



Preliminary Transport Management Assessment and Training in Sri Lanka

Project Location: Sri Lanka

Project Start Date: 2003

Project Duration: 6 months

Introduction:

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (SSM) is a self-governance movement in Sri Lanka that provides comprehensive development and conflict resolution programmes to villages. About 15,000 villages across Sri Lanka are part of the SSM and actively participate in its community development activities. Inevitably, access to communities and the activities involved at all levels within the organisation require a considerable transport resource. The transport required was, prior to the project, deemed to be less effective and cost efficient than it should be. This led to SSM contacting Transaid to request a brief appraisal of the transport management issues they face and also the delivery of transport management training.

Case studies on the use of transport to support the delivery of essential community services have clearly shown that a much greater efficiency will be achieved if the key elements of good transport management are in place. These five key elements are; transport policy, transport management information, operational management, fleet management and human resources. The Transaid Transport Management Manual was provided to SSM to give greater detail on the components of the system and how it, as a whole, can be implemented.

Methodology:

Transaid conducted a situational analysis of Sri Lanka's Transport Management System (TMS) in 2004. A Transaid representative visited a sample of three districts conducting interviews with District Coordinators. From this, it was found that there was some concern over the inadequate level of collaboration and communication between HQ and districts on transport management issues and respective responsibilities. There seemed to be a lack of coordination especially with regard to maintenance procedures and technical advice from HQ.

A brief meeting was held with staff from the Transport Unit HQ in order to get some overview of transport management within SSM. Their frank discussion of their own strengths and weaknesses and their willingness to improve the performance of transport gave a positive impression of what could be achieved. Transaid stressed the importance of a clearly defined role and full job description for the Transport Manager so helped SSM to recruit a new dedicated Transport Manager from the private sector. Transaid also emphasised the importance of a clearly defined transport policy for SSM that is not based on circulars and memos, as these are not comprehensive enough in their coverage of a holistic transport

management system and are not necessarily communicated or understood across the organisation.

HQ had provided each district with one 4-wheel vehicle, 32 in total, but there was no documented inventory of district vehicles. The HQ decision as to what type of vehicle was allocated was largely based on cost, funding availability and what was available on the market at the time. Information from HQ indicated that approximately only 10% of vehicles were being replaced per year which suggested an average working life expectancy of 10 years before replacement. Many of the vehicles being used were uneconomical, unsafe to run and often not best suited to the work requirements of a particular district. Transaid suggested the implementation of Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) to allow for a more proactive repair. The benefits of PPM were explained to District Co-ordinators and HQ.

A section of the interviews with both the District Coordinators and HQ included the use of motorcycles with regards to fleet management and operational management. It was found that over the last few years efforts have been made to improve transport availability in the districts with annual procurement of new motorcycles for use by the Project and Divisional Coordinators. Most of the motorcycles in use were less than 3 years old but the selection of motorcycle was, again, determined largely on the basis of cost and local availability at the time of purchase. Some districts received more than others and, within each of the districts, only a few of the coordinators received a motorcycle. There was a fairly unanimous desire to see all project and divisional coordinators equipped with a motorcycle to support their wide-ranging work across the districts.

It was also noted that there was no provision for training in riding a motorcycle or basic maintenance skills other than the minimum required for acquiring a license. Possession of helmets was widespread but their use was more optional. An innovative cost-sharing/ joint ownership scheme was implemented for the motorcycles; SSM bear the initial cost but the coordinator pays a small amount per month over the five years, equating to less than half the purchase price of the motorcycle, after which the motorcycle becomes theirs. This scheme was seen as benefiting both SSM and the selected rider and it enabled more field activities to be undertaken because of the greater number of motorcycles available. It provided an incentive for staff and encouraged them to maintain and look after the motorcycles. However, there was no clear idea of what the organisation would do when the 5 years of SSM ownership was over and it was also unclear as to what would happen if the motorcycle or rider does not reach 5 years. Additionally, there were few records of actual motorcycle usage and no evidence of log books or running charts being used by riders. The district motorcycles were a largely unmanaged resource.

Transaid also found that there was little or no provision of driving instruction for District Co-ordinators, despite their heavy driving responsibility. It was commented that seat belts were rarely worn and some vehicles were not fitted with rear passenger seat belts.

Also, there was no formal planning and scheduling system for vehicles in place and notification of the vehicle requirements could be at short notice. Therefore, an initiative to raise awareness of road and driver safety was planned by Transaid.

Outcomes:

Through extensive studies much information was gathered regarding the current state of transport within the SSM. This information was then analysed to form conclusions and recommendations as to how to improve the SSM's use of transport. These conclusions and recommendations were clearly explained to District Coordinators and HQ in order to provide them with a clear plan to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their transport.

Further Transport Management Training workshops were also provided. This training was based on the Transaid model transport management system. All participants were provided with a copy of Transaid's Transport Management Manual to reinforce the training and to offer practical assistance in the implementation of the transport management system at their work places. The generic methodology and content of the training combined with the previous discussions and district visits made it possible to deliver an appropriate and adapted course.

Conclusion:

The situational analysis was able to conclude that there was much already in place within the SSM that could easily form the basis of a comprehensive, integrated transport management system right across the organisation. There was a clear willingness throughout the organisation to improve the management of transport resources and thereby seriously enhancing the delivery of services to the communities. It was an appropriate time for the Executive Director to lead the process of change but- to succeed- this needed the support and participation of all staff across the organisation and at every level.

The training was relevant, valuable and well received by staff capable and willing to implement the necessary changes to the way transport was managed within SSM. Some of the HQ staff may not normally have been practically involved in transport management but their inclusion on the course was a great benefit to creating awareness and understanding the issues involved

It was recommended that further initial training for the remaining District Coordinators was required and Transaid would normally follow up the introductory course with a further short course after about 6 months. This would be intended to tackle issues arising in implementing the TMS relating to the practical experiences of the participants and using their own data to assess progress and guide further developments.

The difficulties that became apparent during the workshop included the language barrier and Transaid's resource limitations in terms of field staff time available. However, positive aspects of the course included SSM's excellent trainers and facilities and the overall sustainable development benefits of wider access to transport management skills internal and external to SSM. Thus it was recommended that SSM and Transaid jointly consider the development of a Training of Trainers initiative with SSM acting as partner and agent for Transaid in Sri Lanka and the region.

Tools Utilised: Report for Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement Sri Lanka on Preliminary Transport Management Assessment and Training by Richard Hanson June 2004

Partners: Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement Sri Lanka, Save the Children Fund

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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