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**Access Improvement
and Sustainable
Development**

*Rural Road Development
in Nepal*

DURGA P. PAUDYAL

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Access Improvement and Sustainable Development

Rural Road Development in Nepal

Durga P. Paudyal

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Preface

Acknowledgements

I would like to give my sincere thanks to ICIMOD for awarding me with the research fellowship. Inaccessibility is a basic characteristic and the most important constraint in the development of mountain areas. Availability of transport infrastructure, and within it, a road link, comes naturally to one's mind as the first obvious means to improve access. Road construction in the hill and mountain areas has, however, been a controversial subject both from the perspective of its environmental effects and returns on the very large investments that are required.

The present study by Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, undertaken as part of the ICIMOD Research Fellowship scheme, highlights some of the issues relating to planning, construction techniques, and utilisation and benefits of rural roads, with special reference to the actual experience of four selected rural road projects in different parts of Nepal. It examines particularly the institutional arrangements for planning, construction, and maintenance of roads; the role of the central and local agencies; and the effects of road connection on economic and social aspects of life in the villages connected. It makes a number of suggestions for improvement in planning and implementation of road projects and better use of road facilities for the economic and social upliftment of rural people. It is hoped that the study will be found useful by the planners, policy-makers, and managers of road projects not only in Nepal but also in hill and mountain areas elsewhere.

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Abstract

This study is undertaken on the premise that improvements in access to rural areas are essential for sustainable development. It has attempted to examine the existing policies for rural roads, institutional arrangements, and their linkages with production processes. The study was carried out on three levels, namely, the policy, programme, and project levels.

The study found that the existing policy framework and the institutional arrangements for rural roads are not used effectively and, in some cases, the policy has not been properly implemented. On the technical side, on the one hand, there is shortage of project manpower with the District Development Committees (DDCs) and, on the other, the available technical manpower at the district level is not used effectively. There is no clear maintenance policy for rural road projects. Two unresolved issues, one concerning ownership and the other the economic use of rural roads, have serious implications for designing and road maintenance policy.

On the project level, it was found that roads have, no doubt, changed the feeling of isolation and remoteness among the population, the decisive control of traders in frontier locations over hinterland trade has been weakened, and there has been a reduction in cost, time, and damage of goods during transport. Moreover, the scale of business areas connected by road has increased considerably; and many locally available non-marketable items, such as *Lapsi* in Kabhre District and broom flower in Ilam District, have also become commercially profitable items. Full economic benefits have, however, not been realised due to the lack of supporting institutions for the supply of technology, inputs, and extension services. Roads have had a positive impact on sectors such as education and health. In the education sector, roads have reduced the feeling of remoteness and isolation, therefore, good teachers from outside have also moved in to teach at local schools. In the health sector, roads have enabled patients to reach better hospitals quickly.

Based on its findings, the study makes a number of recommendations to improve the planning and execution of road projects and the delivery of socioeconomic benefits.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AADT	Average Annual Daily Traffic	
APP	Agricultural Perspective Plan	1
APROSC	Agricultural Projects' Services' Centre	1
ADB	Asian Development Bank	2
ADB\N	Agricultural Development Bank of Nepal	3
BBLL	Building of Bridges at Local Level	5
CDO	Chief District Officer	5
DDC	District Development Committee	6
DDP	Dhading Development Programme	8
DOTM	Department of Transport Management	8
DOR	Department of Roads	10
DTO	District Technical Office	12
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	12
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation	14
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development	16
JT\JTA	Junior Technician\Junior Technical Assistant	
IBRD	The World Bank (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)	
LES	Low-cost, environmentally friendly and self-help approach to rural road construction	18
LDO	Local Development Officer	20
LRIP	Local Road Improvement Programme	22
MLD	Ministry of Local Development	
MOTC	Ministry of Transport and Construction	25
NPC	National Planning Commission	
NGO	Non-Government Organization	25
NRB	Nepal Rastra Bank	25
ODA	Overseas' Development Administration	26
PDDP	Participatory District Development Programme	28
PLRP	Pilot Labour-based District Roads' Rehabilitation and Maintenance Programme	28
PIP	Priority Investment Plan Project	35
SDC	The Swiss Development Corporation	37
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	39
UC	Users' Committee	41
VDC	Village Development Committee	42

