



# **‘Cycling Out Of Poverty’ through a culture of bicycle ownership and use: A Case Study.**

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## ABSTRACT

South Africa does not currently have a strong bicycle culture, as most cycling is of a recreational nature. At the same time, inadequate and expensive transport, particularly for many rural individuals and groups, is one of the significant features of poverty in South Africa's rural areas. Many people do not have easy access to vital social and economic activities and opportunities. Because of transport limitations, attempts to promote bicycle transport, by establishing **micro bicycle retail outlets** in identified rural communities have been in place since the year 2000 in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Cycling is viewed as a relatively cheap and efficient means of transport, which has the potential to reduce the transport burden of groups and individuals designated under the term the 'rural poor'.

This study is an exploratory qualitative investigation. Its main aim was to uncover and understand (through observation and interviews), the perceptions of identified rural groups and individuals about the potential of bicycle transport in improving rural travel of up to 20 kilometres. The study sought to identify factors influencing bicycle ownership and use, and whether or not this has become the prerogative of both male and female members of rural communities. The key issues which emerged from the collected data, point to the following: that household economic status; cultural prohibitions; self-interests of key stake holders; lack of credit facilities and or subsidies, are the main obstacles for many rural inhabitants with interest in undertaking investment in bicycle transport resources.

## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this study to my late Grand Mother: Mrs Saraphinah Ntombikazi Ma-Cele – Ngcobo, whose influence on my life I will always cherish.*

# **DECLARATION**

Except where otherwise specified in the text, this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted in part or in full to any other University.

Sipho Casper Ngcobo, September 2003

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## ACRONYMS

CARCAM:	Community Access Road Construction and Maintenance
CARNS:	Community Access Roads Needs Study
DoT:	Department of Transport
IMT:	Intermediate Means of Transport
ITDP:	Institute for Transport and Development Policy
KZN:	KwaZulu-Natal
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA:	Overseas Development Administration
RDP:	Reconstruction and Development Policy
UK:	United Kingdom
USA:	United States of America

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# Chapter One

## *Introduction*

### **1.1 Overture**

Several experts in the vast field of social issues have undertaken to draw up accounts of poverty in its many dimensional forms. The researcher in this study has also taken up the challenge of making a contribution towards a better understanding of poverty by studying the importance of Bicycle Transport. This has been done with reference to poverty reduction as a goal of development. Understanding poverty reduction in this way is based on the fact that:

In many developing countries, peasants, rural workers and all those designated under the term ‘rural poor’, constitute a priority ‘target’ or clientele for the state and its numerous agencies, NGOs and international organizations and agencies – who attempt or intend to mobilize the ‘rural poor’ in a multitude of different (developmental) projects or schemes. The ‘rural poor’ also constitute the largest group of excluded people...in terms of being cut off from services and opportunities (Siefel and Wolfe: 1994: 40).

Cycling out of poverty may sound like a distant dream. However, for the researcher in this study, it is basically a statement of hope and a call to action. Hope that the rural environment in many developing countries may be seen for what it is – an environment filled with variety, with complexity as well as with simplicity and that its people may therefore be seen as groups, as individuals and as human beings who are aware of their priority needs. “A call to action for the poor and the wealthy alike...to change the world so that many more may have among other things, access to education, health and other vital services and opportunities and have a voice in what is happening in their communities” (PovertyNet: 2003: 1).

## 1.2 Motivation

According to the White Paper (1996) on National Transport Policy:

South Africa has inherited a public passenger transport system that is under-performing against its obligation to achieve national goals. Key Reconstruction and Development Policy (RDP) goals are not being met, including basic access and social integration. Workforce mobility is restricted, creating friction around national efforts to create employment opportunities. Current spacial distribution leaves commuters and other residents distant from key services that they need, and the system's overall inefficiency is creating high requirements for subsidy.

This state of affairs is true for many rural inhabitants of developing countries. According to Riverson and Carpetis (1991), one of the two major rural transport gaps is:

Poor and inadequate rural transport services, caused by the lack of Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs) (eg; Bicycles) and appropriate infrastructure for their use...(and this) has meant that the carrying of goods and access to vital services and opportunities between and within villages is dependent almost entirely on walking and head- or shoulder-carrying.

In South Africa, one of the intervention strategies that was devised to deal with this transport problem has since 1998, been in the form of establishing micro bicycle outlets in low-income urban and rural communities to make bicycles, spares and repairs accessible to the members of these communities. This strategy is driven by a partnership between the South African Department of Transport (DoT) at both national and provincial level, and Afribike – a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). It is claimed that from the date of its inception right up to the middle of the year 2002, this partnership: “has mobilized over 10,000 South Africans with bicycles and bicycle skills training” (AfribikeOnline: 2002: 1). Two micro bicycle retail outlets have been established in two rural communities of the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

### 1.3 Objectives and Location

This study is an exploratory, qualitative investigation of the perceptions of rural target groups and individuals about the introduction and the promotion of used and recycled bicycles in their areas. Its main aim was to determine the extent of interest (or lack of interest) that rural target groups and individuals were showing in bicycles and related resources made available in their areas, and also:

- To determine whether or not target groups and individuals see any potential of bicycle transport to help them save time and energy and raise productivity.
- To be able to provide a directional picture of target group or clientele sentiment through data gained from observation and interviews.
- To highlight any factors that encourage or limit the willingness to undertake investment needed to acquire bicycles and to pay for their maintenance regularly.

The study sought to uncover and understand views and opinions of bicycle project managers, learners, teachers, workers and other rural inhabitants about the initiative to provide low-cost bicycle resources as a means to increase low cost mobility and access to vital services and opportunities.

The study was conducted in two rural communities of the KwaZulu-Natal Province – **Muden**: located in the midlands between Greytown and the town of Mooi River, and, **Enqabeni**: located off the South Coast of the KZN – Province between Izingolweni and Harding. The following figure indicates the location of the research sites.

### 1.4 Context and Rationale

Transport needs claim a significant part of daily life for rural populations, especially for women and children (Watson: 1996: 3). These needs cannot always be met because of the ever-present rural transport problem. Factors such as: "... lack of physical infrastructure,

different patterns of human settlement and economic activity, a dearth of means of transport, relatively high cost in owning and operating the means of transport and a range of other factors” (ITT Ltd: 1996) contribute in making the transport problem worse. This means that many ‘rural poor’ suffer from isolation – not only in the sense of remoteness, but also in the sense of being cut off from ideas and innovations (ITT Ltd: 1996: 6). This in turn makes it difficult for the ‘rural poor’ to benefit, if at all, from the development process.

Improved rural travel within communities, require the availability of adequate, appropriate and affordable transport and transport services. Bicycles have been identified as an ideal intermediate means of transport (IMT). It has been pointed out that: “On average, bicycles are three-times faster than walking, and significantly less costly than taxi trips” (AfribikeOnline: 2002: 1). Again, it is stated that: “In rural areas, cultural prohibitions, cost and easy access to cycling products and resources have for a long time, been identified as the major obstacles to mobility facing many rural groups and individuals. For instance, the prevailing cultured gender roles discourage women from cycling” (AfribikeOnline: 2002). There is therefore a great present need to dissolve such barriers to utility cycling.

The study of this nature is necessary for a number of reasons. Some of the main reasons have to do with:

- Understanding the rural transport problem from the perspective of the “rural poor” – those it affects the most.
- Understanding the deeply rooted gender constructions (usually based on culture) that deny women access to cycling products and resources and therefore the right to benefit from the development process.
- Understanding the different perspectives of bicycle transport users and non – users.
- Providing a vital information source that will assist in future rural transport development programmes and policy planning, at all levels of government and;

- Understanding the impact of poverty from the perspective of those it affects the most – the “rural poor”.

In this study, it is hypothesized that: **Cost, low-income levels, cultural restrictions and self-interest of key stakeholders are the major obstacles to the process of developing a strong bicycle culture in rural communities.**

## 1.5 Defining Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following key terms are defined as follows:

- **Cycling** – refers to the concept of using a bicycle as an economic asset to improve access to education, jobs, markets and health-care; increase household income; improve quality of life; and increase time spent with family.
- **Poverty** – refers to inadequate income to meet household needs; not being able to go to school or having to walk a long distance to access education, jobs, markets and other vital services and therefore not being able to improve quality of life; being powerless to change social position.
- **Culture** – refers to a custom or tradition; “a way of life”, that make it socially acceptable or unacceptable for men, women, boys and girls (particularly the rural poor) to own and use a bicycle without any restrictions imposed by one social group on another.

## 1.6 The Route

In chapter two the discussion involves looking at previous case studies on Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs), (particularly bicycles) in developing countries. There seemed to be very scarce technical literature (research reports) on bicycle transport or any other intermediate means of transport that deal specifically with the South African

situation. Most of the available related literature used in this study comes from the World Bank Development Group. In this chapter, there is also a discussion on issues arising from general or non-technical literature on cycling as well as on development practice. This is meant to broaden our understanding of bicycle transport and also our understanding of the nature of development in practice. In this section, we also present a profile about Afribike, as well as government thinking on rural transport development. Here, special attention is given to the KwaZulu-Natal Scholar Bicycle Project initiated by the Provincial Department of Transport (KZN – DoT). The chapter concludes by looking at views from outside of the government sector with regard to rural development initiatives and rural transport development in particular.

Chapter three is concerned with the methodology adopted for the study. It deals with such issues as sampling, data collection / design, data analysis, time frame, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

In chapter four the discussion revolves around field experiences (findings) of the study.

Chapter five is concerned with reflections on some of the key issues arising from the researcher's field experiences. The last chapter of this study – chapter six, has a summary of conclusions and recommendations. Key highlighted issues in the study are given in a summary form.



# Chapter Two

## *Literature Review*

### 2.1 Past Discoveries

The technical related literature available on the subject of Intermediate Means of Transport (IMTs), is in the form of case studies which have been compiled to draw lessons from the experiences of organizations such as the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, the World Bank, the Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank Gender and Transport Thematic Group, and various Non Governmental Organizations. These case studies are considered as works in progress and are updated periodically. They cover experiences learned from a wide range of developing countries all over the world. Although most of them are summary rather than full reports and mostly survey reports, they are however, a very useful source of information on Bicycle Transport and other Intermediate Means of Transport.

