Feasibility Study of Options for Long Term Knowledge Sharing and Management: Needs Assessment Report

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International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD)

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African Community Access Programme (AFCAP)
Project AFCAP/GEN/096
Feasibility Study of Options for Long Term Knowledge Sharing and Management

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The International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) is a global network of individuals and organisations working together towards improved access, mobility and economic opportunity for poor communities in developing countries. IFRTD has 3000 members, 30 affiliated autonomous national networks and four communities of practice focusing on specific transport-development linkages, including gender and health.

IFRTD was formed to act as a global, but southern driven research, networking and information dissemination platform. IFRTD's research, networking and information dissemination work focuses on promoting stronger connections between rural transport investments and human development outcomes such as poverty reduction, promotion of gender equity and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). IFRTD underscores the importance of transport services, motorised and non-motorised as key in optimising the benefits of investments in rural transport infrastructure

IFRTD engages in research, policy advocacy, networking and information exchange to ensure that new knowledge and practices are created, shared and enhanced, and their application is scaled up for wider impact. Currently, IFRTD is engaged in activities to ensure mobilisation of stakeholders and various knowledge streams that can ensure rural transport issues are not missed out in the post MDGs development framework (Sustainable Development Goals –SDGs).

For further information visit http://www.ifrtd.org.

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Table of Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

AFCAP	African Community Access Programme
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
eg	for example
gTKP	Global Transport Knowledge Practice (Partnership), DFID-funded initiative, now hosted by IRF
ICT	Information and communication technologies
ie	that is to say
IFRTD	International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, UK
ILO	International Labour Organisation, Switzerland
IMT	Intermediate means of transport
IRF	International Road Federation, Switzerland
ITDG	Intermediate Technology Development Group (now Practical Action)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
R4D	Research for Development, DFID-funded portal
RTS	Rural transport services
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
T2	Africa Transport Technology Transfer
TRISP	Transport and Rural Infrastructure Services Partnership (World Bank initiative supported by DFID)
TRL	Transport Research Laboratories, UK
UK	United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

1   Introduction

This is a needs assessment report of the demand for and access to knowledge in rural transport carried out on behalf of the African Community Access Programme (AFCAP) by a team of International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) consultants consisting of Paul Starkey, Priyanthi Fernando and Farai Samhungu. The Terms of Reference for this study are provided in Annex 1.

This study aims to identify the most appropriate method of storing and more importantly sharing and disseminating the research findings and knowledge generated in the sector. The IFRTD team submitted their inception report in January 2013 (Starkey, Samhungu and Fernando, 2013).

As a preparation to the main theme of the final report (the storing and dissemination of knowledge within the sector) the team was expected to carry out a needs assessment survey. The team's Inception Report contained proposals for the survey to provide the information required for the needs assessment report. In early February 2013, the survey was made available on line, through the Survey Monkey website. An email version (prepared in Microsoft Word) was also available for those without good on-line access. The word version of the survey is attached here in Annex 2.

The survey was publicised through email alerts sent out by AFCAP, by IFRTD and by the International Road Federation (IRF) that hosts the gTKP: Global Transport Knowledge Practice (was Partnership), the legacy of a DFID-funded initiative. This on-line survey received a total of 74 online responses from Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, North and South America. About half (47%) of the respondents were from Africa with the majority being from Nigeria and South Africa. Of the 20% of respondents in Asia, India had the highest number of participants.

The respondents were a self-selected group. They mainly comprised transport professionals, working mostly in government, but also several working in the commercial and business sector (including consultancy), a few in aid agencies and international NGOs, academia and local civil society organisations. As noted, most of the respondents were from English-speaking Africa. There were no respondents from the French-speaking African countries: this was partly due to the announcements going out in English and the survey language being in English (the tight budget and timetable prevented translations being made in the time available). However, as noted below, personal contacts ensured that views from Francophone West Africa and Latin America will be reflected in the final report.

In addition, key informants were interviewed by telephone to elicit more in-depth conversations around transport knowledge management. The numbers reached were limited because of time and resources, but the team is confident that they provide adequate understanding of the current needs for transport knowledge in Africa, as well as some insights into what is happening outside the region. Various participants at the forthcoming T2 transport stakeholders' meeting in Botswana will be contacted in March 2013, to gather additional ideas, particularly in relation to future storage and dissemination options.

Both the survey and the telephone interviews included various questions relating to the future storage and dissemination of knowledge in the rural transport sector. These will be reported in the final report. This document will concentrate on the findings of the survey in terms of the needs of transport professionals for knowledge, the gaps they have identified and their preferred means of accessing knowledge.

