

The Delft Low-Cost Mobility Statement

From 21-23 June 2000, some 80 experts gathered at IHE Delft, The Netherlands, to participate in the World Bank/Velomondial2000/IHE Delft Expert Group Meeting on Low-Cost Mobility in African Citiesⁱ. The group consisted of politicians, administrators and professionals from African national, provincial and local government levels, NGO representatives, staff from External Support Agencies (ESA's), researchers, consultants and other independent experts.

The background materials, presented papers as well as the outcomes of the working group sessions conducted during the Meeting, have been reflected in the proceedings of the Meetingⁱⁱ. Those proceedings also contain the below 'Delft Low-Cost Mobility Statement', to which the participants in the Meeting have agreed and committed themselvesⁱⁱⁱ.

We, the participants in the Expert Group Meeting on Low-Cost Mobility in African Cities,

Recognising the importance of personal mobility for economic and social development, and convinced that affordable mobility is on the critical path to sound economic and social development in Sub-Saharan African Cities, which must include rather than exclude the poor;

Concerned that the already low levels of mobility of the urban poor in African cities will decline further with the rapid rate of urbanisation and prevailing urban mobility policies which tend to ignore the mobility needs of the poor;

Recognising the dominant role of walking and (the potential role of) cycling within African towns and cities;

Convinced that more efficient and safer walking and cycling positively contribute to poverty alleviation, economic development, health improvement and environmental protection;

Referring to Article 150 of the Habitat II Global Plan for Action, which reads: 'Non-motorised transport is a major mode of mobility, particularly for low-income, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. One structural measure to counteract the socio-economic marginalization of these groups is to foster their mobility by promoting these affordable, efficient and energy-saving modes of transport';

Also referring to article 7.53.c of Agenda 21, which commits governments to 'encourage non-motorised modes of transport by providing safe cycle-ways and foot-ways in urban and suburban centres in countries, as appropriate';

Recognising that these modes have been marginalized in planning, infrastructure provision and traffic management in many African towns and cities, which has resulted in economic losses due to inefficiencies, in economic and social exclusion, and in high economic costs and human suffering as a result of traffic accidents;

Having taken note of the important findings of the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Programme's Pilot Project on Non-Motorised Transport (SSATP/NMT), which, in summary, are that the mobility and traffic safety of the majority of urban inhabitants can be enhanced substantially through the application of a menu of low-cost and straightforward interventions which yield high investment cost/benefit ratio;

Call upon African national, provincial and local governments, civil society and all other relevant parties, including ESA's, to support and implement the following actions:

Actions at national and local levels

1. Awareness raising

A major stumbling block in realising efficient and affordable mobility in African cities is the lack of awareness amongst politicians, administrators and professionals at national and local levels of the benefits of low-cost mobility options. In order to restore a balance in, and increase the efficiency of the urban transport systems, national awareness raising strategies will need to be developed and implemented. These should target politicians, administrators and professionals at the national and local level, and aim at raising their awareness of the economic and social importance of mobility, of the major role of walking and (the potential for) cycling, of the current inefficiencies of the urban transport systems as regards these modes, and of the ways and means to enhance low-cost mobility.

2. Mainstreaming low-cost mobility

Low-cost mobility has a direct relationship with, amongst others, poverty alleviation, economic and social development, employment generation, urban upgrading and development, and environmental protection. Rather than developing stand-alone low-cost mobility policies, national and local governments are urged to integrate low-cost mobility in policies, strategies, programmes, plans and projects that address these issues.

As walking and cycling are an important part of the wider urban transport systems, they should be treated as such. For this reason, national and local governments are urged to include these modes into mainstream urban transport policies, strategies, programmes, plans and infrastructure investment projects. In addition, the requirements for efficient and safe walking and cycling should be included in national urban roads design standards. The draft document 'Productive and Liveable African Cities: Guideline for Pedestrian and Bicycle Traffic' includes relevant proposals for such standards.

3. Stakeholder participation

As is the case in other sectors, stakeholder participation is crucial in the preparation and implementation of sound and equitable policies, strategies, programmes, plans, and projects. National and local governments are urged to credibly involve, as a major group of stakeholders, pedestrians and cyclists in any decision-making process which directly or indirectly relates to their mobility and traffic safety requirements. In doing this, they should pay particular attention to the mobility needs of women, which are particularly affected by inappropriate urban transport solutions.

