

RURAL TRACKS DEVELOPMENT IN BENIN - THE CASE OF PASR

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SUMMARY

Rural roads link villages to villages, villages to towns and allow the access of rural communities to education, health, production zones, and markets and to socio-cultural exchanges.

Needs in rural roads are identified in line with the National strategy on Rural Transport.

Indicators retained for the selection of rural roads are of qualitative order for eligibility and of quantitative for priority and vary according to the Investment Program Objective.

For example within the framework of Road Sector support Program (PASR) which main objective is to alleviate poverty in the rural area by removing the obstacle to socio-economic development that constitute the lack of rural tracks which are practicable in rain season in the intervention area, by promoting local management of this road network that constitute the rural tracks, identification criteria and decision on the planning of rural roads are as follows:

For eligibility

- Rural roads should come as priority in the local development plan, emanating from the grass root communities' thoughts and aspirations and resulting from a dialog process
- The road should be linked to the classified network
- A firm commitment of the community, its contribution in cash, in materials or in manpower of 10% of the work cost of which at least 50% before the beginning of works.
- A firm undertaking by the beneficiary populations to ensure the roads maintenance.

For priority

- The cost of works per beneficiary
- The period during which the track is not practicable because of rains

To guarantee the sustainability of the rural roads network, Government has set up an adequate mechanism for resource mobilization which in most time consists mainly of dues on remuneration during rehabilitation works, toll, contributions, the Mayor Office financial participation, donations and other grants. The funds collected are lodged in the local Government account for the Communal Road Maintenance

There is also a strong partnership between Government, local communities, NGO, Consultancy firms and Private Enterprises and which allows to make about 350Km of rural roads in Zou Department and to establish 56 associations of rural roads users that organise and coordinate maintenance works executed by brigades trained to that effect.

1. INTRODUCTION

Benin is a relatively small country 115.000 km², of lengthened form (800 km long, 300 km wide and 125 km open on the Atlantic Ocean) with a population of 6 million inhabitants [1], but it occupies a strategic position between Nigeria and the neighbouring French-speaking countries (Niger, Togo and Burkina Faso).

It constitutes a natural corridor for the transport of goods to and from the enclosed Niger and Western Nigeria via Cotonou Port.

In addition, Beninese Economy largely depends on agriculture. So, opening of the rural areas to outside influences and the reduction of the costs of transport constitute an indispensable condition to the economic growth which must support poverty alleviation. In the same way accessibility to rural area must make it possible to the populations to reach schools, health centres, production areas, the markets and the social cultural exchanges places more easily.

In order to achieve these goals of development of the rural area, Benin set up in 1997 a rural tracks network development strategy.

In support to this strategy several programmes and /or projects were conceived and implemented including the Road Sector Support Programme (PASR).

2. ADMINISTRATIVE STATUS OF BENIN AND PRESENTATION OF ITS ROAD NETWORK

2.1 Administrative Status of the Benin

In accordance with the law n° 97-028 of 15 January 1999 on organization of the territorial administration of the Republic of Benin [2], the exercise of the State is exerted in the Department. To this end, the Department is the territorial district of the Republic of the Benin. It enjoys neither juristic personality nor financial autonomy.

The national territory is broken up into twelve (12) Departments which are Alibori, Atacora, the Atlantic, Borgou, Collines, Couffo, Donga, Littoral, Mono, Ouémé, Plateau and Zou.

The Departments are divided into communes with juristic personality and financial autonomy. The communes are also divided into arrondissements and the arrondissements are divided into quarters and villages.

As regards Control of Work, the terms of articles 88,89,91 and 92 of the law n° 97-029 of 15 January 1999 on organization of the communes in the Republic of Benin [3], confer on the communes management of rural tracks and construction works which do not concern expressly other institutions and bodies.

2.2 Presentation of the Road network

The network classified of national interest is composed of 6.076 km by decree n° 2001-092 of February 20 2001 on roads classification in Benin [4]. 36% of this network are international roads, 64 % remaining are trunk roads. One can note that this new classification appreciably increased the length of the classified roads which was before January 2001 of 3 425 km. The urban network adds up a 1800 km length.

Only 30% of the national network is surfaced. The national priority network which includes the important surfaced and non surfaced axes is maintained by Road Funds.

The rural roads and tracks account for about 11.000 km, of which about one third (35%) was built. In addition, it remains to identify and classify the tracks within each commune.

The table below assesses the national road network.