All these case studies locate the IMTs between two extreme transport technologies. According to Sarkey (2001: vii) for instance: “The basic transport involves people walking within as well as between locations and carrying things themselves”. This is a simple, cheap and efficient form of transport available to many rural people travelling short distances and carrying small loads. Starkey continues to state that: “At the other end of the spectrum are large-scale transportation devices including lorries, buses, motorcars, and so on. These technologies are intrinsically complicated and expensive” (Starkey: 2001). The question of cost and that of the inadequacy, in terms of the availability or unavailability of rural transport as well as the impact of these factors on the ‘rural poor’ run through all the available literature. These limitations have meant that: “Many rural inhabitants are forced to walk to their destinations, wasting valuable time that could be spent generating income, gaining skills, or meeting household needs” (AfriBikeOnline: 2002: 1).

The intermediate Means of Transport are intermediate in the sense that they effectively bridge the gap between walking, carrying and large-scale transport. According to Starkey (2001: vii) again: “A wide variety of land-based IMTs including bicycles, tricycles, wheel barrows, hand-carts, animal-powered transport, motorcycles and many others, increase transport capacity and reduce drudgery at a relatively low capital cost by playing a vital complementary role between the two extremes”. In many developing countries, intermediate transport technologies such as bicycles are seen to be capable of providing solutions to local transport problems. It was because of this very same desire to find solutions to local transport problems (particularly in rural areas) which led the National Department of Transport (DoT) to form a partnership with Afribike – an NGO, which in turn resulted in the creation of a Scholar Bicycle Project known as “Shova – Lula”. It was also because of this desire that the KZN Scholar Bicycle Pilot Project was launched at Muden as well as at Enqabeni respectively (V3 Project Report: 2001).

The following common key issues have been identified in almost all the case studies on the related literature. For example, Malmberg Calvo, C. (1994: 1-2) suggests that:

- Ownership and use of a bicycle for personal transport is influenced by factors like household economic status, cultural background and location with regard to terrain and infrastructure.
- Bicycle cost, for those regarded as the ‘rural poor’ is high. Lack of credit means that the cost of a bicycle has to be met in full when purchased. This strains the household’s resources.
- Culturally, bicycle ownership and use is the prerogative of the male members of the household. Bicycle ownership confers social prestige and its use is monopolized by men to reduce the time and cost of making journeys outside the village.
- The locational characteristics of the area of residence also influence bicycle ownership. Bicycle ownership is highest in the flatter lowlands and tends to decline as altitude and gradients increase. Bicycle use is also affected by the road surface – well - maintained roads are easier and safer to navigate than poorly maintained ones.



One of the key themes which, is mentioned through all the available literature on bicycle transport, is that there are major gender inequalities in rural transport planning. This is the case despite the fact that for Sub-Saharan Africa, most village transport still involves people (mainly women) walking and mostly, head-loading. This means that the benefits arising from the promotion of IMTs such as bicycles are very often not shared equally. What is more likely to happen is that:

The more marginalized members of society may even be impoverished (relatively or absolutely) by the entrepreneurial activities of richer people able to afford transport technologies. Women, the elderly and people with special needs are unlikely to benefit proportionally unless there is specific targeting, in relation to technological choice, information, subsidies, credit, income-generating opportunities and / or the formation of appropriate empowerment groups (Starkey: 2001: 3).

Another important issue that is dealt with extensively in the literature pertaining to matters related to IMTs and rural transport is the role of physical transport infrastructure; for example, roads, bridges, foot paths, tracks and so on. According to the African Development Report (1999: 109) prepared by the African Development Bank:

Improvement in rural roads, bridges and paths have the potential to improve the position of the poor in several ways...it can reduce the transport burden where foot and bicycle travel is involved by allowing passage and shortening journeys.

Furthermore, "IMTs can allow access to social services and non-agricultural income-generating activities including health clinics, for which travel time is reduced" (CARNS: 1997: 1.1 – 1.2).

The sentiment echoed in the African Development Report is in line with the vision statement of the national DoT, set out in the draft White Paper on National Transport Policy of July 1996. In that document, it is stated that the vision of the department is to:

Provide safe, reliable, efficient, and fully integrated transport...infrastructure...in a fashion that supports government strategies for economic and social development whilst being environmentally and economically sustainable...to support the goals of the RDP for meeting basic needs, growing the economy, developing human resources, and democratising decision making...(CARNS: 1997).

## **2.2 Bicycles and their beginnings**

Mary Reynolds in her article: “Who rides bicycles and why?” (1989: 2), begins by making this bold statement in an attempt to answer her own question:

The bicycle is a triumph of simplicity and efficiency: relative to its mass, nothing else moves faster or further for the amount of energy consumed. It is the greenest of machines, making almost no demands on the earth’s surface...It is little wonder therefore that more and more people in the world depend on bicycles than any other form of transport.

In spite of this positive way of looking at bicycles, it is however, also true that: “There were times when the bike was seen as a backward and painful way of getting about rather than an exhilarating, efficient, product of functional design and elegant technology” (Reynolds: 1989: 5). This is true in more developed countries where transport users have many modes of transport to choose from and where the standard of living is generally high for most people. In the developing countries or in Third World conditions however: “The bicycle has long been the most practical and affordable vehicle for most people...Bicycle transport has been perceived to have the potential to become the main

mode for many people whose only hope of owning personal transport is the ‘cheap’ bicycle” (Reynolds: 1989: 8).

When looking back at the historical origins of bicycle transport, Reynolds (1989: 11) has no doubt that:

The invention of the bicycle in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had an explosive impact on society and on industry: it made independent, convenient transport available to the masses for the first time...it gave the rich and the poor the freedom of the countryside...and it was even taken up as a symbol of liberation by the Victorian Feminists. The early bicycle factories became the base of a vast transport industry that was later to manufacture the automobile and the aeroplane.

In South Africa a very few selected areas were fortunate to enjoy good bicycle facilities. This was due to many factors including, the fact that cycling has been since its origins, more of a recreational sport than anything else and apartheid ideology which ensured neglect of developing facilities, including bicycle facilities in both rural and urban residential areas inhabited by Africans. According to Reynolds (1989: 9) “Apartheid ideology forced working class communities (including people whose only personal transport was the bicycle) so far from their work places that it became impractical for them to cycle to their jobs and other vital services”. In an attempt to emphasize the significance and the contribution of bicycle transport in the liberation history of South Africa, Reynolds (1989: 20), states thus:

Sol Plaatje, an intellectual and campaigner for the rights of Africans, used a bicycle to traverse South Africa in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, while he was investigating the effects of the Native Land Act on people’s lives. A founding member of the South African Native National Congress, he used the information gathered on his bicycle travels to write “Native life in South Africa”.

It is necessary to note however that published literature about ownership and use of bicycles among African communities is almost non-existent. Most of the available literature on cycling in South Africa refers exclusively to recreational cycling. The available literature gives us this information about the development of cyclist's facilities in South Africa:

The first explorations into building bicycle paths were made in Cape Town; initially there were hopes that a landscaped, car-free cycle way linking the suburbs with the city would be approved. Plans were drawn up and the issue was debated at length, but eventually was blocked. Instead, some areas, notably Randburg, Cape Town's southern suburbs and Pretoria got bicycle lanes designed for scholars in predominantly white, high-income suburbs (Reynolds: 1989: 22).

Attempts to provide bicycle facilities in predominantly African, low-income communities started in earnest in the year 2000 – the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, more than half a century after Sol Plaatje's lonely bicycle travels. Although these recent attempts, do not yet include the provision of infrastructure facilities such as bicycle paths, landscaped car-free cycle ways; the provision of used, recycled bicycles, spares and repair facilities to rural communities is hopefully a start of better things to come. It will be wonderful to see this important task carried out in a way that would definitely benefit the intended beneficiaries.

## **2.3 Afribike – A Profile**

The following information about Afribike has been adapted from the company's own General Prospectus for Funders and Partners (2002). The purpose of this section is to enable readers to have a basic understanding of the origins of the company, the history of Afribike, its vision, mission and objectives. This background information is necessary for anyone interested in understanding: why does Afribike promote bicycle transport in the first place, why does the company focus on Africa And, why are the interventions required to promote bicycle transport:

“Afribike is an independent company operating under the not-for-gain platform with offices in Southern Africa and the Netherlands. The name Afribike was first coined by the Institute for Transport and Development Policy (ITDP), based in New York. The initial Afribike activities focused on recycling used bicycles from the United States of America (USA). In 1998 ITDP partnered with United Kingdom (UK-based) Re-Cycle and elected to focus its activities on South Africa.

Re-Cycle had good access to used bicycles, and the shipping costs from the UK were significantly lower than from the USA. Several containers were shipped to South Africa and the project established itself on a semi-permanent basis in downtown Johannesburg from where training was provided and bicycles were sold. By 2000 Afribike was registered in South Africa as an association not-for-gain and has since established itself as an independent South African organization.

Afribike promote bicycle transport because it is the most successful form of sustainable transport in the world. Bicycle transport is non-polluting, requires relatively little land space and uses renewable energy sources. Furthermore bicycles have proven a low cost and effective mode of transport. Finally, bicycle transport is one of the safest modes of transport and has significant health benefits.

Afribike’s focus on Africa is based on the understanding that the transport system in Africa is generally very under-developed and that this forms a major constraint on the development of the continent. Bicycles are a low cost mode of transport, which can drastically improve African People’s mobility and can realistically be made accessible to most Africans. Interventions are required to promote bicycle transport because, bicycles are generally not accessible to most Africans, and, there is very little recognition of the role that bicycle transport can play in the development of Africa.

Afribike’s vision is to make Africa a cycling continent. In practice, this would translate into bicycles becoming the preferred mode for short trips; the construction of suitable

infrastructure focused on the safety of cyclists; the development of an African bicycle suitable for local market conditions; and a positive bicycle culture based on the general recognition of the economic, social, environmental, and health benefits of bicycle transport.

In order to achieve this vision, Afribike started off by establishing micro bicycle retail outlets in low-income urban and rural communities to make bicycle resources accessible to members of these communities; recycling used bicycles to sell through these outlets; and, developing bicycles appropriate to the African market and conditions.

Each enterprise; is managed by local operators who are trained by Afribike as bicycle mechanics. They also receive training in small business practice and operational procedures. Each bicycle shop also functions as a mini resource centre, which can promote cycling locally through the establishment of local cycle clubs and organizing local cycle races. Basically, Afribike's mission is to promote the use of bicycles / workcycles as a means of poverty alleviation, job creation, education, sustainable development and environmental protection" (AfribikeOnline: 2002).