2   Knowledge demand assessment for TRISP

The team have also built on a previous Knowledge Demand Assessment that was carried out in 2003 for the World Bank/DFID Transport and Rural Infrastructure Services Partnership (TRISP). The detailed analysis was prepared by Lloyd-Laney, Fernando and Young (2003). The TRISP knowledge

demand assessment consulted over 200 stakeholders in the transport sector worldwide, carried out a literature review, held four workshops in the UK, Zimbabwe, Peru and Senegal and sought responses to an electronic questionnaire. Although this survey was carried out a decade ago (and technologies are rapidly changing in the knowledge storage and dissemination sector) it remains highly relevant and its conclusions will be discussed as the more recent survey results are presented.

It is perhaps ironical that the TRISP study on information was never formally published and remains 'grey literature'. In contrast, the inception report of this present (and much smaller) study is already freely available worldwide, thanks to the DFID-funded R4D website.

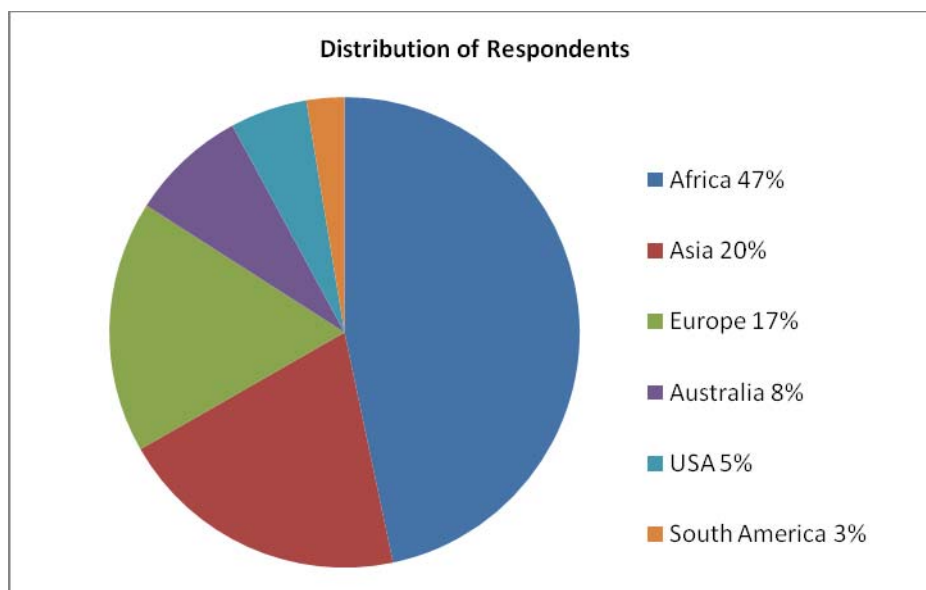## 3   Characteristics of the survey respondents

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents who took completed the online survey

Government actors accounted for the highest number of survey respondents at 24%, a reflection of the fact that the majority of transport actors in the African region are government institutions. International and local NGO/CSOs accounted for 23% of respondents. Interestingly 19% of respondents were from the commercial/business sector.
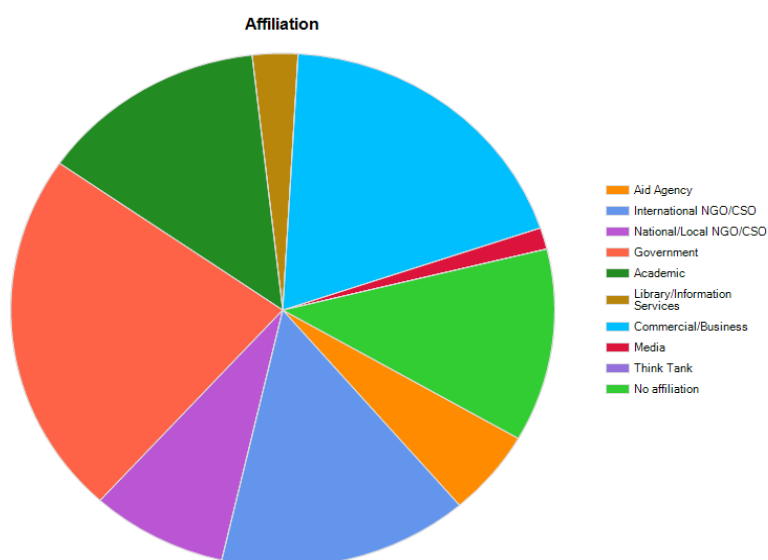

Figure 2: The affiliation of respondents

4   What information is in demand?

The TRISP study found that there was no global consensus as to what constituted 'gaps' in transport knowledge, and that people's information demands varied by region, profession, what they want the information for and timing. One area of consensus was that users appeared more satisfied with information on the technical aspects of road construction, but were less able to find information on social and environmental issues. The paucity of monitoring and evaluation data and practical information on implementation were also areas of frustration. The provision of national statistics from government sources were considered inadequate. Governments were not seen to prioritise the generation and sharing of transport information.

