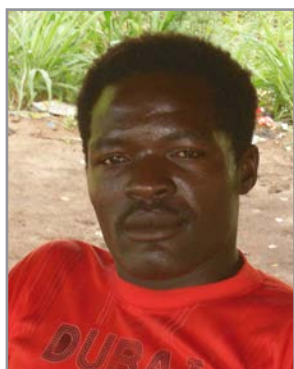




ENHANCING TRANSPORT IN TANZANIA

How AFCAP is helping transport operators by providing safe and reliable access

Eastern Tanzania, rain falls heavily on the Bago to Talawanda road. Motorbike taxis, known locally as boda-boda, continue to speed past. But, this hasn't always been possible. Just over a year ago, the poor condition of the road under the stress of rain would have made it impossible for vehicles to pass. But now the road has been redesigned and constructed under the African Community Access Programme (AFCAP) to provide reliable access for rural communities in all weather.



Boda-boda operator Mohina Saidi (picture left) was taking a break in a restaurant at the start of the road in Bago when we met with him. The development of the road has increased the number of transport operators in the area. "Business is better now even though there is competition because travel time is shorter," he says. "The road is better and it gets rid of a lot of my problems."

"It was very bad before, very hard and difficult to pass. Sometimes we couldn't pass especially in the rain," he describes. "There was always accidents and people would hurt themselves."

The 28-year-old was involved in three accidents before the new road was constructed. "The first one I was taking a passenger to Talawanda, on the way it started raining, but I didn't have the information that it was going to rain," he recalls. "I fell off and hurt myself but my passenger was fine."

After the accident, Mohina had to ride his motorcycle to the hospital in Msata. He gestures to a scar on his leg and says: "It was very painful because heat from the bike made my injury worse."

"I haven't had an accident since the new road but my friends have," he says. "The problem is not the road it is the cars." "The cars use high speeds and because the road is narrow they don't want to give motorcycles space to pass," he explains.

Habibu Milaji (picture right) lost two of his front teeth in a boda-boda accident shortly after the road was complete. "The driver

was going very quickly, about 60 km/h. Ahead you can see a sharp corner," he recalls. "The motorcycle hit some small stones and swerved."

The 54-year-old livestock keeper was knocked out on impact and woke up two hours later with some memory loss. "People came to the accident and were like 'wow he's dead'," he says. When he came around he was taken to the hospital where he remained for two weeks. "Even now I don't have teeth," he smiles. But, despite his injury Habibu does not blame the road for the accident. "Maybe it is because the drivers are going quickly," he says. "There is not a lot of accidents now."

Road traffic injury is a killer, which kills more people than HIV, Malaria and Tuberculosis worldwide. Which is why AFCAP is working with Amend NGO to provide road safety research and education. "Our concern is rural communities with little understanding of fast roads and conflict between fast cars and pedestrians," says Tom Bishop from Amend NGO.

Mohina is very safety conscious. "I wear a helmet with a visor to protect myself from wind, insects and dust. Also, I am afraid of accidents and traffic police," he explains. A motorcycle passes carrying four passengers. He looks at them disappointed and says: "The most people I take on my bike is two and myself." Mohina taught himself to ride but would like to learn about road safety. "If someone could help me get training or go to college I would be very happy," he says.

But, before construction, accidents were not the only problem. The fear of being ambushed by bandits at night caused the price for boda-boda to double. "I am afraid of the passenger stealing from me. You get to a destination and passenger takes the bike and maybe even kills you" he says as he gestures slashing his throat. "I don't carry a knife myself but other boda-boda drivers do." "Nobody has been attacked since the new road. If somebody had I would know," he says.



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