The mission to promote bicycle transport in the manner articulated above suggests, a particular way of making bicycle transport resources available and providing a service to the 'rural poor' in particular. Another way of looking at this would be to see it as a particular way of practising rural transport development. Before looking at development practice in the context of the promotion of bicycle transport, we must first look at the views of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Transport on bicycle transport. The significance of such a discussion lies in the fact that the provincial DoT established a partnership with Afribike, to promote bicycle ownership and use.



## **2.4 The KZN Provincial DoT On Bicycle Transport**

According to the V3 project report (2001:3): the KZN provincial DoT's Scholar Bicycle Project is informed by the following factors:

- The vision statement of the National DoT, as set out in the draft White Paper on National Transport Policy of July 1996, including the broad goals of the transport policy.
- The 1995 KZN DoT's long-term programme of rural economic development through the provision of roads, known as the CARCAM-2000: Community Access Road Construction and Maintenance.
- The March 1997 CARNS – Community Access Roads Needs Study, and
- The July 1998 KZN DoT Rural Mobility study to identify patterns and needs to provide input to the development transport modes and services to meet these needs.

Surveys carried out as part of the latter report found among other things that: “Inadequate or expensive and often unavailable transport forces the majority of Scholars to walk to school. Secondary school learners walk between 5 and 8 kilometers each day while; primary school learners cover a distance of about 3 to 5 kilometers “(V3 Report: 2001: 3) in terms of a return trip from place of residence to school and back.

This led to the recommendation to the effect that: “since the average cost of travel to school by public transport is too expensive for many learners, the most economic form of intervention would be in the form of supplying bicycles to needy learners” (V3 Report: 2001: 3). Some of the final recommendations to ensure success of the initiative to make bicycles and related resources easily accessible to needy scholars were stated as follows:

- That the role of government (DoT) should be to provide seed capital for the establishment of bicycle shops.

- That the bicycles should be priced to ensure that once the seed capital and initial bicycle stock has been provided, the bicycle shops are able to become self-sustaining small businesses (V3 Report: 2001: 15).
- That government should take up the responsibility of providing a subsidy programme for the poorest learners, to ensure that this specific target group benefits from the projects.

Other recommendations include: “the monitoring of project; the location of bicycle shops; the question of choosing bicycle shop managers; their training and their support by Afribike; and, investing some funds in basic infrastructure improvement and road signage by provincial, district and local government” (V3 Report: 2001: 16).

## **2. 5 Development Practice**

The approach to the practice of development adopted by the KZN Provincial DoT and Afribike in terms of attempting to create a culture of bicycle ownership and use, as a driving force towards alleviating poverty, has the following characteristics:

- It seeks to promote the small business sector through the promotion of a vibrant bicycle industry.
- However, it is at the same time, a top-down approach to economic and social development, in the sense that, the development initiative, as well as decision-making; come from the developing agencies (a government department and an NGO).
- Moreover, its participatory nature is questionable, and, it has all the ingredients of a functionalist perspective with regard to the development of society.

In the light of these observations therefore, it seems appropriate that this development initiative should be judged in terms of some of the contemporary pronouncements on development practice. Oxfam’s basic principles for development and relief work are more informative in this regard.



According to Eade (1997: 4), the following is a list of Oxfam's basic principles for development and relief work:

**“People-centeredness:** Development...is about improving the lives of women, men and children. Interventions must always be measured in terms of how they affect people's lives, in ways that are meaningful to the people concerned.

**Human rights:** The active promotion of human rights is central to development...These rights, include the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights – individual and collective, personal and public rights of all women, men and children.

**Empowerment:** gaining the strength, confidence and vision to work for positive changes in their lives, individually and together with others, is the process of empowerment. Women and men become empowered by their own efforts, not by what others do for them. When development...programs are not firmly based on people's own efforts to work for change, their efforts may be disempowering.

**Participation:** Effective participation means people's rights to shape decisions, which affect their lives. Women and men are disempowered when they cannot exercise this right. Development...should strengthen people's capacity to participate positively in social change, in terms of both personal growth and public action.

**Interdependence:** Societies depend on the interrelations between women, men and children, whose needs are distinct, and vary according to cultural, political, and economic factors. Development...interventions cannot isolate or 'target' one set of people without also having an impact on the lives and well - being of everyone who relates to them.

**Change:** Development...takes place within a context of wider processes of social change, which are drawn on a far broader canvas than that of NGO interventions. Such processes are messy; social change does not have a clear beginning, middle or end, nor is it predictable or evenly - paced. Social change is always differentiated by gender. To be a positive force, NGOs must understand, and be committed to, the process of change in which they choose to intervene.

**Sustainability:** To be sustainable, the process of change must promote equity between, and for all women and men; and enhance their ability to gain a decent living, both now and in the future. Sustainability is more than a matter of financial self-reliance; it depends on people's social and economic capacity to withstand and surmount pressures on their lives and ways of life.

**Risk:** Development...work is not risk free. Women and men take risks when they try to change their lives, and so shape the decisions and processes affecting them. They cannot be certain about the outcomes of their efforts. Likewise, NGOs cannot demand certain returns from the support they give”.

What is articulated through the above principles suggest that, an enormous amount of effort and a high level of commitment, is required from any agency intending to make a meaningful contribution, in improving the standard of living of those members within any society who are less fortunate than others.

## 2.6 Other Views

There are a number of competing perspectives on the debates and issues surrounding small business enterprises. According to Goss (1991: 8): “There are three theoretical frames of reference – the Free Market model; the Marxian model; and the Green Ecological model”. When we take into consideration the fact that as far as Afribike and the KZN Provincial DoT are concerned, the key to the creation of: “a positive bicycle culture based on the general recognition of the economic, social, environmental and health benefits of bicycle transport...is establishing micro bicycle retail outlets in low-income urban and rural communities” (AfribikeOnline: 2002), then there is no doubt that it is the free market model that is being promoted here. In his book: “Small Business and Society” (1991: 9), Goss has this to say about this model:

The theory of the free market envisages a society constituted through the act of exchanging goods, services and individual capacities in the market. In such a society the principal actors are the individuals who have unrestricted access to,

and power to dispose of, the key factors of production; land, labour, capital and the goods and services produced thereby. The result is widespread competition between buyers and between sellers in line with supply and demand – the balance of which determines the prices at which commodities will exchange. Thus, depending upon consumer preferences and resources, some goods and services will sell better than others, with the result that the sellers of demanded goods will be able to cover their costs and perhaps make a profit, whilst those whose goods are not in demand will risk either not selling them or reducing the price and selling at a loss.

The question that we need to ask ourselves then is: can this particular model have the desired result of making a contribution in creating a strong bicycle culture and a sustainable micro bicycle retail industry especially, in low-income rural communities?

It is common knowledge that many people in rural areas of developing nations have either restricted, or no access at all to the key factors of production, and, they also have no power to dispose of such factors. These are some of the reasons, which contribute to the creation, and recreation of high unemployment rates, low-income levels, inadequate access to vital services and opportunities and a host of other negative factors in such areas. These factors in turn, affect the supply and demand of goods and services. What then can we deduce from all this? Mills (2002: 87), seem to suggest that the first positive step in dealing with developmental problems in developing countries lies in everybody involved realising that: “The challenge is complex, rooted in history and defined by ill-formed, sometimes dysfunctional geographic and state units...and that rural economic decline reflects both politics and institutional failure including patronage politics”.

The free market model has been presented within identified rural communities, in a top-down fashion. Planning and decision-making concerning such important aspects as, how the bicycle enterprises should be financed and by whom, how these businesses should be run as well as where they should be located and who should manage them, come from the top (the powerful). This suggests that the approach adopted is not in line with the basic

principles of development practice as outlined above. As a result of this therefore, it is highly unlikely that even the existence of democratic procedures can be able to safeguard community interests. As such, the approach is based on the dominant paradigm of development. Tegegn M. (1997) in Eade D. (1997: 7) has this to say about the dominant paradigm:

One of the absurdities of the dominant paradigm is that it ignores the important aspect that the subject in the process of social development **must be people**; for the essence of development must be to improve people's standard of living. A change for the better first of all implies the consent of the people. What constitutes a better standard of living; must be defined by the people themselves. However, people have until now often been dragged into a definition and measurement of the process of social development, using the yardstick of northern values.

The problem does not end here. It is further confounded by the question of who identifies the problems, needs and priorities of the 'rural poor' as well as who defines the target groups themselves. In Pottier, J. (1993: 4), Hutson and Liddiard, point out that:

The definition of problems and clients may depend less on the objective characteristics of the 'rural poor' (that is on observable reality) and more on the history, the political and social objectives, skills, resources and funding base of the agencies under consideration...also the identification of problem areas can reflect political pressure and decisions taken beforehand rather than real need.

The extent to which this may affect the success or failure of a development project or affect the cooperation or lack of cooperation of target groups and individuals is enormous. In the next section we will discuss poverty reduction in relation to bicycle transport.



## 2.7 Poverty reduction and Bicycle transport

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2003; the Minister of Finance in South Africa (Trevor Manuel) listed during his budget speech, nine key objectives or major themes on which the whole budget was based. The listed objectives were two more than the ones put forward at the beginning of the budget speech of the previous year (2002). However, despite this, the number one key objective for the South African government in terms of the allocation of funds was still the same: **poverty reduction**. There are many reasons for this.

One of those reasons has been pointed out by Gaurav Datt et al. in Oshikoya, T. W. (2001: 203), and it is simply that: “Poverty reduction is arguably the ultimate goal of all development, and by implication, of all development policy”. To know what helps to alleviate poverty, what works and what does not work, poverty has to be defined, measured and studied – and last but not least, poverty has to be lived. Thus, “The most commonly used way to measure poverty is based on income levels. A person is considered poor if his or (her) income level falls below some minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the ‘poverty line’ (The World Bank Report: 2003: 6). According to this World Bank report: “Much progress has been made in measuring and analysing income poverty. Today however, new directions in poverty measurement; that is, on non-income dimensions of poverty is taking place. The agenda includes assembling comparable and high-quality social indicators for education, health, access to services and infrastructure...it also includes the development of new indicators to track other dimensions, for example – **vulnerability and social exclusion**” (The World Bank Report: 2003).