Overall, it seemed that users were not so much interested in new knowledge as in better access to, and engagement with existing knowledge. According to the TRISP study, most users wanted to be able to select information from a broad spectrum of sources, and were most interested in information that reflected local realities and was of practical use to them in their work.

The present survey suggested that although information needs were diverse, majority of the respondents (80%) wanted information on rural transport infrastructure and community access and mobility needs. There was also a relatively high demand for information on rural transport services (70%), technology (67%) and economic and financial (63%) issues. The demand for information on governance issues and gender and disability was relatively lower, with approximately 50% of respondents identifying these areas as essential to the administration of their work.
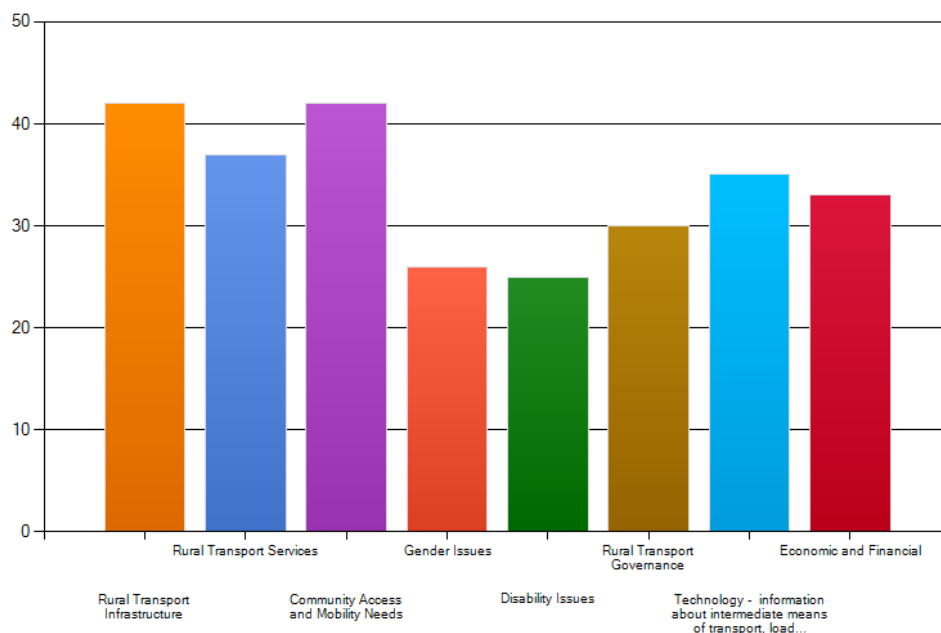

Figure 3: Information needs identified by survey respondents

A complementary question on knowledge gaps showed that people were concerned by the lack of information i on a large range of topics, with information on disability issues being particularly lacking (see Figure 4).

From your perspective, how sufficient is the available information on the following topics?
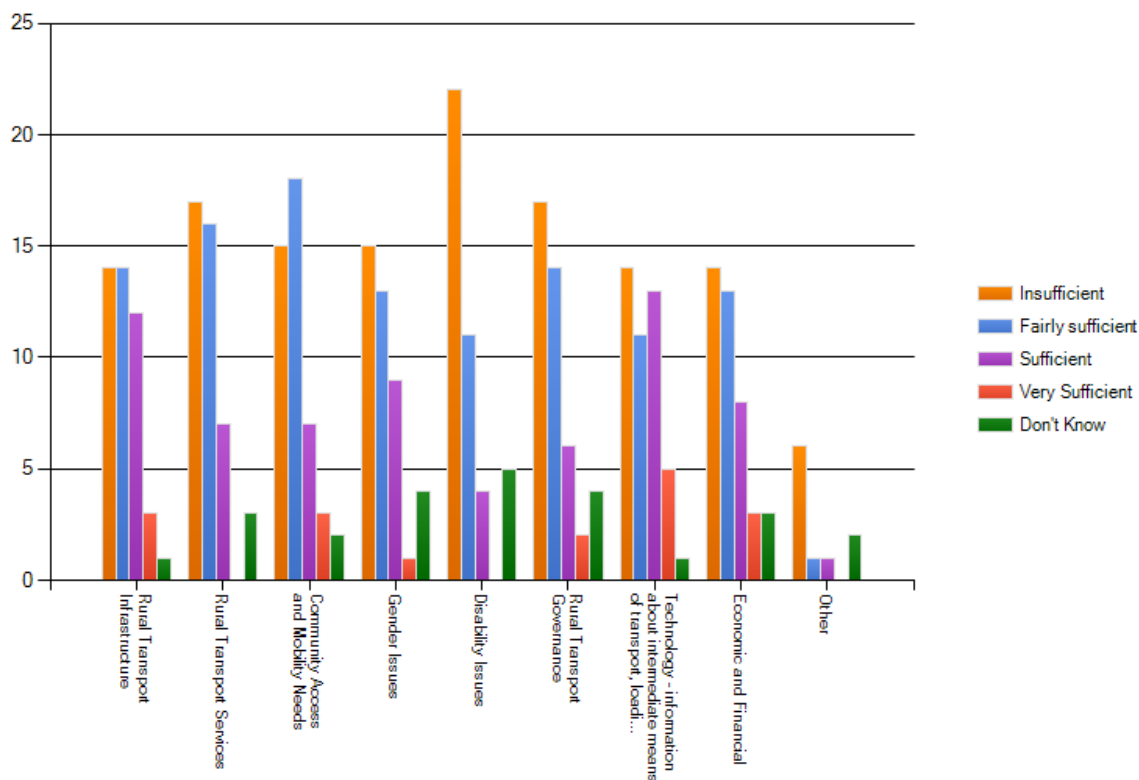
Figure 4: Survey results on the sufficiency of information on various topics