Contents

Chapter 1: Background: The Context of Rural Roads in Nepal	1
1.1 Historical Context of Road Development in Nepal	1
1.2 The Present Study: Context and Background	2
1.3 Objectives and Methodology	3
Chapter 2: Rural Roads: Concepts and Policies	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 The Concept of Rural Roads	5
2.3 Design Standard of Rural Roads	6
2.4 Public Policy on Rural Roads	8
2.4.1 <i>The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)</i>	8
2.4.2 <i>Rural Road Programme</i>	9
2.5 Institutional Set-up	10
2.6 Rural Road Development in the Past	12
2.6.1 <i>District Road Network Studies</i>	12
2.6.2 <i>Agricultural Perspective Plan (APP)</i>	14
2.6.3 <i>Priority Investment Plan (PIP) Project</i>	15
2.7 Experimentation with Sustainable Rural Road Projects	16
2.7.1 <i>The Concept of a District Transport Master Plan in the Pilot Labour-based District Road Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project (PLRP)</i>	16
2.7.2 <i>Experimentation with the Low-cost, Environmentally Friendly and Self-help (LES) Approach in Palpa and Dhading Districts</i>	18
2.7.3 <i>Rural Infrastructure Development Project</i>	20
2.8 Conclusion	22
Chapter 3: Planning and Implementation of Rural Roads at the Local Level - Case Studies from Four Districts	25
3.1 Introduction	25
3.2 Profile of the Four Districts under Study	25
3.2.1 <i>Baglung District</i>	25
3.2.2 <i>Dhading District</i>	28
3.2.3 <i>Ilam District</i>	28
3.2.4 <i>Kabhre District</i>	33
3.3 Planning and Implementation of Rural Road Projects	35
3.3.1 <i>Planning</i>	35
3.3.2 <i>Project Design</i>	37
3.3.3 <i>Implementation</i>	39
3.3.4 <i>Technical Supervision</i>	41
3.3.5 <i>Financial Disbursement</i>	42
3.3.6 <i>Maintenance</i>	43

3.4	The Phase-wise Construction Approach	46
3.5	People's Participation	46
3.6	The Users' Committee	50
3.7	Conclusion	51

Chapter 4: Impact of Rural Roads in the Project Area **53**

4.1	Introduction	53
4.2	Profile of the Rural Roads' Projects	54
4.2.1	<i>Deurali Chowk - Bayanabbe Danda Road Project of Baglung District</i>	54
4.2.2	<i>Dhading Bensi - Salyantar Road Project of Dhading District</i>	55
4.2.3	<i>Project-level Case Study: Nepaltar - Mangalbare Road, Ilam District</i>	56
4.2.4	<i>Panauti - Kusadevi - Rayale Road Project of Kabhre District</i>	58
4.3	Methodology for Assessing the Impact of the Road	59
4.4	Economic Impact	61
4.4.1	<i>Reduction of Travel Time and Cost</i>	61
4.4.2	<i>Change in Production and Marketing Patterns</i>	65
4.4.3	<i>Change in Prices</i>	72
4.5	Social Impact	75
4.5.1	<i>Impact on Education</i>	75
4.5.2	<i>Impact on Health</i>	76
4.5.3	<i>Social Awareness</i>	78
4.6	Impact on Input Delivery and Extension Services	79
4.7	Environmental Impact	81
4.8	Conclusion	83

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings and Recommendations **87**

5.1	Introduction	87
5.2	Summary of Main Findings	87
5.2.1	<i>Policy Level</i>	87
5.2.2	<i>Programme Level</i>	88
5.2.3	<i>Project Level</i>	90
5.3	Recommendations	91
5.3.1	<i>Rural Road Network</i>	91
5.3.2	<i>Rural Road Policy</i>	91
5.3.3	<i>The Road Head Concept</i>	92

Bibliography **93**