A New Road with Modern Facilities at the Service of the Population

Bamako, July 2014. Mr. Diarra, a butcher, has been serving customers for several years at the 9th District market of Commune IV, in the western suburbs of the Malian capital. This market is accessed from the Kankan-Kourémalé-Bamako interurban transnational road, which provides the single entry and exit point between Conakry and Bamako. Traffic on this road has a direct impact on his trade. Moreover, ever since it was rehabilitated and improved through a project financed by the African Development Bank, Mr Diarra has seen his income increase, partly because he can keep his stall open after sunset and attend to an increasing number of customers: “The electricity, cleaner environment and the new conditions of the road have brought new users and, therefore, new customers”, he points out. In fact, this road has totally transformed the areas around it and even downtown Bamako, where traders buy from the Medine Main Market.

Impact of Road, Electricity and Security Facilities

“The road and its electrical facilities have made a huge difference,” says Djenebou Diakité, a fruit vendor near an intersection of the road. Before, she only worked daylight hours, as staying late was too risky and she had hardly any customers after nightfall. In addition to benefitting from the improvement of the now busier national road, Djenebou Diakité is enabled to stay longer, “….up to midnight sometimes, when there are customers, thanks to public lighting. And my own expenses have been reduced as I no
IMPA C T IN G W EST A F R ICA

The Mayor of Commune IV in the District of Bamako, El Hadj Sirimam Bathily, had one major concern: the security of the inhabitants. Since the construction of the new road, the population has been enjoying safe and direct access to the interurban road as well as to related facilities such as electricity, safety barriers along the road, and drainage structures such as the improved gutters and rain water collection points. Electricity has been crucial to curbing crime and protecting the population round the clock.

"Today, you are certain of arriving at destination without breaking anything", says the Mayor. "Previously, breakdowns were a matter of course: a flat tire, a chassis requiring repair or vehicles getting stuck in a rut during the wet season. A journey which could take you two or three days due to these obstacles can now be covered in 30 minutes!". A vital link for economic integration of the region, the road project has fostered trade, as evidenced by the influx of Guinean foodstuffs - mainly fruits and vegetables sold in the 9th district of the Commune IV market, and lowered prices.

"The need to improve the security of our neighbourhoods has finally been recognized," says El Hadj Sirimam Bathily, Mayor of Bamako’s Commune IV (here in July 2014).

"The need to bring along my flashlight to use when the sun sets."

Only three years ago, this interurban road was not fully paved and entering into Bamako was very difficult. The road under construction ran through the district market, creating an accident-prone area. This seriously impeded economic development and the commercial activities that are the main source of income for local residents.

State of road and traffic before implementation of the project. Photo at right: entrance to Bamako (July 2010).
PROJECT SUMMARY

Key dates: Project approved on 27 September 2010, completed on 31 December 2013

Financing plan:
- ADF Loan ~ FCFA 9 billion
- WADB Loan ~ FCFA 7.5 billion
- EBID Loan ~ FCFA 3.7 billion
- Malian Government Loan ~ FCFA 1.9 billion

Objectives:
- Enhance urban mobility within Bamako;
- Contribute to the development and accessible means of transport along the Bamako - Kankan, road;
- Improve the standard of living of the local population

Main outcome: Extension into 2x2 lanes over 8.8 km of road, to provide the missing link of the corridor connecting Guinea to Mali via Kouremalé and, downstream, of the Kankan-Kouremalé-Bamako transnational interurban road, works for which were completed in 2008.

Outputs:
- Development and asphalting of 8.8 km in 2x2 lanes, including 4.5 km with public lighting, entirely financed by the ADF;
- Related facilities (water points and latrines in schools, footbridges for schools and markets for the safe crossing of children and residents, water collectors for sanitation in neighborhoods, weighing station for trucks, etc.);
- Automatic traffic counting system;
- Assistance to project management.

Behaviour Change Ensures a Sustainable Impact

*“The population has really embraced the new facilities brought by the project and organized itself to ensure their maintenance and operationalization,” says Mamadou Sylla, Police Chief of the 9th District of Bamako. For example, an association called INPS-Siguida has been formed to protect and maintain the water collectors. The Commune IV population was mobilized right from the start of the project, with the police station organizing union and neighbourhood meetings to sensitize the maximum number of persons on practices to adopt, such as using the footbridges to ensure safety, instead of crossing the road directly.

The behaviour change is widely evidenced in schools, as attested by the teachers of Sèbéninkoro School: “Before the new road, we had an average of three accidents per day involving pupils. Currently, there are no accidents at all; at school opening and closing hours, we come out to ensure that the pupils use the footbridges.”