Table n°1 Classification and state of the road network (in km) [5]

		Bad	Average	Good	Excellent	Total
Non classified	Ground	11.000	608			11.608
	Gravelly		592			592
Classified road	Ground					
	Gravelly	1,457	875	318		2.650
Trunk road	Gravelly		824	263		1.807
	Asphalt		43	118	132	161
International Road	Gravelly	190	351	51		592
	Asphalt	112	402	773	299	1.586
Total		12.759	3.695	1.523	299	18.276

3. II BRIEF SURVEY OF BENIN RURAL TRACKS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The diagnosis of the programmes and projects of rural tracks carried out in the middle of the decade 1990, after more than two decades of construction of rural tracks reveals the quasi generalized absence of maintenance which had as a consequence the loss of the investments made and the persistence of poverty in the enclosed rural areas. [6]

Taking into account the shortcomings raised, a national strategy for the development and maintenance of the rural tracks network was defined in 1997, with the following essential objectives:

- effective appropriation of the rural tracks network management by the recipients,
- coherent development of the network of the rural tracks and its best adaptation to opening to outside influences and rural transport needs,
- identification and determination of an adequate mechanism to mobilize sustainable resources to finance the existing tracks network.

The implementation of this strategy is based on the following intervention principles:

- rehabilitation and maintenance programmes at the local level will be formulated by the recipients gathered in interests associations,
- a participative approach will be developed, which will require the local Communities financial contribution,
- the funding of the rehabilitation and maintenance of the rural tracks will be ensured thanks to the joint funding of the State (own resources and/or contributions of the development partners) and of the local communities who will have initiated the programmes,
- the level of contribution of the State will vary and will depend on the satisfaction of pre established criteria largely disseminated within the basic communities.

The decree n° 003/MTPT-MDR-MF/DC/DROA/CPR of 09 February, 1998 creates an institutional framework which is the Rural Tracks National Technical Council (CTNPR). The Rural Tracks National Technical Council (CTNPR) is a national decision-making and consultation body as regards roads and rural tracks (article 2). It includes the Ministry in charge of the rural development (Chairman), the Ministry of Finance (1st Vice Chairman), the Ministry in charge of Tourism (2nd Vice Chairman), the Minister of Public Works (Permanent Secretary), the Ministry in charge of planning and the Ministry in charge of Territorial Administration (members). It is envisaged its extension to local partners. [7]

CTNPR Permanent Secretariat is ensured by the Management of the Rural Tracks and the Presidency by the Management of the Agricultural Engineering.

CTNPR has the essential role to:

- ensure the coordination of the whole of development and maintenance of the rural tracks in line with the State policy on the matter;
- examine the files of the local partners to decide on their eligibility to State contribution to maintenance of the rural network which they took the responsibility;
- examine the programmes suggested by the partners declared eligible;
- contribute to the mobilization of loans from the Government, the private and from development partners.

At the departmental level, the Rural Tracks Department Committees (CDPR) are in charge of programmes monitoring and centralization of the recipients associations activities of the department concerned.

Experimental Projects including the Road Sector Support Programme were implemented to test the feasibility of this approach.

4. ROAD SECTOR SUPPORT PROGRAMME (PASR)

Road sector support Programme is initiated by the Government of Benin and financed by DANIDA. It is made up of several components including «rural tracks» component [8]. The first phase of this programme through «rural tracks» component started in 2001 in Zou Department. It comes as support to the rural tracks development strategy in Benin.

4.1 Objective of the Programme

The Road Sector Support Programme in its component " rural tracks " aims at poverty alleviation in rural areas by removing the obstacle to socio-economic development which constitutes the absence of practicable rural tracks at any season in the area of intervention, while promoting the local management of this road network that constitute the rural tracks.

The immediate objectives are to:

- reinforce planning, design, monitoring and supervision of the of the rehabilitation and maintenance work of the rural tracks by applying the approaches High Intensity of Labour and the treatment of critical points;
- improve rural transport by the rehabilitation and maintenance of the rural tracks through complementary actions in order to increase the impact of the investments.

4.2 Results expected from the Programme

Four results are expected from this programme namely:

- creation from 40 to 50 local committees;
- Building capacities of the Public works Regional Management of Zou and Collines Departments to manage its network of improved rural tracks;
- theoretical and practical trainings of the various stakeholders in HIMO method in order to use the funds allocated to the project in the beneficiary villages and to ensure manual servicing of the tracks thus made;
- rehabilitation from 200 to 250 km of rural tracks through participative approach and HIMO method.

4.3 Programme approach

The Road Sector Support Programme is primarily based on rural tracks development strategy. Thus the need for rehabilitation / maintenance of the rural tracks is expressed by the road users who are organized in local committees representing the interest group of the population. The rural roads selected for the rehabilitation must have direct or indirect connections with the network of the classified roads. The financing of the rehabilitation is ensured jointly by the State and the communities/committees that make the request. The communities contribute at least 10% of the cost of the rehabilitation and 100% of the cost related to the maintenance of the rural tracks. The Rural Tracks National Technical Council approves all the proposed projects and coordinates the Programme. At the Departmental level, the Public works Regional Management and the Rural Tracks Departmental Committee supplement the intervention framework.