The new directions in poverty measurement therefore, lead us to define poverty simply as: hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not being able to go to school and knowing how to read and write, not being able to travel and have access to vital services and opportunities, that is, being socially excluded in the sense of being cut off from vital services. Poverty is powerlessness and many more negative experiences. When we are talking about cycling out of poverty therefore; we are referring

to a situation where many 'rural poor' are cut off from available vital services and opportunities and are therefore, not able to effectively close the gap between their place of residence and the existing social and economic services / activities.

One of the words in use today that is invoked by this manner of defining poverty is the word: 'empowerment'. According to Menike (1997: 25) this word "implies that the poor, lack power to improve the quality of their lives. It also implies that the poor lack the necessary strength and capacity to improve their own conditions". Thus, according to Menike (1997):

Numerous programmes initiated by government departments and NGO's are usually based on the false assumption that, the poor do not know how to overcome poverty, and improve their condition; that they do not have the knowledge about the cause of their poverty and how to overcome it; and that the poor are lethargic and tend to accept their poverty as their fate.

Menike (1997: 26) continues to argue that: "It is on this premise that many well-intentioned NGO's and government officials develop their programmes for empowering the poor. They seem to want to enter villages to shake the poor up and wake them from what they think is the poor's slumber and tell the poor that they must take their future into their own hands to create ways of improving their quality of life". Most top-down intervention initiatives (including the Afribike / KZN provincial DoT bicycle project) need to be understood in this light.

A top-down development intervention initiative based on the above premise, is more likely to result in a situation where development officials ignore the fact that: "the poor not only possess a depth of knowledge about their present social environment, but they also have visions about what they would like to see and towards which they would like to move" (Menike: 1997).

## 2.8 A “Culture” Of Bicycle Ownership and Use?

In this section we examine the literature on culture. This is necessary since the title chosen for the study is (**‘Cycling Out Of Poverty’ through a culture of ownership and use**). At a certain stage in our discussion above, we have learned that in most African countries: “Culturally, bicycle ownership and use is the prerogative of the male members of the household; and that, bicycle ownership confers social prestige, and its use is monopolized by men” (Malmberg: 1994: 7). It is necessary to note now that, issues pertaining to gender inequality, in the context of the ownership and use of bicycles as discussed in this study, should not be interpreted as a way of encouraging the female members of rural households to balk at the established ways – norms and values or rules and set standards. Rather, those issues should be recognized as highlighting one of the undeniable facts about social existence, which is to the effect that: “Every aspect of human living is in some way dictated by culture – be it shelter, food, clothing, music or recreation” (Ndebele: 2002: 2) and, even rural mobility through bicycle transport.

“Culture is a shorthand term used in many ways and in many different contexts. As a rule we unconsciously adjust our usage to the context or situation in which we find ourselves” (Preston-Whyte: 1995: 20). Thus, if we find ourselves in a situation in which education outcomes are dropping in an unacceptable manner – we will generally talk about the creation or recreation of a ‘culture’ of education or learning. Similarly; when there is too much violence or too much crime – society will refer to this situation as a ‘culture’ of violence or crime. Preston-Whyte (1995) further informs us that: “It is this (our usage of the term to the context) which makes it so difficult both to pin down what is meant by culture, and to understand its influence on actions”. For the purposes of this study, we are going to stick to a definition given by Raymond Williams (1992) cited in Lull (2000: 130) where it is stated that: “Culture is generally defined as ‘a particular way of life’ that is shared by a community and shaped by values, traditions, beliefs, material objects and territory”.

A “culture” of bicycle ownership and use would therefore mean; first of all, a change in the manner in which Patriarchalism operates within society. This is necessary since, according to Castells (1996: 130):

Traditions or customs are rooted in patriarchalism; which is, a founding structure of all contemporary societies. Patriarchalism, is characterized by the institutionally enforced authority of males over females and their children in the family unit...

For this authority to be exercised, patriarchalism must permeate the entire organization of society, from economic partnership (in terms of who has or does not have a right to own what or to use or not use what) to production and consumption, to politics, law and culture. Patriarchalism is rooted in the family structure, and in socio-biological reproduction of species, as historically (culturally) framed. Without the patriarchal family, patriarchalism would be exposed as sheer domination.

In practice, the envisaged change would translate into changing the content of the socialization process within society. This is necessary because: “Cultural traditions are not followed automatically or as a matter of instinct; they are taught. Parents and teachers socialize children in accepted standards of behaviour and they, in turn, are reminded of how they ‘should ‘ behave by the comments of others if and when they step out of line” (Preston-Whyte: 1995: 20). For instance, it may be true that originally, a bicycle was seen “as a backward and painful way of getting about (which only men could manage), today however; it should be seen as an exhilarating, efficient product of functional design and elegant technology” (Reynolds: 1989: 5), for men, women and children alike.

Cycling out of poverty: through a culture of bicycle ownership and use therefore aims to highlight the need to effect positive social change in terms of set rules or standards about the ownership and use of bicycles. Rules are very significant within society. “Rules often tell us what is required, what is forbidden or how to do something” (Lull: 2000: 75). An



example of a forbidden rule; was given by a male respondent in one of the study sites. He firmly stated that:

*According to our African culture, it not acceptable for women and girls in our community to ride a bicycle. Actually, it is a scandal for a woman to be seen riding a bicycle.*

According to Lull (2000: 77), “When rules are widely known and where compliance is a shared value, rules; “specify” ‘correct’ or ‘appropriate’ [social] procedures and the attendant community evaluates the performance”. Culture may serve a benign purpose for individuals and groups as the example above indicates. This is because: “The very label “culture” has symbolic power. People fear the loss of their culture. To invoke the term is to recognize, and give coherence and integrity, to a “way of life” or what is generally referred to as cultural identity” (Lull: 2000: 134).

One of the most important aspects of culture that may be useful for understanding whether or not it is possible to create a culture of bicycle ownership and use, is that of culture being volitional. This is in the sense that people continue to reproduce, adapt, and invent culture (Lull: 2000: 133). The fact that people continue to reproduce, adapt and invent culture does not mean that this in itself is an easy process. Pierre Bourdieu’s (1993) cited in Lull (2000: 157), concept of the *habitus* bears testimony to this. Simply stated; *habitus* is how we live.

How individuals and groups develop: “The feel for the cultural game from motivated, strategic, repeated, practical experience in such a way that it becomes ‘a system of acquired dispositions’ and ‘an organizing principle of action’” Bourdieu (1990a) cited in Lull (2000: 158). It seems as if the creation of a strong bicycle culture therefore, will depend on a number of factors, including; a change in attitudes and a change in the cultural rules of the game in so far as economic and social partnerships within households are concerned.

# Chapter Three

## *Methodology*

### **3.1 The Population**

The study population from which the final sample was selected is made up of Secondary School male and female learners (including both bicycle users and non users) from grade 8 to 12; farm and other workers; self-employed and other members of both the rural communities of Muden and Enqabeni. Basically, the population includes all bicycle users, potential users and or potential beneficiaries (both male and female) of the intervention initiative to promote bicycle transport. Snowball sampling was used to select the final sample of participants. “This is a multistage technique which is very useful for the purpose of gaining access to the social world of respondents with similar experiences. It begins with one or a few cases or people and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases” (Neuman: 1997: 19). According to Coleman,(1958, cited in Bulmer 1984: 55) “such a sampling procedure follows the pattern of social relations in a particular setting and therefore, the population in the sample involves individuals and relations among individuals”.

In this study, the point of entry was Afribike’s Project Director who became a link between one of the two bicycle shop managers, the researcher’s supervisor and the researcher. The first bicycle shop manager then made it possible for the researcher to get in touch with bicycle users and potential users as well as with the second bicycle shop manager and other key stake holders. This method of made it possible for the researcher to select a chain of 18 informants for interviewing. Formal interviews involved 17 male respondents and one female respondent - an educator in one of the sites. This bias towards male respondents is due mainly to the fact that bicycles are owned and used by men. The only potential female respondent, who was said to own and use a bicycle,

became unavailable on three occasions until the researcher decided to abandon the idea of interviewing her.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study was done in two phases. The first phase involved the researcher getting to know the key stakeholders in the field (particularly, bicycle shop managers) and establishing trust. The initial contact was made through the use of the telephone. This was followed by first visits to each of the two sites. During these visits the researcher was able to conduct some informal interviews as well as make observations about the sites, the bicycle products available and the manner in which the bicycle business was conducted. It was also during these visits that the researcher was able to determine whether or not it was going to be possible to conduct research under the observed circumstances in each of the sites.

Although initially the researcher had, some doubts about the willingness of one of the bicycle shop managers to cooperate in the study, the researcher nevertheless, came to the conclusion that it was possible to overcome the perceived obstacles. The problem during the researcher's first visit was due to the attitude of one of the bicycle shop managers. Although he had initially, (during the first telephone conversation) given the impression that he was very willing to cooperate in the study, he made it clear (during his first face to face contact with the researcher), that his cooperation will be dependent on the researcher's willingness to meet the following conditions:

- Agree to be introduced to the local government councillors of the area concerned; and,
- Agree to travel by car within the area concerned, with the bicycle shop manager and the local government councillors, who will then introduce the researcher to the community.

The researcher agreed to meet these conditions, although in the end they never materialized because, according to the bicycle shop manager concerned:

*I didn't know you (the researcher) and it was not easy for me to accept your story at first. One of the Councillors in the area had pointed it out to me after I had told him about our first telephone conversation that, he does not understand why 'educated' university people want to get themselves involved in the business of bicycles.*

This local government councillor turned out to be the owner of the supermarket and the premises on which the first bicycle shop in the area was located. Informal interviews were conducted on each of the two sites, with bicycle shop managers and some members of the public during the researcher's first visits. The members of the public concerned appeared to be 'curious' and showed interest in talking to an outsider who was asking questions about bicycles in their area. Those informal interviews provided some foundational information in terms of the direction of the study.

The second phase involved preparing an interview guide, going into the field to make further observations, taking photographs of the bicycle shops and conducting formal in-depth interviews. The conversations during the interviews were conducted in IsiZulu – the participant's and the researcher's common language. The interviews involved the researcher writing field notes in English during the interviews and later in the evening constructing accounts of what transpired during the interviews. Most respondents were interviewed in places where they were most comfortable. Learners were interviewed within the school premises, courtesy of the school principals. A male teacher was also interviewed at school, while a female teacher was interviewed at her place of residence, due to the fact that she was only available after school hours. A male garage employee was interviewed at his place of work and others including the bicycle shop managers were interviewed at each of the bicycle shops, which are in the form of shipping containers.