The ease of access to current information within the rural transport sector was also explored, revealing that most information on rural transport was not available within the internal databases of most organisations. Information on rural transport is largely accessed through search engines, personal contacts, specialist transport websites and development and research websites. There was minimal use of regional information centres or national research structures, indicating some reluctance to engage with national data. Despite the availability of information from a variety of platforms, the general consensus among respondents revealed that information remains largely inaccessible and difficult to find, with 46% of respondents identifying information on rural transport as 'somewhat difficult' to access (Figure 5).
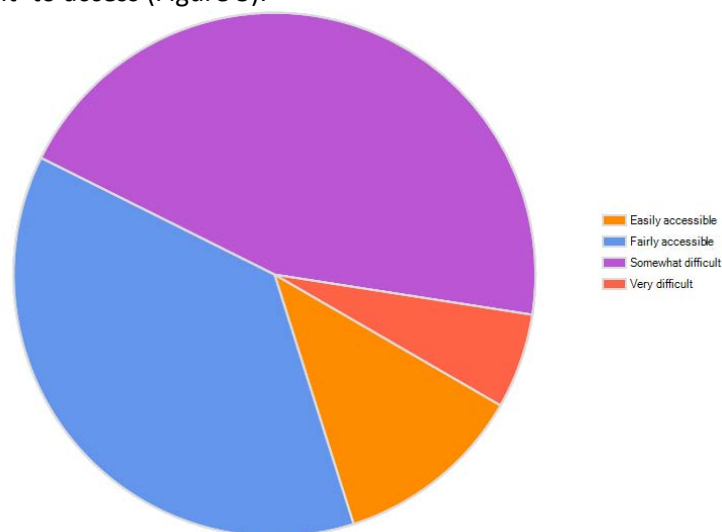

Figure 5: Survey results on the accessibility of information in the rural transport sector

In addition respondents revealed that information from original sources was significantly more beneficial than information that had been repackaged by intermediaries. The implications of these findings reveal a need for information within the rural transport sector to be stored in a more comprehensive, easily accessible database that stores information in its original form as well as repacked condensed information from intermediaries. While most practitioners use both sources of information for their research, 83% of respondents prefer information that has not been repacked or condensed. Information from original sources was seen as being authentic, the basis of rigorous analysis and more reliable as it was not tampered with. Nevertheless information from intermediaries was still seen as useful for targeting particular stakeholder groups that need information that is not as detailed.

The key person interviews corroborated some of the findings from the survey. Infrastructure information tended to be dominant and the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD) had broken some ground in producing gender and transport information. However, respondents pointed out that the perception of a 'lack of information' did not necessarily mean that information did not exist, but that people did not know how to access this information, or that they were not able to sift the information and pull out what was relevant.

5   Sources of demand for information

The TRISP study makes reference to a review of global research communication that identified four issues that led to a disjunct between knowledge generators and users. These are:

- The distance between 'scholarly' research and development policy shapers, international media and international NGOs
- The gap between research carried out at a national level in developing countries and the broader international debates
- The lack of communication between the research community, both national and international, and the worlds of policy and practice
- Within developing countries, constraints in the flow of knowledge between the national level and the grassroots and vice versa. The TRISP study confirmed that these gaps existed within the transport sector as well.