4.4 Programme implementation strategy

For the implementation of this component “rural tracks”, Benin Government at the end of an invitation to tender, entrusted to an international NGO and two local NGO the services relating to the social intermediary funding and appropriation.

The purpose of these NGO in charge of the social intermediary funding and appropriation is to bring the populations concerned and the communes to be responsible for the rehabilitation and maintenance of network of the Community tracks. To achieve this goal the NGO proceeded to:

- the spread/dissemination of information to assure the local populations and get their support of the objectives;
- the sensitization of the local populations on the appropriation of the Community infrastructures and the maintenance of the tracks;
- the study of the environment in all the arrondissements and villages, identification, priority, selection and the planning of the tracks to be rehabilitated;
- Encouraging women integration and participation, both in the decision-makings and participation in rehabilitation and maintenance work;
- the organisational structuring and the setting of responsibility for the populations concerned;
- the building capacities of the local institutions, through the training of its members in simplified, co-operative management and conflicts, guaranteeing a better achievement of their role of local relays of implementation of the programme;
- the definition of a mode of mobilization and management of the funds;
- the mobilization of the Community counterpart;
- the harmonious linking of stakeholders on HIMO sites;

4.5 Rural tracks development

4.5.1 *Tracks selection*

The rural tracks to develop under this programme are selected through qualitative indicators for eligibility and quantitative for the priority.

For eligibility

- Rural roads should come as priority in the local development plan, emanating from the grass root communities' thoughts and aspirations and resulting from a dialogue process
- The road should be linked to the classified network
- A firm commitment of the community, its contribution in cash, in materials or in manpower of 10% of the work cost of which at least 50% before the beginning of works.
- A firm undertaking by the recipient populations to ensure the roads maintenance.

For priority

- The cost of works per recipient
- The period during which the track is not practicable because of rains

By these criteria, thirty five (35) various axes were identified and up linear total of 323,275 km.

4.5.2 *Mode of Work execution*

The tracks selected and finally validated by the CTNPR are the subject of technical studies by the Local consultancy firms. These firms at the end of the technical studies work out the Tender Documents.

The Small Local Companies that take part in the training in HIMO method are invited to submit their proposals for a technical and financial offer for lots ranging from 3 to 5 km thereabouts.

The contracting Companies carry out work with the local labour. The execution time of work is 3 to 4 months. Thus linear of 80 km rural tracks are carried out per annum.

Once the rehabilitation works are completed and the acceptance pronounced, the rehabilitated tracks are entrusted to the communes and communities to ensure their regular maintenance

4.5.3 *Regular maintenance mechanism*

For the sustainability of the investments, the mechanism is set up at the level of each Commune [9]:

- a legal framework for regular maintenance management;
- a mechanism of maintenance funding;
- a mechanism of maintenance funds management.

Legal framework for regular maintenance management.

For the implementation of the maintenance organization and financing, the Communes introduced a framework of collaboration and created "Communal Funds of the Tracks Maintenance" (FCEP).

The Fund has:

- a Board of Directors chaired by the Mayor or his representative who is assisted in his tasks of administrator by the head of technical department of the town council and the person in charge of the financial service of the commune. All the “arrondissements” are represented by two members of the Executive Committees and the Heads of “arrondissements” of the villages concerned.

The Board of Directors meets in the beginning of each maintenance period to appraise the financial resources mobilization, to analyze and approve the maintenance budgets, to authorize the disbursement and to evaluate at the end of each period the execution of the contracts. In the same way it examines the planning and the programming of the maintenance work and informs Public works Regional Management of the evolution of work.

- a funds management cell (CG); it is a secretariat of three people employed for six (06) months of the year (three months in full-time per period). This Management Cell represents the CA to sign, in accordance with the specifications of the contracts with the barriers guards, the maintenance brigade and the funds collection agents. In addition, it monitors the contracts implementation and works out the budget estimates for maintenance to be subjected to the CA approval

- AUPA Executive Committees (EC)

The Executive Committees of Associations of the Users of the Arrondissements Tracks (AUPA) are set up since the starting of the programme in the villages concerned. They are responsible for the practical organization of maintenance. To this end, their role is to:

- plan the works to be carried out;
- work out an estimated budget;
- connect the Management Cell and the Brigade for the signature of the contract;
- monitor the contracts implementation;
- give justified opinions in the payment of remunerations;
- support the maintenance brigade in labour management;
- organize financial resources collection;
- ensure the transfer of the resources collected into the funds account;
- give work progress report to the populations on regular basis.

