



Transport and Trade for Market Women in Accra

Project Location: Accra, Ghana

Project Start Date: January 2004

Project Duration: 3 years

Introduction:

This project was conceived in 2004 when Elsie Owusu Architects and Integrated Transport Planning Ltd undertook research with groups disadvantaged by the available public transport system in Accra. This highlighted the problems faced by the women market traders. Their study was funded by Transport for London. Transaid was invited to be part of a project that aimed to identify ways that the women's cooperatives could be provided with the capacity and skills to set up and manage their own independent transport system.

The majority of traders in Accra are market women engaged in a wide range of commodities- from perishable and canned food items to articles of clothing. It was clear that these women have great difficulty transporting their goods to and from the market as most commercial drivers failed to understand the trading dynamics and genuine transport needs of the women. With no transport under their direct control and difficulties in accessing the vehicles that are available this poses significant challenges to the women, both in economic and social terms. Some of the women were forced to spend long hours away from home travelling with their goods or taking care of them. This lack of a transport service designed to meet the particular needs of women traders meant the cost of transport is high and the women are forced into a punishing daily routine that makes life unnecessarily difficult for them and their families. The solution that was proposed by Transaid was a project that enables the women to own, control and effectively manage their own sustainable fleet of transport. Through the provision of a small fleet of vehicles and by championing good transport planning, Transaid aimed to facilitate sustainable business and economic growth.

Methodology:

The initial phase focused on research. The research largely consisted of-

- Questionnaire surveys of market traders
- Individual discussions with those representing market traders
- Discussions with Ministries of Women and Children's Affairs and Modernisation of the Capital City

Transaid then arranged the provision of a small fleet of light goods vehicles (four in the first instance) to initiate this project. Four commodity cooperatives were selected to participate in this pilot project. The key elements of the project were:

- Development of a business plan for a viable, sustainable transport operation

- Technical and management transport training to ensure skills are in place
- Donation of a small pilot fleet of light goods vehicles to the co-operative to kick-start the transport
- Ongoing monitoring and support to the cooperative to ensure the fleet is operated equitably, efficiently and cost effectively

A training workshop was held to help the leaders of the Four Market Cooperatives understand the basic principles and dynamics of running commercial vehicles. Through this, a meaningful and relevant set of operational procedures and reporting methods which could aid the women in effectively managing their own fleet was also produced. The workshops were designed to help the women plan how to organise the vehicles when they arrived, how they would be operated and to consider financial management and reporting.

The workshop sessions ended with a summary of the points covered and a quiz. In the period before the vehicles arrived, the women recruited drivers or appointed and trained women within the co-operatives. Operationally they also further investigated the option of using fuel issue vouchers and began talks with suppliers. There were also investigations made in terms of secure parking. The women started thinking about a bookings diary to prepare for when the vehicles arrived and they started focusing people on the importance of planning the vehicles use as far ahead as possible. Transaid also strongly encouraged the women to use the report to refresh their understanding of all the transport management issues before the vehicles arrive. It was ensured that it was understood that, with the vehicles, the women were also going to receive further training from the vehicle donors. It was recommended that if the vehicles took longer to arrive than anticipated that a follow-up workshop took place upon their arrival to reinforce the principles and to focus in more detail on the financial management aspect.

Outcomes:

The key issues that arose from the interviews and workshops were-

- Taxis are too expensive to consider – often taxi cost can be more than the profit of selling goods.
- Traders get charged more for travelling early in the morning and for travelling at peak time in the evening.
- Trading day can typically last between 4:00 am and 11:00 pm.
- In the morning, after a walk to the tro tro station, a wait of up to two hours can be expected.
- After finishing trading it can take up to 4 hours to get home as tro tro's are very busy.
- Often tro tro drivers and their bookmen exploit the traders need to travel at set times and to carry goods. This increases the cost of travel.

- Moving goods from one market to another, or another point of sale, can take a very long time due to transport not being available.
- Too many breakdowns can increase travel time significantly and cause additional costs if perishable goods start to decompose.

Following these workshops, the small fleet of light goods vehicles arrived in Accra and the project was initiated.

Feedback from those involved found that the project-

- Reduced transport cost/turnover ratio, bringing economic benefit for co-operative members at personal and community level
- Resulted in social improvements for co-operative members, including less time away from home, improved security for members and their children
- Provided a positive model for women's development in Ghana and beyond
- Provided an advantageous lead into the wider public transport system in Accra

Conclusion:

The women's new transport system will assist their members with transport of goods ensuring that transport is reliable and accessible, and reflects the women trader's genuine needs. Efficient management of the fleet was designed to allow the co-operative to use a margin of the profits to rest aside for recapitalisation, and, in the future, to expand the women's fleet. The co-operative members and their families are the first to benefit from this project.

Tools Utilised: Transport Cooperative Workshop: Phase 1 Workshop to develop operating policy and business plan by Caroline Barber, Summary of survey report, Transport and Trade for market women in Accra Unilever, Transporting Goods To Market: Empowerment of Accra's Women Traders by ITP, Transaid website.

Partners: Ghana Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development, The Market Traders Co-operative Union, Wincanton, Transport for London, Integrated Transport Planning (ITP).

About Transaid:

Transaid is an international UK development charity that aims to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods across Africa and the developing world through creating better transport. Transaid was founded by Save the Children and the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. Our Patron is HRH The Princess Royal. Transaid specializes in the following:

- Building the capacity of public health authorities to provide effective, safe and cost efficient transport management systems to promote equitable access to primary health care services.
- Developing and improving logistics and supply chain systems to enhance the delivery of medicines, equipment and relief services to vulnerable communities.
- Promoting effective partnerships to support and enhance community participation in developing sustainable transport solutions in rural areas.
- Developing and delivering transport and logistics training and qualifications for public and private sector operators.

Transaid has the capacity and reach to lead projects throughout the developing world, but is equally capable of providing niche technical assistance to large scale health systems strengthening projects. Transaid maintains strong relationships with a number of leading international organizations including donor agencies such as DfID, DANIDA and USAID, and implementing organizations such as Health Partners International, Options Consulting, John Snow Inc. and Management Sciences for Health.

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