### 3.3 Description of Instruments, Data Capture and Time Frames

The main instrument used to collect data was the researcher – a black South African Masters student in Sociology at the University of Natal: Pietermaritzburg Campus. The researcher is in his late-40s and data was collected using in-depth interviews and direct observation. As a young boy the researcher had the experience of walking a return trip of about ten kilometres each school day during his Secondary School days. This experience was due to the fact that bus transport was unaffordable or too expensive for learners from poor families. It is the researcher's belief that, the will or the desire to succeed in getting educated made a number of learners including the researcher in this study, more determined to consider the burden of walking to school as a temporal discomfort. Research data was further collected through the use of a camera: taking photographs of the bicycle shops, people coming into the shops to inquire about the conditions of sale of bicycles and bicycle parts as well as coming for repairs.

Discourse analysis was used to make sense of the conversations, words and interactions in the field and to draw up conclusions for the study. The emphasis in this regard, is in the analysis of what people in the setting do, say and how they do and say what they say and do through the use of language. "Discourse", according to (Levett et al: 1997), "refers to the vernacular in motion and to patterns of social convention that are more verbal. It refers to representations that are exhibited in rhetoric but are constructed by established belief systems". Crush (1995) points out that: "language is important to the way that one understands, organizes, intervenes and justifies one's interventions into the natural and social world". Discourse analysis then involves the close study of naturally occurring interactions (Marshall: 1998: 442).

The study was conducted over the period of August 2002 to April 2003. The first phase of the study including the review of related literature took place during August and September 2002. The second phase of the study including interviews and observations in the field took place between October and the first week of December 2002 due to the fact that the two sites are located at different parts of the province and opportunities for entry



were different. In one site accommodation for the researcher closer to the field was difficult to find. The researcher had to be content with being accommodated about 40 kilometers away and to use public transport (Kombi-Taxis) and a bus to and from the field. In the other site the key contact person became unavailable in October and early November due to personal commitments. Analysis and write up was done during January and April 2003.

### **3.4 Assumptions and Limitations**

This study, like most social research studies, has certain assumptions and limitations. The assumptions particular to the study are as follows:

- The study has been designed and conducted in good faith;
- It has been designed and carried out in a manner that will not in any way undermine the values of the research community as well as the values of the University of Natal;
- It is meant to benefit not only Afribike as a service provider and the South African Department of Transport both as a service provider and as an institution of policy formulation and management but also, the powerless 'rural poor' or individuals and groups who are cut off from vital services and opportunities because of the often inadequate and expensive transport.

The limitations in the study are as follows: The sample used to collect data presents the views and opinions from only eighteen participants selected from within two communities in the province of KZN. The sample can therefore not claim to be representing the views and opinions of the whole population of the 'rural poor' in the KZN province. Some of the participants; were selected by the bicycle shop managers. The latter made sure that those participants were interviewed in their presence. It is the opinion of the researcher in this study that this had an impact on what was said and how certain respondents articulated their views and opinions.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

This study was designed and carried out in a way that respects the following principles: voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality in as far as it was, humanly possible. The participants were made aware of the following:

- That they were participating in a research project;
- The role of the researcher in the study;
- The purpose of the research and the procedures involved;
- The possible risks especially, psychological risk, and, possible benefits of the research;
- The voluntary nature of the research and participants' right to stop the research at any time; and,
- The procedures used to protect participants' confidentiality.

# Chapter Four

## *Findings*

### **4.1 Modes of Transport / Services Available**

This sub-section aims to give an indication of the other modes of transport (beside bicycles), as well as the social, and economic services available within the communities under consideration. This information is necessary because bicycles are not the only means of transport available in these areas. It is also equally important to give an indication of the extent of the availability and or, unavailability of the social and economic activities within the two research sites. The latter are represented as **Site A** and **Site B** in the study, in order to minimize the possibility of revealing the identity of the participants, as stated in the ethical considerations section above. Deliberations about having access to bicycles and related products will not make sense if some of the vital services and opportunities (schools and markets for instance), are not available within the communities involved. The findings contained in this section are derived from data collected through observations and informal interviews with members of the communities at the two research sites.

In site A, the main major transport options available within the area and between other areas are as follows: **Walking:** women, mostly informal traders can be seen head-carrying bags of garden produce from home to the local shopping centre where they sell their produce to the local community. The process of head-carrying unsold stock and walking back home is repeated in the afternoon, at the end of the normal trading hours. One of these informal traders says:

*Taxi drivers are reluctant to allow passengers like us, who undertake short trips within the area during peak hours, to board a taxi. They are usually more interested in taking passengers travelling to the nearby town because these pay R9.00 for a single trip, while*



*short trips within the area normally cost about R3.00. Besides, we cannot afford to pay an extra taxi fare for each bag of produce since we do not make much money by selling.*

A large number of girls and boys can also be seen walking to school during the morning and back to their places of residence in the afternoon. A female teacher in one of the local schools, which she estimates to be about six (6) kilometres away from her own place of residence, has this to say about the daily burden of walking and its possible impact on some of the learners:

*Walking a long distance to school every school day means that some of the learners will always miss at least the first two morning sessions and that some of those who are able to arrive on time are too tired to pay full attention to what is being taught. One of the girls in my school used to walk about 20 kilometres from her home to school. I have since given her accommodation in my house otherwise, she would have been forced to stop attending school altogether.*

The researcher in this study could pick up from his conversations with female participants that women, in this particular research site, claim to have no knowledge about the fact that the use and ownership of bicycles was not only being promoted in their area, but also that “cheap” bicycles were actually available for sale to all who needed them and can afford to buy them. The general response to this issue was as follows:

*We have never heard anything about such a thing. It is even more surprising that we have come to know about this from a stranger. Anyway, whether or not women like us are interested in bicycles is not the issue. The most important issue is that attitudes about women including, attitudes with regard to ownership and use of bicycles and a lot of other things need to change first. In this area men are still the main decision makers about a lot of things including what and how women should dress. Riding a bicycle is not yet an option for most women around here simply because of traditional attitudes.*

In site A **Kombi-Taxis / a local bus** add up to the modes of transport available for the community. There are therefore some men, women and children who can afford to travel by a taxi or a local bus to various destinations within as well as outside the area. Farm workers either walk to and from their places of work or are sometimes transported on **Trucks / Lorries or Tractor drawn passenger and goods trailers** by their employers. It was observed that each of these usually carry about 20 to 25 male and female farm workers during a single trip. **Bicycles:** It was also observed that a few boys and a few grown up men were occasionally seen riding on bicycles either to school or to a place of work. Hiking on the road to get transported by **Commercial Vehicles** passing by is also another transport option in this area.

The vital services and opportunities available in this area are few and usually they are located very far from the people's homesteads. There are about six or more **primary and secondary schools** according to one member of the community. The researcher could only see one health facility; **a surgery**, which operates between 8h00 and 10h30 in the morning from Monday to Thursday. There is also a **police station; a shopping centre** and a **community centre**. The latter caters for community development needs. Those members of the community who are fortunate to have employment work at the following places: the few available shops, the garage, the farms, the schools, the community centre or are engaged in informal trading. Otherwise, most services and opportunities in this area are available at the nearby rural town, about 25 kilometres away and the cost of a single return trip is R18.00.

In site B, the researcher only managed to get accommodation about 40 kilometres away from the site and thus had to travel by taxis (two) and or by bus to and from the field during the time of the research. Nevertheless, it was possible to identify the following: **Walking** to school for most school children was the main option; **Kombi-Taxis** and an occasional **bus** were available for those who can afford to pay the fare. Many vital services and opportunities are available in the three towns on the either side of the site. One of these is about 12 kilometres away and the other two are about 5 and 36 kilometres away respectively.

## 4.2 A Rural Bicycle Shop Manager's Life World

First of all, it is important to understand that the bicycle shop managers form a very important component of this study. There are two reasons for this. They are the people who are directly responsible for making bicycles and spare parts available to the members of the public. They have been trained to assemble the bicycle parts into a useful technology and to repair each bicycle as the need arises. They have been tasked to sell the idea of owning and using bicycles to members of the community. In other words, they have the responsibility to make bicycles a preferred mode of transport. Secondly, they are a very important link between the researcher and bicycle users as well as potential users simply because they interact with the latter groups respectively. Thus, conducting this study without seeking their cooperation, in order to understand their perspective, would have been futile. They are an important link between the KZN DoT and Afribike on the one hand, and, individuals and groups who have been identified by these institutions as potential users of bicycles and related resources on the other hand. It is no exaggeration therefore, to suggest that the objectives and mission of each of these institutions, are dependent on the manner in which bicycle shop managers carry out their task.

The bicycle shop managers from the two research sites are both African young men in their late twenties. They are both single and each resides in his parents' homestead with other family members. In both cases, matriculation is stated as the highest level of education. At the beginning of the interviews, each bicycle shop manager was first asked to describe himself. The bicycle shop manager from site A, responded to this question by first being silent. This silence lasted approximately about one and a half minutes and after some promptings from the researcher, he began to say:

*I come from a family of six people, which includes myself, my widowed mother, two sisters and, two brothers. As the first born in our family, I have a responsibility to look after the needs of our family.*

He further describes himself as a *sportsman* and as *somebody who is deeply involved in community activities*. On the question of how he came to be associated with Afribike and the retail bicycle project, he explains thus:

*The Director of a Community Based Organization in our area suggested to me that I take up the challenge of running a retail bicycle shop. The decision to take up the challenge however, was influenced by the following factors: I did not have a permanent job at the time, the fact that I was going to receive training as a bicycle mechanic, and, the possibility of running my own business in the near future.*

It seems as if this bicycle shop manager's decision to be involved in the bicycle business had more to do with individual gain / benefits and less to do with benefiting the community.