There are still accidents, unfortunately, but no longer for the same reasons. Previously, the problems were due to poor road conditions and trucks getting stuck or overturned. Now, it is rather the heavy traffic and speed that are the causes. Nevertheless, the police are vigilant and the number of dramatic accidents has significantly declined. “The road was ranked among the three most “accident-prone” in the city of Bamako, but no longer is,” Police Chief Sylla affirms.*
The behaviour of the local residents has also changed noticeably. Djenebou Diakité says she feels safer with respect to her four children, who cross the road to get to school. “Since the footbridge was built, I have been letting them go unaccompanied to school; they tend to move as a group but there are also times when they go alone, and I am no longer afraid of anything bad happening as they cross the road. This facility has really helped to make our children safer.”

The popular mobilization is such that local residents do not hesitate to share their concerns:

- In response to protests against the new traffic rules that prohibited turning off the road at some key intersections leading into neighbourhoods, the project operators had to revise their plans in order to ease traffic.

- A lingering problem is that of the sand spilled all over the road making it more slippery and, therefore, more dangerous. This also creates a hygiene issue for local shops. A youth association was initially volunteering to sweep the road, but was soon discouraged by safety risks posed by the high speed of vehicles. The 9th District Police Station is currently holding talks with the competent authorities (city and district), to address the issue of maintenance of the road. It was proposed in particular that a tax be imposed on the numerous sand carrier operators (with overloaded trucks), which would go towards hiring sweepers whose safety could be guaranteed by the presence of policemen.

Socio-economic Development, Evidence of the Beneficiaries’ Dynamism

To ensure safety in the vicinity of the road, a metal barrier has been installed around the market. The results were immediate, as recounted by Ms. Bagayoko, a potato and onion seller: “The new road has provided better security for us traders, and for our customers. In addition, now I can remain...
after sunset without fear, my days are longer and I earn more income."

Several traders however insist that there has been a decline in the number of customers: they previously stopped by the roadside to make their purchases but must now park further away, because of the new barrier and police checks.

That has not however detracted from the new appeal of the location: the population has increased significantly, new buildings are springing up and businesses are being set up, such as banks, gas stations and pharmacies. This new influx has certainly had an impact on the price of land, but the positive impact on incomes has managed to offset that hike. "The cost of real estate in these neighbourhoods has tripled due to the improved access to the commune", says Police Chief Mamadou Sylla. On the other hand, commercial and residential constructions have accelerated, and there are 13 new estates."

Going by testimonies, the traders acknowledge that the greatest benefit remains the clean surroundings; their products are no longer sprayed with sand each time a vehicle passes and their health has improved considerably. All these factors contribute to better working conditions and encourage them to carry on.

In the cereal section, Mr. Samosso has been selling millet, corn, peas and imported rice for 22 years. Living with his family at the rear of his shop, he is especially pleased: "The neighbourhood has improved significantly. There is a lot less dust, with the result that our products are of better quality. Most importantly, my family is in better health. Care must be taken when crossing the highway because traffic has increased but, for us traders, this heavier traffic means more customers."

What of the other beneficiaries? The representative of the transport operators' union, Manikou Abdoulaye, says the transporters unanimously approve of the road. "This road has brought us only benefits. There is less congestion and we waste less time in our movement. As a result, we are able to do several round trips, which increases our income at the end of the week. "The union also acknowledges that vehicle maintenance costs have fallen considerably. The same applies to the vehicle repair costs; they dropped by about 60%, entailing a reduction in fuel consumption, to the greatest benefit of transporters: previously, they spent an average of CFAF 60 000 on fuel for four trips, against CFAF 55 000 in 2014.

The Bank’s Resident Representative in Mali, Helen N’garnim-Ganga stresses how rewarding it is to “be able to see the positive effects of a project concretely, on the ground, and share in the populations’ satisfaction.”

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The new road has been providing sidewalks, pedestrian bridges and gutters to evacuate rainwater, Bamako, July 2014.
Thus an interurban road benefitting from the financing for its development and asphaltig has spurred the transformation of an entire community, showcasing the positive security, health and economic impacts of a Bank operation.

One road has paved the way for radical change in the individual as well as collective behaviour. No doubt its positive impacts will be sustainable for years to come.

**POSITIVE IMPACTS**

A posteriori, all the positive impacts identified under the project have been confirmed by the testimonies gathered:

- reduced travel time, thanks to the smooth flow of traffic;
- lower accident rates, thanks to the improved quality of the road;
- reduced transport costs and prices of goods;
- easier access to health, school and administrative facilities;
- improved enrolment rate, in particular that of girls, thanks to easier access and to the related facilities, such as water points;
- economic activities boosted and jobs created, with the establishment of new businesses;
- environmental integration fostered, thanks to improved hydraulic structures and storm drainage systems.

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For more information on the African Development Bank Group in Mali, see http://www.afdb.org/fr/countries/west-africa/mali/.