce corruption. At the heart of CoST is the Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG), a representative body comprising key stakeholders from government, the private sector, civil society and donor partners. The MSG plays a critically important role in the oversight of CoST. Experience from EITI indicates that this approach can enhance trust amongst the different parties, improve credibility and lead to innovative ways of working. CoST proactively includes civil society groups in the process, improving their capacity to hold governments and companies accountable.

CoST is currently at the pilot stage with a number of countries, including Tanzania, Zambia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and United Kingdom, working towards implementation with the support of various donors. A consortium comprising Oxford Policy Management (OPM), IT Transport (ITT) and Transparency International (TI) has been involved in the design of CoST.

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## Community Unites to Protest Against Poor Construction Work

“Fort Portal protests over poor road works” read the newspaper headlines in the Rwenzori region of Uganda in June 2007. For some people it was unbelievable to see religious leaders, the Mayor of Fort Portal municipality, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and students, side by side in peaceful protest, despite their different political backgrounds and ideologies.

However, for the Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), the sight of Fort Portal residents taking to the streets together, with placards that read “No to corruption and shoddy work, where is value for money”, was a testament to their successful work educating local communities about their rights.

For a number of years KRC has worked towards stimulating awareness of the responsibility of individuals, local leaders and CSOs to contribute towards development and good governance. Brainstorming fora, such as dialogues, retreats, and radio programmes, are used to facilitate a process in which local stakeholders can understand conflict, development, corruption, political harmonisation and the potential for reconciliation in the Rwenzori region and Uganda as a whole. Retreats held at the Kasunga Training and Conference Centre have identified challenges such as corruption in public and private institutions, and the need for economic empowerment in the region. Open discussion and reflection on these issues has enlightened local stakeholders on their rights and entitlements, particularly in the area of service delivery.

Development partners are awakening to the concept that knowledge is power, and that for critical analysis of development

programs the community must be empowered with information. KRC has spear headed the process with its ‘Poverty Resource Monitoring and Tracking Model’ (PRMT) and the ‘Civil Society Radio Program’ (CSR), which has the sole aim of empowering local communities to actively advocate for their entitlement to improved service delivery and sustainable development initiatives. As a result of these sensitisation activities and the space afforded by retreats and radio talk shows to engage with their leaders, communities are actively demanding accountability from their service providers.

The Fort Portal protests reflected the concern of local stakeholders about the work done by the China Chongqing International Construction Corporation (CICO) on the Fort Portal to Hima Road. Areas of the completed road were already developing potholes. A petition was handed to Mr Ndiwa Chepkongin Chemasuet, Resident District Commissioner (RDC) of Kabarole District. Due to the demonstration, the Commissioner of Roads from The Ministry of Works, the Chinese Embassy, the Ministry of General Duties and local leaders, were forced to inspect the road and several action meetings were held. An agreement was reached that no payment would be made to CICO until the construction was improved to the required standard.

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## News and Events

### Network News straight to your inbox

**N**etwork News, IFRTD's monthly electronic newsletter, brings all the latest news, events and resources from across the IFRTD network directly to your inbox.

Every month we take a selection of current rural transport news stories, forthcoming events, and interesting new resources and compile an easy to digest email. *Network News* also contains Network Focus, a short highlight of an organisation, website or project that we think will interest you.

To subscribe to receive *Network News* email [news@ifrtd.org](mailto:news@ifrtd.org) with your name and email address. This is a free service and your email details will not be shared with any third parties.

We welcome your contributions to the IFRTD websites, *Forum News* and *Network News*. Please email [info@ifrtd.org](mailto:info@ifrtd.org) with news, event information, resources, suggestions and feedback.

**We update the IFRTD websites regularly with news and resources so please remember to visit:**

[www.ifrtd.org](http://www.ifrtd.org)  
[www.mobilityandhealth.org](http://www.mobilityandhealth.org)  
[www.ruralwaterways.org](http://www.ruralwaterways.org)

### Meeting the Health Sector in Beijing

**I**n October the Researchers of the Mobility and Health International Networked Research Programme gathered in Beijing, PRC to share their first research findings. A three-day workshop gave all the Researchers the opportunity to reflect on their first findings before their final reports are submitted in early 2008. They were able to identify common issues and worked together through participative exercises to translate their research evidence into policy recommendations.

**View the IFRTD Exhibition Stand online:**

[www.mobilityandhealth.org/etc/threedelays.php](http://www.mobilityandhealth.org/etc/threedelays.php)

**Forum 11:** <http://www.globalforumhealth.org>

### 2007 IFRTD Executive Committee Meeting

**I**FRTD's Executive Committee meets on an annual basis to review activities and set the mandate for the forthcoming year. The 2007 meeting was hosted in Berne, Switzerland by SDC, IFRTD's long-time donor, from 5th to 7th December. The Executive Committee Meeting (ECM) comprised a governance day, a strategy workshop and a networking day. The latter was organised in collaboration with Transnet, the network of Swiss transport practitioners, and took a special focus on Mobility and Health.

Alongside IFRTD's Chairman and Secretariat, participants at the ECM included representatives from IFRTD affiliated National Networks (NFGs), the Gatnet Gender and Transport Community, ILO, Practical Action, Sida, SDC and other invited network members.

The Strategy Day was an opportunity to share the first stage findings of the Capacity Assessment that is currently being carried out for IFRTD by IISD. The Capacity Assessment looks at the capacities needed to implement the new IFRTD strategy and in particular to prepare IFRTD for its forthcoming independence. Among other key decision points, the EC opted for a small board to provide oversight on operational, legal and financial matters, with the current EC continuing to provide strategic direction for the network.

**ECM minutes available online:**

[www.ifrtd.org/new/about/gov.php](http://www.ifrtd.org/new/about/gov.php)

A CD Rom containing the full presentations given during the meeting is available by contacting the IFRTD Secretariat (See 'About Us' box).

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*Promoting the Mobility and Health programme at Forum 11*

The Workshop was held in conjunction with *Forum 11* of the Global Forum for Health Research, an international event attracting a cross section of participants from the health sector. The *Forum 11* theme was 'Equitable Access: Research challenges for health in developing countries'. The Mobility and Health team profiled the critical role of mobility in health care access and delivery through an exhibition stand (pictured), and in two public sessions; an international panel discussion and a participative workshop to develop a strategy for change.

**The summaries of the first research findings are now available online:** [http://www.mobilityandhealth.org/etc/first\\_findings.php](http://www.mobilityandhealth.org/etc/first_findings.php)

### About Us:

**T**he IFRTD is a global network of individuals and organisations working towards improved access and mobility for the rural poor. It provides a framework for collaboration, information sharing, debate and advocacy that bridges traditional geographic and institutional boundaries.

Membership of the IFRTD is free. All members receive *Forum News* and any other publications that are made available to the network. In over 20 countries autonomous networks that subscribe to the vision of the international network have become affiliated to the IFRTD as National Forum Groups (NFGs).

The IFRTD is facilitated by a small, decentralised Secretariat based in the UK, Cameroon, Kenya, Peru and Sri Lanka. Please contact the IFRTD Secretariat as follows:

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