When the researcher made this suggestion, the bicycle shop manager was adamant that self-interest was not the main factor, which made him decide to get involved in the business of promoting the ownership and use of bicycles in their area. He argued that:

*The environment under which we live around here, suggest that there is a need for some of us to play an active role in the activities meant to contribute to the development of our community. There are too many poor people in this area because of the fact that, job opportunities are either very scarce or are simply not there. As the Chairperson of the youth club in our area, I have also taken up the responsibility of encouraging the youth to create jobs for themselves, by among other things, taking part in community organized farming activities. One of these activities will be commercial fish farming in the near future.*

This explanation suggests that, because this bicycle shop manager is a well-known active member of the community, it may be possible for him to create a network of links with a reasonably large number of potential bicycle owners and users. If the bicycle shop manager in site A seems to be well connected, a position which may be good for the



business of selling bicycles and thus promote a positive culture of bicycle ownership and use, then what, in his opinion, are the future prospects of the rural bicycle project in his area. He responded to this by stating that:

*'The community around here was excited when they first came to know that they now had easy access to cheap bicycles and related resources. This excitement could be maintained to such an extent that the bicycle business become self- sustainable. However, there are at least three things which need to be taken care of before this could happen: firstly, we as bicycle project managers must be well taken care of by the Afribike company because we make a lot of money for them. Secondly, a way must be devised to ensure that prices of bicycles and spare parts are affordable by rural standards. Lastly, there has been no initiative from Afribike, to ensure that we have a competitive marketing strategy, which can enable us to reach a large number of potential customers so that many people know what is on offer.'*

The use of the term “*the community*” above is misleading, because it is used to refer to one section of the rural community under consideration – men and boys. Women and girls are not included, even though transport problems affect rural females in the same way that they affect their male counterparts or they affect females more than they affect males. Even the bicycle shop manager himself confirmed this bias towards a men when asked to give his opinion about the interest shown by women in bicycle transport in his area. He stated without hesitation that:

*For women and girls to ride bicycle it will mean that they wear Jeans / or Trousers, a practice which according to our culture is taboo and besides, the Chief in our area does not permit women and girls to go around wearing such things.*

It is important to mention here that, the idea behind the implementation of the rural bicycle project particularly, in KwaZulu-Natal, was based on the premise that it will benefit first and foremost ‘the rural poor’. This term includes all women, girls, men and boys including the disabled persons in all these groups who are faced with the rural

transport burden. However, what is happening in practice in site A in particular, is that culture is being used or abused to exclude certain sections of the community from becoming effective beneficiaries of this initiative. Again, the agency on the supply side of the bargain provides those bicycles suitable only, for one section of the community, that is, able-bodied men and boys.

The bicycle shop manager in site B appeared to be more than willing to cooperate with the researcher and to participate in the research process when the first (telephonic) contact was made between him and the researcher in this study. In his own words, he stated that:

*I will be glad if you (the researcher) could come to our area so that you will see for yourself how the bicycle business is booming around here. Maybe your visit will help the project become more viable.*

This last part above was a complete surprise to the researcher because he had not made any promises to the bicycle shop manager in this regard in particular, except to request a suitable date to meet with him in the site for the purposes of enabling both parties to know each other face to face, establishing trust and enabling the researcher to inspect the site so as to determine the feasibility of including it in the research process.

The initial impression that the researcher could make about his first visit, as well as, his first contact with the bicycle shop manager in site B was that the latter, appeared to be extremely suspicious about the researcher's motives to conduct social research on matters pertaining to the bicycle project in his area. This assessment is based on the following factors and or actions and words used by the bicycle shop manager under consideration:

- The researcher was made to travel to the research site (through public transport –taxi) using the most inconvenient direction that was going to make it difficult for him to reach the research site on the same day and be able do a return trip from his place of residence to the site and back. This was despite the fact that



the researcher had made three phone calls to the bicycle shop manager asking for directions and the most convenient route to the site before undertaking the trip. It took the researcher 9 hours instead of 3 hours to reach the research site.

- Promises of meeting and collecting the researcher with the manager's "own car" from one of the nearest towns to the site were not met and no explanation given afterwards. Instead the researcher had to take another taxi (for the third time) and after it, walk about 3 kilometers before reaching the actual destination.
- When the researcher finally arrived at the research site at about 14h30 pm, the first words uttered by the bicycle shop manager were: *How are you going back? It is now getting late and you won't be able to find a place to sleep around here.*

In spite of these difficulties and especially, the cold reception as well as the short time available, the researcher was able through perseverance and through remaining calm under trying circumstances, to make important observations about the site and to carry out some informal interviews with the bicycle shop manager and a couple of other members of the public who seemed interested in the stranger who was asking questions about the presence of the bicycle shop in their area. By the time the researcher had ascertained that there was direct easy transport that will enable him to reach his place of residence (about 235 Kilometres) from the site, at least before 20h30 pm, he had gathered enough information which enabled him to come to the conclusion that there was no reason why he should not include site B in his original research plan. One of the issues brought out by the bicycle shop manager in this site during this first visit was to the effect that:

*The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial DoT should take the blame for the increase in the sale price of bicycles in these micro bicycle retail outlets. Firstly, they waste money by giving financial support for the shipping of the bicycles from the Sea Port of Durban, which is in the KwaZulu-Natal Province and therefore nearer to us, to Johannesburg in the Gauteng Province. Secondly, they pay for the same bicycles again to be shipped back to us in the province, If they could just make an arrangement that the bicycles are moved from Durban direct to us, then we can sell them at an affordable price.*

This explanation sounds logical and reasonable, but, not until one of the members of the public engaged in an informal interview with the researcher afterwards expressed his opinion on the matter. According to this man, there is another factor contributing to the increase in the sale price of those bicycles and this has to do with the fact that:

*The local shop owner, on whose shop's grounds the retail bicycle outlet shipping containers turned bicycle shop are located, actually buys some of the bicycles from the bicycle shop manager and re-sell them to the members of the public at a higher price.*

The bicycle shop manager in site B describes himself with what seems to be an air of confidence and self-assurance, as follows:

*I am a hard worker and a Christian who is committed to the development of the youth in our community. One of the ways in which I express this commitment is through my involvement in managing a local soccer club made up of boys between 15 and 20 years of age.*

He also states with excitement and enthusiasm that: *I am also the Chairperson of the local branch of the South African Non Governmental Organization Congress. I have been trained to conduct workshops on good social behaviour, as you know that HIV and Aids affects young people as a group more than other groups in all societies. I received this training from the Centre for Public Participation in Durban.*

On the question of his involvement with Afribike and the project to promote bicycle transport as the preferred mode for short distances within his community, he has this to say:

*The position for a bicycle shop manager was advertised in a local newspaper and I applied as directed by the advert. Interviews for this post were conducted at the local regional council offices. I was asked to come for an interview and I assumed there would*

*be a few other interested candidates. However, afterwards I learned that I was the only candidate from those who had been short listed for this purpose, who had bothered to come for an interview. I guess that this, together with the fact that I had been an owner and a user of a bicycle as a young boy made it possible for me to get the position.*

The respondent however, did not mention during this conversation that in fact, another reason why he was able to secure this position, may have been that he has strong connections among the members of the regional council. This fact became clear to the researcher during other later field visits when the same respondent, mentioned that his own father was one of the powerful councillors within the area concerned. This has been confirmed recently (June 2003) by the fact that the respondent's father has been appointed to the position of being the mayor in the area.

#### **4.3 All In A Days Work**

One of the issues, which struck the researcher as soon as he began to interact fully with both bicycle shop managers in the field; was the “unavailability” of any documentation about the company (as the Franchising agency), which supplies bicycles and spare parts, to the micro retail bicycle outlet or any documentation pertaining to the running or functioning of the bicycle shops as business enterprises or about any policy matter concerning the rural bicycle initiative. This is strange considering the fact that, public funds, time and other resources have been invested in establishing the bicycle shops. Each time the researcher raised a question about this, the response was that:

*Afribike never gave us anything of that sort. In fact, their only concern is that we do everything in our power to continue to sell these bicycles and in the process make as much money for them as is possible.*

The more the researcher came to know the bicycle shop managers, the more it became clear to him that the latter had adopted an attitude of “blaming” Afribike officials or

sometimes the KZN Provincial DoT officials for what one of them referred to as: *the slow progress in this bicycle business*. This attitude of creating the impression that only other role players are to blame for most of the "problems" encountered by the bicycle shop managers, (in running the bicycle retail outlets), is contradicted by some of their own practices when interacting with clients, especially, when conducting the business of selling bicycle spare parts.

For instance, the researcher observed on a few occasions that whenever a client comes into the bicycle shop to buy a bicycle spare part, the whole transaction is rendered informal in the sense that, a receipt is not issued or no record is made of the transaction. We must bear in mind that these budding business people were, (according to the Afribike and the KZN Provincial DoT sources mentioned above) given training which included – entrepreneurial skills development and small business management skills.

The bicycle shop managers complain about many issues. One of their complaints is that:

*Some of the bicycles we are expected to sell to the members of the public were in a very bad condition when they were delivered to us. In spite of this, we have done our best to fix them in such a way that they are now in good condition and are ready for sale. Some of these bicycles have already been bought and customers use them without any trouble.*

The researcher is not a trained bicycle mechanic and therefore, is not in a position to comment about whether or not some of the bicycles could or could not be fixed by those trained for this job. The only condition that the researcher was able to observe and could make a comment without any hesitation was that, a large number of bicycle wheels, frames, chains and even some other completely assembled bicycles had gathered a lot of rust and nothing was being done about this.

The more serious complaints coming from the bicycle shop managers have to do with the way in which they perceive the company, which supplies them with bicycles. This is more related to the manner in which business relations have been taking place between

the two parties. Thus it is not uncommon for any one of the bicycle shop managers to refer to the company officials in this way:

*We have made a lot of money for them...they do not care about us...they have become corrupt....some of them are now driving expensive cars. This has resulted in the company becoming bankrupt. This in turn is affecting our business.*

One of the ways in which these claims are emphasized and legitimised again and again is by stating that:

*Although we signed a contract to the effect that we will receive a monthly salary, we have received payment for only the first four months of starting with the business. They now owe us salaries for seven months. What is even sad about the whole issue is that they are no longer keeping regular contacts with us.*

On the question of whether or not this will have any effect on the idea of creating a strong culture of bicycle ownership and use in these areas, both managers claim that the demand for bicycles will always be there, however:

*They must make sure that they take good care of us. The government must also do something to help us because we are in fact, the government's agents of development.*

There are other questions, which are very important in our discussion because they relate specifically, to the target groups and individuals. For instance the bicycle shop managers were asked to state as to which service do people get when buying a bicycle. Both the bicycle shop managers stated that:

*We were supposed to give every person who buys a bicycle some basic bicycle riding skills but in most cases, the customers who have bought bicycles from us already have these skills. What we do instead, we give them some basic useful information about safety*



*measures they need to take into account when riding a bicycle. Another thing is that we try to give as many people as possible, a skill in doing minor repairs for themselves.*

The bicycle shop manager from site B also added that: *In our area there is a group of boys between seven and twelve years old who would like to ride a bicycle but cannot afford to own one. I have decided to make things easy for these guys by making it possible for them to hire one of the bicycles from the shop. I charge each of them R1.00 for a 30 minutes use of a bicycle. Maybe when they are grow up, circumstances will allow each of them to have his own bicycle and the number of customers who will need the services offered in my shop will increase.*

Another crucial issue in the business of selling bicycles has more to do with cultural values, norms and beliefs among rural communities in particular. One of the bicycle shop managers showed no interest or concern about the influence of these cultural aspects on the bicycle business. However, he could not hide the sudden excitement in his face when he mentioned in a somewhat triumphant manner that:

*There is, one man in this area who has bought a bicycle for his daughter from me.*

This maybe true but unfortunately, she is the only girl who is mentioned as having bought a bicycle in the area for the past two years or so since the bicycles were made available. Further than this, she is said to be using her bicycle only for exercise purposes rather than using it to travel to school or to any other social service centre.