4. Demonstration projects

Although the validity and applicability of the findings of the SSATP/NMT Pilot Project are beyond doubt, they are based on a limited number of isolated engineering and cycling promotion pilot interventions. The consistent application of the 'menu of interventions' as an output of the pilot project at a large scale, and the monitoring and dissemination of the results thereof, will greatly help in raising awareness of the importance of efficient and safe walking and cycling, and in convincing politicians, administrators and professionals at the national and local levels, as well as the public at large, that this efficiency and safety can be greatly increased at relatively limited costs. For this reason, national and local governments are urged to plan and implement, at city or district level, a number of such demonstration projects in a number of countries, and to disseminate the results within Sub-Saharan Africa.

5. Local application

Independently of, and in parallel with these demonstration projects, local governments can and should make a start with addressing the mobility and safety needs of pedestrians and cyclists, whenever and wherever possible. In doing this, the guidelines produced under the SSATP/NMT Pilot Project are a useful tool, as is the exchange of experience through the network of experts on low-cost mobility.

6. Human resources capacity building

It is recognised that professional leadership capacities (urban planning and management, transport planning and management) are well below what is required, both in quality and in numbers, to prepare and implement sound and equitable low-cost mobility policies for the fast growing African towns and cities. This has undoubtedly contributed to the near exclusion of the requirements of pedestrians and cyclists in urban transport and land-use policies and infrastructure investments. National governments are urged to redress this situation, by providing relevant education and training opportunities, as well as attractive employment conditions, for professionals involved in urban mobility at the national and local levels. In addition, current relevant university level curricula should be upgraded to reflect current thinking about (low-cost) urban mobility, in order to better prepare graduates for their tasks.

Actions at the international level

7. Mainstreaming low-cost mobility

ESA's are urged to integrate low-cost mobility in their current and future aid policies and to promote its application in national and local strategies, plans, programmes and projects which they support and which aim at poverty alleviation, economic and social development, employment generation, urban development and upgrading, and environmental protection.

They are also urged to provide technical and financial support (both grants and loans) to urban transport plans and projects only if these do justice to the importance and major modal share of walking and (the potential for) cycling in African cities.

8. Support to demonstration projects

The identification, preparation, execution and monitoring of local demonstration projects (see 4. above) will require outside technical and financial support. In this

connection, the Low-Cost Urban Mobility Demonstration Programme proposed under the UNCHS Sustainable Cities Programme is a relevant initiative, which qualifies for support by ESA's.

9. Support to human resources capacity building

As in many instances existing human resources at the professional level are either very weak or non-existent, national governments will require external support in building human resource capacities and in upgrading relevant university curricula. In view of limited resources and in order to promote regional networking and knowledge sharing, the establishment of a regional 'Centre of Excellence' should be seriously considered. Such a centre could develop and provide training of trainers courses, post-graduate education modules and programmes and assistance to universities in the upgrading of curricula, staff development and strengthening of the related educational/training infrastructure. This Centre could also serve as the coordination unit for a Network of Experts on Low-Cost Mobility which would disseminate experiences and promote exchange amongst professionals working in this field.

10. Further pilot work and dissemination under SSATP.

The SSATP/NMT Pilot Project has delivered valuable lessons which are applicable in a large number of situations. Nevertheless, more coordinated pilots should be carried out. The supporters of the SSATP are urged to include a follow-up NMT Pilot Project for additional interventions in its programme of activities.

The SSATP is also urged to put in place a programme for much wider dissemination of the findings of the SSATP/NMT Pilot Project, as well as those of follow-up pilot activities and the proposed demonstration programmes.

In order to fulfil these activities and to do justice to the crucial role of non-motorised transport in African cities, the SSATP is also urged to ensure that low-cost urban mobility remains a recognisable element within this important initiative.

As participants in the Expert Group Meeting, we commit ourselves to promote the proposed actions, to actively strengthen the network that the Meeting has helped to establish, to keep each other informed of successes and failures in implementation activities, and to meet again in the year 2005 to take stock of progress and to update the plan of action.

Delft, The Netherlands
23rd June 2000

ⁱ In the context of this statement, Africa is understood to mean the Sub-Saharan African countries.

ⁱⁱ Proceedings can be obtained from IHE Delft, Mrs. Van der Klis, phone +31.15.2151896, fax +31.15.2122921, e.mail kli@ihe.nl.

ⁱⁱⁱ Participation in the Meeting was on a personal basis. Views expressed in this statement, although supported by the Meeting participants, may not necessarily be shared by their respective organisations.