In 2003, there seemed to be a high level of demand from English-speaking Africa (in contrast to the other regions that the TRISP study investigated); web statistics showed that users in the north are more dominant, and that students, government officials and consultancy organisations featured as large scale users of information services. The current survey did not explore these issues in depth.

In contrast to the TRISP study, from the present survey, there seems to be greater use of the internet, and websites are a popular source of information. This reflects the spread of electronic communications in the last 10 years, but even then, the key person interviews did suggest that access to the internet for many professionals was not always easy. In Tanzania and Uganda, for example, internet access was severely restricted by data costs which are still relatively higher in Africa as well as the fact that those who access internet using their mobile phones cannot download large files such as reports and newsletters.

6   Where should information be placed?

The positioning of information would depend on the understanding of how people access and use it and what we want them to do with that information. For instance, increasing users' knowledge levels, challenging attitudes and changing behaviour all require different strategies of engagement with users. The scope of this study is limited to making knowledge available, rather than using that knowledge to change behaviour.

People have a common set of 'filters' that they use when selecting information sources, though the importance of each filter could vary (Lloyd-Laney et al, 2003). The filters include awareness of the source; the credibility of author and/or institution; reliability of content; satisfaction levels from previous use of materials; trustworthiness of source; timeliness (i.e., currency of the information and adequacy of responses to enquiries); cost (money, time, personnel); interactivity of source; and language.

Active networking is one of the most successful strategies in engaging users and promoting knowledge uptake. But as the TRISP study found out, the transport sector is not very well networked – both in terms of connecting different transport stakeholders, or engaging with other development actors who could be interested in issues of mobility. Weaknesses in the sector include inadequate knowledge and sharing environments within transport organisations; choosing communications media that are appropriate to their own environments rather than those of their users; charging for information and choosing English as the dominant language of dissemination. (Lloyd-Laney et al, 2003)

In the current survey we found that the highest preferences for the dissemination and accessing information were websites, publications and workshops and conferences, and that most organizations shared the information they generated through reports and websites. This matches where people go for information. 67% or respondents also highlighted that they found alerts useful in highlighting information available from numerous stakeholders. The IFRTD newsletter was highly ranked as a source of good information, together with the GTKP. Information from Road Federations and the Transport Research Newsletters also mentioned.
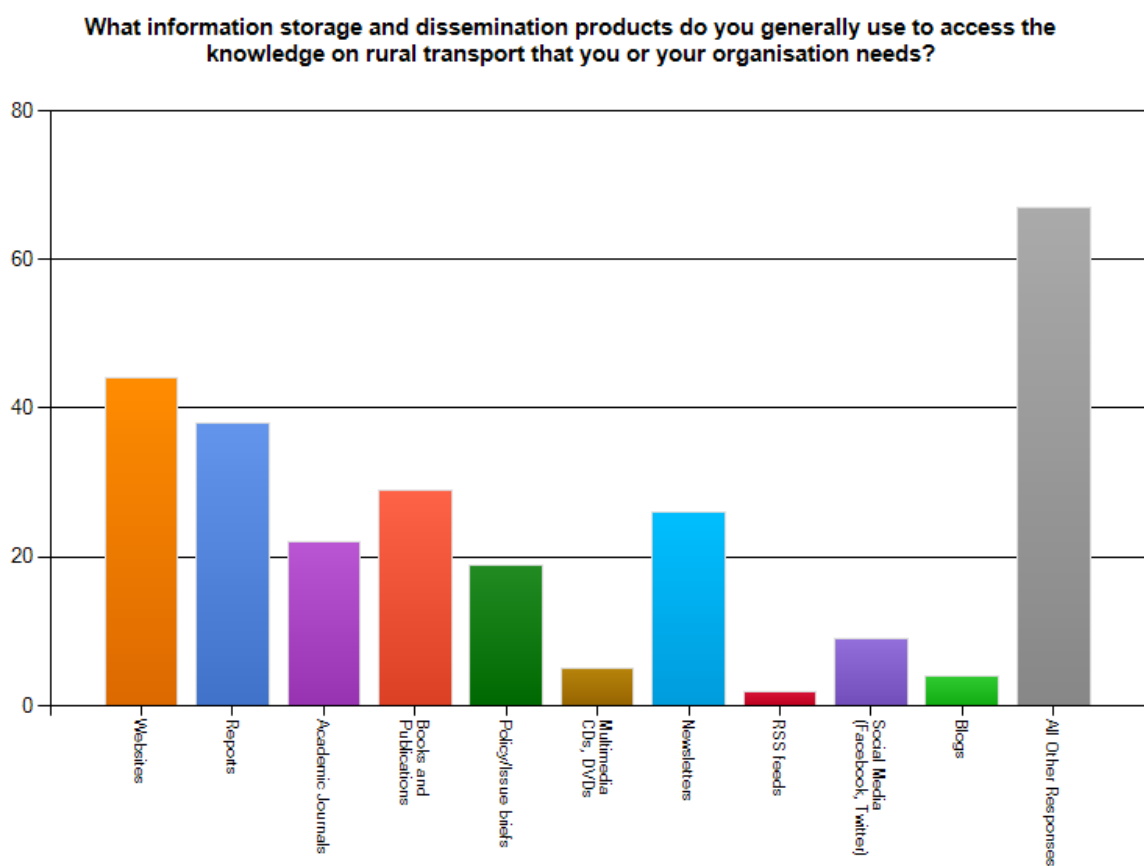