#### **4.4 Bicycle Users And Potential Users**

Some of the characteristics of bicycle users in both rural communities that came out during interviews point to the following: that owners and users of bicycles are either men or secondary school boys only (5 men and 12 boys according to the sample); that the learners who own and use bicycles generally come from well-off families (at least 9 of



those interviewed), that is, families who have enough income to invest in bicycles and related resources without this affecting the acquisition of other basic household needs; that all the learners (all 12 who participated in the study) are between the ages 17 and 20; that the majority of learners in this group are in grade eight (4) and nine (5) while 1 is in grade ten and the last two in grade eleven; that most of the learners (7) have repeated one grade or two grades during their time at school; and, that 10 learners travel more than five kilometres to school.

Five of the men interviewed are employed in good-paying jobs by rural standards. Two of the men are teachers and one of these also owns a car. The third man from this group is employed as a petrol attendant, while the fourth man is a policeman. The fifth man is self-employed – he owns a Spaza-Shop. The latter has this to say about how he was able to move from being unemployed to being a proud owner of his own home based shop:

*After winning the first bicycle race, which had been organized by the man who sells bicycles in our area, I found myself being the owner of two bicycles because the first prize for the winner of the race was a bicycle. I decided to sell the second bicycle because I wanted money to start my own business. I sold that bicycle for R150.00 and with that money I was able to buy beer to sell to people around my homestead because shops are too far from us. My business is still growing and I buy and sell anything that is needed by the community around me.*

A female teacher (the only female respondent who participated in formal interviews), who showed interest in knowing more about the availability of bicycles in one of the two research sites, had this to say about initiatives (like the rural bicycle initiative), meant to improve people's lives:

*It is a pity that whenever people come to talk about issues that are meant to help improve the lives of all the members of the community, usually, the concerns are actually only about men and not about women as well.*

When she was asked whether or not she would consider investing in buying a bicycle given the fact that she had made a claim that she wastes a lot of time every weekday waiting for the only transport service available on her way to work – a local bus, she did not hesitate to give a firm ‘no’. This is how she related her experience:

*I have been teaching in this area for the past ten years now. I can tell you that traditional attitudes are still very much alive in this place. Women still have the problem of having their lives dictated to by cultural considerations, some of which are good for no one. I would gladly buy a bicycle for my own son yes, but not for myself. If I can be seen riding a bicycle just for once, it could create a scandal that would last for many years within the whole community and beyond.*

On the question of why is it that women owning and driving cars are usually regarded with high esteem and great respect (even in rural communities like her own) and that since bicycles also serve the same purpose as cars (that of bridging the gap between activities); why does she think there is a problem with the idea of women using bicycles, she replied:

*I do not believe that women owning cars are respected; maybe they are more envied than respected. Consider this: in most African communities a successful woman is usually referred to as a man in a woman's body. This is a clear indication that as far as many African people are concerned, success has never been associated with women.*

When asked to identify as a woman, one main reason why, a woman who owns and ride a bicycle would be treated differently especially, in communities where traditional values are still the norm, she had this to say:

*It is all about control and the desire to maintain that control. This is especially true for those men who believe that they have the divine right to exercise control over women. Denying women the right to ride bicycles has more to do with control and less to do with cultural considerations. Culture is simply just used as an excuse.*

In each of the two schools where respondents in the study were drawn, the researcher noted that compared to the number of all students in the schools, there were very few learners who own and use bicycles. The bicycles could be seen parked along the veranda. Some have chain locks while others do not have any locks at all. One of the revealing moments is in the afternoon when the school children are going home. There would be two or three boys cycling away as if they are racing. But the most interesting part is about one cyclist, who is riding on his bicycle in a very slow speed because he is chatting with a group of male and female School Mates and deliberately intends to keep up with them. He would occasionally ride away from the rest of the group, but then make a u-turn a few meters away and join the group again. It seems as if these young cyclists have become a special group among the other school kids. After all they have what many of their colleagues could not afford to have even if they wanted to. One of the male School Teachers in one of the schools says this about the availability of bicycles in the area:

*I also own one of the Afribike bicycles. I can say that attendance for those boys who own bicycles has improved. But there are still many other kids who would like to own these bikes but cannot afford it because they come from very poor families. I mean, some of the kids we have around here cannot afford to pay the price of a bicycle even if the price was R10.00.*

This may sound as an exaggeration of some sort, but it is true. It is a well-known fact that poverty is more prevalent among the rural poor communities. One of the school boys who does not own a bicycle expresses this sentiment thus:

*There are three boys and a girl at home. All of us are at a secondary school and we are dependent on our Grandmother's old age pension grant. It would be great for me to own a bicycle. However, it would be unreasonable for any of us, to ask our Grandmother to buy a bicycle, there are a lot of basic things that she needs to buy for the household. Sometimes, she is not able to buy all that we need for our survival; there is simply not enough money.*

As it has been mentioned above, most of the boys who own and use bicycles come from relatively well to do families – their parents receive enough regular income. One of these boys is 18 years old and is in grade eight. His father is self-employed. He also owns a van, which he uses to transport learners attending school in a nearby town. The latter's son owns and uses an Afribike bicycle. The boy said this about his own choices:

*Well, my father paid R300.00 for my Afribike bicycle. Our homestead is about 4 kilometres away from the school, but I have never been late for school even before I owned a bicycle. If this money was given to me and I had to decide whether to buy a bicycle or something else, I would have bought clothes – probably shoes, instead of a bicycle. I would have no problem with walking to school because all my friends walk to school every day.*

All the learners who participated in the study are of the opinion that, the need to provide bicycle models, suitable for rural conditions, should also be complemented by the provision of improved tracks and paths as well as rural roads. One of them gave this supporting argument:

*Some of us travel about 10 kilometres from home to school and back under conditions where there is no direct road to school. Travelling on bad tracks and paths as well as on bad roads is not only tiring it also, damages a bicycle prematurely and unnecessarily.*

All the respondents were also asked to give their views and opinions about what was being done in their communities to promote a culture of bicycle ownership and use. Specifically, the respondents were asked whether or not there is any possibility of this attempt becoming a success. All the respondents agree that the most important factor in this regard is the cost of a bicycle and spare parts. The current operating cost prices (quoted at R285.00 in site A, and R350.00 in site B), were regarded as being too high for many rural poor people, including the working poor.

One of the respondents had this to say about this issue:

*There are many people who earn very low wages in this area. Some of them earn per month less than the present price of an Afribike bicycle because they are employed as casual labourers. One of the strategies which, may be used, is to allow people to buy these bicycles on credit. If furniture and clothing shops can do this, why not bicycle shops located among the people.*

# Chapter Five

## *Reflections*

It is clear from the above findings that the rural mobility problem (inadequate ease and frequency of movement) is a very complex issue. It follows therefore that because of the complex nature of this issue, simple solutions alone are not the answer. One of the problems with simple solutions is that they tend to serve the interests of a few privileged individuals and groups. Complex issues, like the rural mobility problem require both simple and complex solutions: the former to serve immediate needs and the latter to ensure that long-term problems are also taken care of. According to Starkey (2001: 5) complex solutions at our disposal may help those involved in transport planning and interventions achieve the following:

To address the complete transport picture; to set priorities according to local needs; to consider economic development and social equity goals; and, to address conflicts of interests with transparency.

Failure to address the above may lead to what Rist (1997: 213) refers to as “the virtual notion of development” that is, an ‘as if’ form of development, according to which development planners and practitioners act as if development is taking place or act as if their policies and intervention strategies are actually addressing the concerns of the poor and the marginalized. This form or conception of development does not serve the interests of the intended beneficiaries. On the contrary, it serves the interests of the powerful government officials, NGO officials and key stakeholders who are always the link between the development agencies and the communities to be developed.

According to the agencies involved in the promotion of bicycles as a preferred intermediate means of transport, individuals and groups designated under the term the ‘rural poor’ are supposed to be on top of the list of all possible beneficiaries. This means that poverty alleviation has been used as an entry point and also that the rural poor have



been given preference. However, what happens in practice is very much in complete contradiction to the noble intentions. For instance, economic considerations override the interests of users and potential users when it comes to decisions about the location of the bicycle outlets. In one of the sites in the study, the bicycle shop was moved to another place without notifying bicycle users and potential users. A bicycle user had this to say about this state of affairs:

*It is bad enough that we were not made aware about the intention to move the bicycle shop to a new location and to get there, will constitute a burden in terms of transport fares as well as the trouble of transporting the whole bicycle for repairs, if this is necessary. This creates the impression that all the talks about developing rural areas like ours are simply shallow talks.*

According to a KZN DoT official and the bicycle shop manager in the area concerned:

*The decision to move the operations of the bicycle shop was taken in order to ensure that, the bicycle business is sustainable since the new location has the potential to attract customers from other surrounding areas because of its strategic economic position.*

There are two questions, which immediately come to mind as it has become clear that economic considerations in this case, took precedence over the interests of the originally identified beneficiaries. The first question is this: Does taking decisions, without due consideration of the interests and the feelings of identified beneficiaries, affect the efforts to create a positive culture of bicycle ownership and use? The second and the last question is: What will it take to ensure that through such a culture, the potential of bicycle transport is fully realised in such a way that, all the rural poor (including women and the disabled) are eventually empowered to access vital services and opportunities. Both questions could be answered by stating one common factor, that is, it is all about the question of interests. In other words, the success or failure of any intervention strategy is more likely to depend on this question; whose interests are given priority by the agencies involved and those who exercise power within those agencies.