- Inter Village Tracks Users Committees (CIVUP): the CIVUP represent AUPA at the local level. These committees are set up during a Inter Village Tracks Users Committees assembly. They act at the local level in the name of the Executive Committee to which they report. As such, they are assigned to mobilize communities' participation, facilitate communities' participation, in kind and in cash, in rehabilitation and maintenance activities of the tracks and monitor the use of the road infrastructures at the local level.
- Maintenance Brigades; they are set up at the level of each arrondissement for the assigned maintenance work. These brigades are made up of a Head of brigade, Heads of team and labourers (road menders). Each Head of team has under his responsibility about fifteen labourers.

It should be noted that the local committees are set up intervals estimated at approximately 18 local committees per annum. The total number of committees set up is 56. The detail by commune is presented in table after here.

Table N° 2 : Number of local committees [9]

COMMUNES	NUMBER CE	NUMBER CIVUP	TOTAL COMMITTEES
ABOMEY	1	1	2
AGBANGNIZOU	3	5	8
BOHICON	1	1	2
COVE	2	4	6
DJIDJA	4	8	12
OUIHI	2	4	6
ZAGNANADO	3	5	8
ZAKPOTA	3	6	9
ZOGBODOME	1	1	2
TOTAL	20	36	56

Maintenance funding mechanism

• Principles:

The funding of regular tracks maintenance requires the mobilization of adequate local resources to cover the expenses of the activities. The principles applied within the framework of this mobilization are:

- the final recipients of the infrastructure who are the population of the villages served by the track take part in kind, in work and in cash in the maintenance of the track;
- the users of the track take part in the maintenance of the tracks through tolls;
- the resources mobilized for maintenance should be used only for maintenance;
- the funds collection operations are carried out with the support of the local authorities;
- the collected funds are lodged in the accounts of the Tracks Maintenance Communal Funds

• Sources of maintenance funds: the identified sources of maintenance funds are:

- levies on remuneration during the maintenance work;
- toll;
- contributions;
- the financial participation of the Town Council;
- donations and other grants.

The total amount of the funds mobilized for maintenance rural tracks is presented in the table here after:

TABLE N° 3: Recapitulative of the mobilized Funds for the Maintenance [9]

Communes	Amount Cotized	Laking away on the remuneration of the Workmen	Total Mobilized
Abomey	172 600	825 400	998 000
Agbangnizoun	2 161 370	2 575 700	4 737 070
Bohicon	898 750	702 200	1 600 950
Covè	3 371 245	3 350 000	6 721 245
Djidja	5 502 600	7 151 550	12 654 150
Ouinhi	3 889 875	6 854 572	10 744 447
Zagnanado	3 011 780	4 204 200	7 215 980
Zakpota	3 591 748	3 169 300	6 761 048
Zogbodomey	417 500	776 300	1 193 800
Total	23 017 468	29 609 222	52 626 690

Maintenance funds management mechanism

To minimize the risks of poor management of the funds, the following principles are applied:

- the Executive Committees ensure the organization of financial resources collection at the level of the arrondissement. The collection agents recover the funds and return them to the EC;
- the EC keeps documents recalling all the movements of funds between on the one hand the collection agents and the EC, and on the other hand between the EC and the Management Cell;
- all the financial resources mobilized for maintenance on the level of the commune are lodged into a single account;
- withdrawals from this account require compulsorily the signature of the CA chairman and two delegates of the EC sitting in the CA;
- the Management Cell is answerable to the CA Tracks Maintenance Communal Funds. It signs the contracts, sets up the financial resources corresponding to the contract clauses, after approval of the funds by the CA Chairman
- no disbursement can be done without the approval of the Mayor and a budget recalling in detail work to be carried out and duly noted by the Head of Technical Department of the Town Council.

5. CONCLUSION

The Road Sector Support Programme, "Rural Tracks" component is a programme of operationalization of the Transport New Strategy in the rehabilitation and maintenance of the rural tracks in Benin.

Broadly the Programme has achieved its main goal which is to alleviate poverty in rural area by removing the obstacle to the socio-economic development that constitute the lack of practicable rural tracks at any season in the area of intervention, while promoting the local management of this road network that constitute the rural tracks [10]. This objective could be achieved thanks to:

- partnership with the recipient communities which was strategic in the whole of the process of planning- execution of the rural tracks;
- the innovative approach of socialization of rehabilitation work through the option of labour intensification which made it possible to make the programme a direct source of income to the recipients who were recruited as non skilled labour;
- the integration of equal chances in access to opportunities and resources.

The Road Sector Support Programme is currently in its second phase and it is extended to the Departments of Collines, Plateau and Couffo.

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