Figure 6: Survey results on the information products people access

Even though the shift has been towards more Internet based information sharing, there is still limited use of social media, which most people perceive as not suited to serious information sharing.

However, some key persons interviewed seemed to show a willingness to try social media, and suggested that its use as a means of dissemination had been suggested at the AFCAP meeting in Mozambique in 2012.

It was recognized that there were a lot of people that held rural transport information. Governments had a lot of information that was generated through their national road and transport agencies; the private companies also generated considerable information through their consultancy work; universities should be encouraged to engage with rural transport like they engage with other sectors.

It is important that this information is placed in the public domain and that efforts should be made to strengthen information exchange and knowledge through reciprocal links to websites, that publications are made more readily available, and that the grey literature (i.e. unpublished information) is shared, particularly through newsletters (electronic and printed), and at conferences. The key informants interviewed felt what is needed is a system that collects all the information available and stores it in one place that is easily accessible, and has sufficient resources to innovatively link people to this information. The recent survey respondents indicated a strong preference for a network of organizations, with clear and transparent roles and responsibilities. There was an interest in a system of alerts for when new information became available, and a suggestion of transferring knowledge from 'older' experts to younger professionals through systems of mentoring.

7   Conclusions

- There is need for a system that collects the information available and puts it in one known and accessible place. This should be accompanied by a mechanism of alerting practitioners to this new information through such things as emails or a newsletter. Use of social media should also be actively promoted as was recommended at the AFCAP meeting in Mozambique 2012. To achieve this, dedicated resources will be required to ensure sustainability

- There is need to encourage universities to be involved in research, curriculum development and teaching of rural transport issues as they are in other knowledge development areas. This requires a deliberate effort to be focussed on academic institutions as one mechanism of ensuring rural transport knowledge is passed on to future practitioners and policy makers.

- There is an urgent need to create a system that collates information as well as provides links to knowledge resources that are easily available and relevant to the needs of the diverse actors in the rural transport sector.

- There is a need for information within the rural transport sector to be stored in a more comprehensive, easily accessible database that stores information in its original form as well as repackaged condensed information from intermediaries.

- The Internet is linking people with information resources that they would otherwise not access due to a number of constraints. There is need to tap the opportunities offered by Internet to establish e-libraries that stakeholders can easily access. However, such systems need to explore accessibility options based on cost and bandwidth especially for users in different African contexts.

- Make publications more available. Organisations with information must be encouraged to share catalogues of all the information they have through newsletters and events that bring practitioners together. For example organisers of

events such as T2 should request participants to bring information/catalogues of information to events as a matter of practice.

- Involve stakeholders to validate the information and knowledge products to ensure that the quality of information accessible to users is of high quality and meets their needs.
- Create demand for information by making sure that users are aware of what information is available, where it is held and how they can sift through massive amounts of information to pick out what they need.
- Develop national and regional guidelines and benchmarks for information dissemination in the rural transport sector.
- Institutions should develop a culture of sharing important information internally and within their networks. They should be encouraged to cross-post useful information they receive to their listservers. Web tools such as Diigo and others can help facilitate this.
- There were suggestions to use the Technology Transfer centres in Tanzania and Botswana to share information.
- Governments should be involved in storage and dissemination as they are responsible for regulation of transport issues and have more resources. They also hold a great amount of information through national road and transport agencies.
- Establish mentorship programmes for young practitioners in the sector. A lot of information held by older experts and some knowledge they hold has not been captured (substantial information held in people's heads and danger of losing it).
- Involve the private sector: they hold a lot of information.

8   References

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Lloyd-Laney M, Fernando P and Young J, 2003. *Knowledge demand assessment: Final Report*. Prepared for the Transport and Rural Infrastructure Services Partnership (TRISP). CommsConsult, Falmouth, UK. 30p.