In this study, the key relevant agencies with interests in the quest to promote ownership and use of bicycle transport are: the KZN provincial Dot and Afribike – an NGO. Both these institutions have undertaken to act as bicycle transport service providers. They provide, among other things, financial support to ensure that the rural bicycle project becomes self- sustainable. The interests of these two agencies will only be served, when the micro bicycle retail outlets established within the two rural communities, are perceived to serve the purpose for which they were established, that is, bicycles have become the preferred mode of transport for short trips.

It has been mentioned above that economic considerations by the key stakeholders (those who control resources and make important decisions), sometimes ignore the interests of the beneficiaries. This very same tendency has also contributed to the failure to provide bicycles suitable for use by individuals and groups with special needs – the elderly, the handicapped, the sick, women, low-income earners or people with no income at all; especially, children who are dependent on pensioners. In both research sites, the available bicycles serve one group only – men (including secondary school learners) who can afford to pay for a bicycle, the necessary spare parts and repair costs.

This failure to provide bicycles, suitable for use by those with special needs, is a contradiction to the ideal of creating a strong bicycle culture through which the poor may be able to lift themselves out of poverty. Bicycles designed for women cyclists for instance, are not available. This is despite the fact that such bicycles can, empower women and hence change their lives and bring benefits not only to women, but to the communities concerned as well.

Issues related to the cost of purchasing a bicycle, that is, capital costs of a bicycle, including variable costs, such as repairs, bicycle parts and routine maintenance, are among the key factors that make it impossible for many potential users to invest in bicycle resources. This situation is further confounded by the fact that there are also

many working poor people in these communities. A member of the community in one of the research sites gave this insight on this matter:

*Most of the workers around here are employed as casual labourers in the farms. The wages they earn per month (about R200.00) are far less than the current quoted price of a bicycle (R350.00).*

Issues related to cost are further made complicated by the fact that, bicycle shop managers bale the company responsible for supplying them with bicycles for price increases. This is a very sensitive and difficult issue, which challenges other people's integrity and reliability. It is not in this study's interest to determine who is right or wrong in this matter. This is especially true because the researcher never got to interview officials of the company concerned. All the information the researcher has about the company was sourced from the latter's website. The complication is brought about by the fact that, the company operates under the not-for-gain platform and that one of the reasons given for promoting bicycle transport in the first place, was to help the poor lift themselves out of poverty. Now, although it is true that price increases are sometimes necessary to ensure the sustainability of the bicycle retail outlets, it is also true that high unaffordable prices will also lead to a close of the business and therefore the destruction of the very ideals meant to serve the interests of the rural poor.

# Chapter Six

## *Conclusion and Recommendations*

Transport is a necessary ingredient of nearly every aspect of economic and social development (Howe et al: 1984). Bicycle transport is one of the many necessary branches of the whole transport sector. This study has highlighted the importance of bicycles as an intermediate means of transport, which is necessary for local transport solutions, and the very uneven nature of their ownership and use. The study has also highlighted the fact that the concept of culture is one of the most significant ideas which affects many people's lives; their way of thinking, and, power relations in terms of ownership and use of certain material cultural objects like bicycles. Deeply-rooted, gender constructions deny women access to resources meant to bring about social and economic changes not just to male groups and individuals who can afford to pay the stipulated price, but to the entire community as well.

A rural transport intervention initiative, which does not take into account the fact that social and economic development is about women, girls, men and boys together becoming empowered to bring about positive changes in their lives will have a very limited impact on the lives of the rural poor. Eade and Williams (1995: 9) have highlighted this understanding of development: "Development is about personal growth together with public action; about both the process and the outcome of challenging poverty, oppression and discrimination; and about the realization of human potential through social and economic justice". Now, how can the bicycle transport intervention, in its present form, be said to be challenging poverty, when entire groups and individuals are still held captive by cultural considerations, which reinforce the marginal position of women in particular. How can we begin to talk about empowerment, people-centeredness, or, sustainability of development programmes when there is still culturally enforced oppression and discrimination against women as a group; and when the needs of other equally marginalized groups and individuals with special needs are simply ignored.

The impression given by the bicycle shop managers who participated in the study, and by the documents from the bicycle transport development agencies is that, the bicycle retail outlets will be seen to be sustainable when many rural people invest in bicycles.

Promoting the ownership and use of bicycles means, promoting a process of change.

Now, according to Eade (1997: 5):

[T]o be sustainable, the process of change must promote equity between, and for, all women; men; and enhance their ability to gain a decent living, both now and in the future. Sustainability therefore; is more than a matter of financial self-reliance; it depends on people's social and economic capacity to withstand and surmount pressures on their lives, and ways of life.

This includes social capacity to withstand and surmount culturally oppressive and discriminatory pressures on the lives of culturally marginalized groups and individuals, so as to allow new worthwhile cultures to blossom and benefit entire communities.

Inadequate and expensive transport is one of many socially destabilizing factors. The bicycle has the potential to become the most practical and affordable vehicle for most people and can remain so for a long time to come especially, for those groups and individuals whose only hope, of owning personal transport, may be a possibly cheap bicycle. The effective realization of this potential will depend on the following factors being taken into consideration:

- Conducting a study that will give detailed household characteristics including income levels and priority needs of individuals and groups most affected by inadequate and expensive transport.
- Launching awareness campaigns about the need to adopt a flexible attitude when it comes to understanding and practicing culture, to ensure community awareness about the possible benefits for the entire community.
- Collecting enough information about all the issues affecting rural mobility.



- Take into account the importance of inclusive, participatory methods of promoting rural mobility; issues related to cost; regulatory considerations and the design and construction of paths suitable for the provided bicycle models, when promoting ownership and use of intermediate means of transport like bicycles.
- Interventions to address gender and cultural obstacles in order to make bicycles available to all those in need.
- Providing credit facilities and or subsidies for those groups and individuals who wish to invest in bicycles but cannot afford to pay the whole purchase price at once.
- Taking care of people with special needs by providing bicycles that cater for their physical conditions – providing physically disabled people friendly bicycles.
- Providing bicycles suitable for rural conditions should be a reality not something that is “planned” for an unknown time in future.
- Bicycle shop managers to be provided with clearly spelt out guidelines about the running of the rural bicycle retail outlets, including guidelines about proper pricing procedures that will not defeat the main objective of solving the rural mobility problem for the rural poor. Target groups and individuals to have easy access to this information.
- National and Provincial transport planning systems should not neglect the secondary and tertiary roads, tracks, bicycle paths and low-level bridges that serve rural areas. Planning systems should not ignore the off-road transport and travel because these make up the bulk of rural journeys.

Cycling out of poverty must be understood, as stated above, as a statement of hope and a call to action. It cannot be denied that there are many obstacles, which make it difficult for many rural poor to lift themselves out of poverty through cycling, as a way of life. Facing these challenges is a responsibility that can no longer be postponed, simply because: “Freedom is nothing without access” (AfrbikeOnline: 2002).



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# APPENDIX: A

**Interview guide: Designed for Bicycle Shop Managers**

**Interviewer name:**.....

**Date of interview:**.....

**Time of interview:**.....

**Place of interview:**.....

**Introduction**

Hello, I am from the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus. I am conducting a case study on the ownership and use of Afribike bicycles. The aim of the study is to get information, which might help in improving the quality of service with regard to intermediate rural transport development. I would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your views on certain aspects on the operation of the Afribike bicycle project. This will take about an hour of your time. The information you give me is entirely confidential and no findings in this study can in any way linked to you.

Thank you.

### **Interview Guide Questions for Bicycle Shop Managers**

1. How do you describe yourself?
2. How did you become involved with the rural bicycle project?
3. Considering Afribike's vision and mission statement, how does your role fit in with these?
4. Can you give me your brief understanding of your role in relation to the KZN Provincial DoT and its initiative to provide affordable bicycles, servicing and spare parts in your area.
5. How could you describe a day's work at this bicycle shop?
6. What are your opinions about the community's response to this initiative?
7. What can you identify as the key factors influencing the community's response to want to invest in bicycle resources?
8. Can you identify any constraining factors?
9. Can you say that the decision to provide affordable bicycles, servicing and spare parts took into consideration gender relations and or cultural stereotypes most prevalent in rural communities?



10. What are your opinions on the advocacy of the bicycle perspective in terms of solving the transport problems of the rural poor?

11. What are the strategies that you are using to encourage the community to see value in terms of the ownership and use of bicycles?

12. What are your future predictions in terms of success and or failure of the bicycle initiative in relation to rural transport development in particular?

13. Is there anything you might wish to add concerning the bicycle initiative and the rural poor?

**Thank you for your time.**

# APPENDIX: B

**Interview guide: Designed for Bicycle Users and Potential Users**

**Interviewer name:**.....

**Date of interview:**.....

**Time of interview:**.....

**Place of interview:**.....

**Introduction**

Hello, I am from the University of Natal Pietermaritzburg Campus. I am conducting a case study on the ownership and use of Afribike bicycles. The aim of the study is to get information, which might help in improving the quality of service with regard to intermediate rural transport development. I would like to ask you some questions about yourself and your views on certain aspects on the operation of the Afribike bicycle project. This will take about an hour of your time. The information you give me is entirely confidential and no findings in this study can in any way be linked to you.

Thank you.

## **Interview Guide Questions for Bicycle Users And Potential Users**

1. How did you come to know about the Afribike bicycles?
2. What can you say motivated you to want to own and use a bicycle?
3. Who paid for your Bicycle?
4. What is the main reason you do not own a bicycle?
5. Can you describe the terrain and or paths within your community in relation to bicycle use?
6. Can you identify any specific benefits gained from owning and using a bicycle in this area in relation to the needs of the community?
7. What are the costs involved in owning and using a bicycle?
8. How often have you come for repairs to the Afribike shop?
9. If you were given money equivalent to the cost price of your bicycle before became owner of a bike, what would you buy?
10. What is your opinion about the possibility of women and girls becoming owners and users bicycles in your area?

11. Are there any suggestions you can give that might contribute in helping those who wish to own and use bicycles but cannot afford the purchase price or because of other reasons?

12. What can you identify as major problems encountered by those who own and use bicycles in this area?

13. Is there anything you would like to add concerning the initiative to make bicycle transport a preferred mode of transport for short trips in your area?

Thank you for your time.