Starkey P, Samhungu F and Fernando P, 2013. *Feasibility study of options for long term knowledge sharing and management: Inception report*. International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), London, UK for Crown Agents, Sutton, UK. 25p. Available at: http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/PDF/Outputs/AfCap/AFCAP-GEN-096_Inception-Report.pdf

9   Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Background

The goal of AFCAP is sustained economic and social development, poverty reduction and improved livelihoods of the rural poor through more effective, efficient and equitable access to socio-economic opportunities.

The purpose of AFCAP is to create sustainable access for rural communities to external opportunities and services including health, education, employment, markets and social networks. Therefore, to achieve the programme goal and purpose, AFCAP has a vision of delivering an integrated, wide-ranging portfolio of research, dissemination and training activities. AFCAP is currently active in Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan and is developing relationships with a number of other countries and regional organisations across Africa.

AFCAP provides advice and supports applied research to address rural access constraints, communicates the research outcomes to stakeholders, and supports the mainstreaming of the research results into practice. A number of projects have been implemented under AFCAP which have generated a selection of research findings that are to be made available to relevant practitioners and classified as public knowledge. By disseminating knowledge, AFCAP aims to improve policy making, technical research and improve rural access

Objective

The objective of the assignment is to identify the most appropriate method of storing and more importantly sharing and disseminating the research findings and knowledge generated in the sector. The proposed solution would continue to exist beyond AFCAP and have the capacity to integrate or link with similar knowledge management and sharing solutions.

The aim would be to allow relevant research findings to be built upon and meet the key criteria of being accessible and available. These research findings shall be an evidence base which can assist and support policymaking and technical delivery of relevant transport projects and programmes.

Scope of the Services

The project will be managed and funded by AFCAP. Services required include:
- Investigate the range of feasible knowledge management and sharing solutions. Consideration should also be given to the governance and sustainability of the proposed solution;
- Evaluate the existing knowledge management and sharing solutions in the Infrastructure/Transport and Development Research sectors, focusing particularly on the institutions or bodies that have ownership and lead the promotion of such knowledge;
- Conduct an appropriate survey/assessment of practitioners current and future research needs and requirements for access. The Consultant shall be responsible for identifying key stakeholders in consultation with Crown Agents; and
- Recommend the best available knowledge management and sharing solution for AFCAP. The recommendation will pay particular attention to the institution that shall take ownership and lead dissemination of AFCAP research findings.

Deliverables
- Inception Report: This will elaborate the work plan for the assignment, the methods to be used to assess the various knowledge management and dissemination options and the list of and a list of stakeholders to be consulted.
- Needs Assessment Report: Will present an assessment the existing and potential research and knowledge needs by stakeholders and the needs that the proposed knowledge management framework will need to meet.
- Final Recommendations Report: This will present the various options that will have been investigated, the merits and demerits of each case and estimated costs of the proposed solution or set of solutions.

10 Annex 2: Survey form (Word version, similar to the on-line survey)

African Community Access Programme (AFCAP) has identified the need to strengthen knowledge management and dissemination in the rural transport and development sector. Through the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), AFCAP has commissioned a team to evaluate potential knowledge management and sharing opportunities and to recommend the best available knowledge management and sharing solution. As the first step of this assignment, the team would like to take stock of how different transport professionals access the information that they need for their work. The team also wish to learn how transport research is stored and shared, and the best practices at national and international levels. Please could you respond to the attached questionnaire as comprehensively as you can. Any comments/questions/ideas outside of the questionnaire are also welcome.

Personal details	Responses
Date	
Name	
Organisation	
Job Title	
Location	
Affiliation	Choose an item If other, please specify

YOUR ORGANISATION, INFORMATION AND DISSEMINATION

1. What type of information (if any) that is relevant to rural transport do you or your organisation produce?	
2. What do you or your organisation use to disseminate rural transport information?	☐ Websites ☐ Reports ☐ Academic Journals ☐ Books and publications ☐ Policy/Issue briefs ☐ Multimedia CDs, DVDs

	☐ Newsletters
	☐ RSS feeds
	☐ Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
	☐ Blogs
	☐ Bibliographies
	☐ Workshops and Conferences
	☐ Fact Sheets
	☐ Manuals
	☐ Other
	If other, please specify
3. Would you say you or your organisation actively targets an audience with information your organisation has produced or do you just make it available for people to find?	Choose an item.
4. Do you have a system for storing information, relevant to rural transport, in your organisation?	
5. Who has access to this information relating to rural transport?	

INFORMATION NEEDS AND ACCESS

| | ☐ Rural Transport Infrastructure |

6.	What information on rural transport and related sectors do you need to facilitate your work? *Please tick all the areas you need for your work and please add any topics or subtopics that are particularly important to you.*	☐ Rural Transport Services ☐ Community Access and Mobility Needs ☐ Gender Issues ☐ Disability Issues ☐ Rural Transport Governance ☐ Technology- information about intermediate means of transport, loading, etc. ☐ Economic and Financial ☐ Other If other, please specify
7.	Is the information you need available within your organisation?	Choose an item.
8.	Is it available outside your organisation?	Choose an item.
9.	If it is available outside your organisation, where do you access it? *Please tick all the systems you commonly use.*	☐ National research structure ☐ National information centre ☐ Library ☐ Regional information centre ☐ Development and research websites ☐ Specialist transport websites ☐ Personal contacts ☐ Google and other search engines ☐ Other If other, please specify
10.	What information storage and dissemination products do you generally use to access the knowledge on rural	☐ Websites ☐ Reports ☐ Academic Journals

transport that you or your organisation needs?	☐ Books and publications ☐ Policy/Issue briefs ☐ Multimedia, CDs, DVDs ☐ Newsletters ☐ RSS feeds ☐ Social Media (Facebook, Twitter) ☐ Blogs ☐ Workshops and Conferences ☐ Fact Sheets ☐ Manuals ☐ Other If other, please specify
11. Please rate each of the following methods of disseminating and accessing information according to your preferences with 1 being low (little value/interest) and 5 being high (great value/interest) to you.	☐ Newsletters ☐ Email discussion groups ☐ Publications ☐ Workshops and Conferences ☐ References and Citations ☐ Policy briefing papers ☐ Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, others) ☐ Websites ☐ RSS feeds
12. Is the information you need accessible?	☐ Easily Accessible ☐ Fairly Accessible ☐ Somewhat Difficult ☐ Very Difficult
13. Some rural transport information comes from the original sources and some comes from intermediaries that package information to suit different target groups. Where does most of the rural transport information you use come from?	☐ Almost all original, very little intermediary ☐ Most original, some intermediary ☐ About half and half ☐ Some original, most intermediary ☐ Very little original, almost all intermediary
14. What is your preference?	Choose an item. Please explain why

15. Do you receive any alerts informing you of new information about rural transport?	*Alerts may include newsletters, listserves (emails sent to particular groups of subscribed people), RSS feeds, Twitter, Facebook and Wiki group alerts.* Choose an item.
16. From which organisations do you receive alerts from? Please list up to 5, in order of preference with the first being most useful to you. *Specify the country or region where the organisations are based.*	Alert 1 (most preferred) Title or description Organisation Country Alert type Choose an item. --- Alert 2 Title or description Organisation Country Alert Type Choose an item. --- Alert 3 Title or description Organisation Country Alert Type Choose an item. --- Alert 4 Title or description Organisation Country Alert Type Choose an item. --- Alert 5 Title or description

	Organisation
	Country
	Alert Type
	Choose an item.

INFORMATION GAPS

17. From your perspective, how sufficient is the available information on the following topics?	Rural Transport Infrastructure *Choose an item.* Rural Transport Services *Choose an item.* Community Access and Mobility Needs *Choose an item.* Gender Issues *Choose an item.* Disability Issues *Choose an item.* Rural Transport Governance *Choose an item.* Technology – information about intermediate means of transport, loading, etc. *Choose an item.* Economic and Financial *Choose an item.* If other, please specify *Choose an item.*
18. What do you think are the most important knowledge gaps in the rural transport system?	

KNOWLEDGE STORAGE SYSTEMS

19. Based on your knowledge of the rural transport sector, are there any central systems at national or regional level that manage and	Please list

disseminate information that includes rural transport topics.	
20. Which of the systems you have listed above stand out for you?	Please list 3
21. Why do they stand out?	☐ The quality of their information is excellent ☐ The quantity and diversity of their information is excellent ☐ Their dissemination tactics meet my needs ☐ Other If other, please specify
22. Are you aware of any excellent information management and dissemination systems outside the rural transport sector?	Choose an item. If yes, please explain
23. From the list above, which systems provide the best examples for the transport sector to learn from?	Please list and explain
24. If existing knowledge in the rural transport sector were to be consolidated, who should be taking responsibility for storing and disseminating this knowledge?	☐ A single organisation ☐ A consortium or network of collaborating organisations ☐ No change required If you ticked a single organisation, please give your suggested organisation If you ticked a consortium or network of collaborating

	organisations, please list some key organisations that should be involved in this
25. Based on your knowledge of the rural transport sector, what else needs to be done to improve the management and sharing of information?	If possible, please give one (or more) concrete suggestions

Other leads

Can you suggest other people who might be able to participate in the research as a key informant interview?	Choose an item.
Name	
Organisation	
Job Title	
Email	
Phone	