

**A government *shova kalula* bicycle initiative:
Experiences, challenges and expectations in KwaZulu-Natal
Province**

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ABSTRACT

The problem of assisting rural residents with transportation has long been identified as one of the pressing ones. Such that the Department of Transport has decided to facilitate transportation by introducing bicycles as part of a broad *Shova Kalula* Programme. This paper summarizes findings of two research projects conducted by UNIARC in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Emphasis is in the experiences, challenges and expectation by rural community participants. Of major interest is the contrasting bicycle prioritization pertaining to cycling experience between community members and school pupils. Community priority needs hinge on more infrastructures like separate cycling tracks (66%), and sport training and fitness (82%). As a result, 21% of parents indicated that they were not ready to use bicycles even though they have indicated vested interest as they fear reckless driving in public roads.

Meanwhile, 52% of school pupils indicated readiness to use bicycles provided they are trained in their safe use (69%). Of prominence for school pupils in cycling experience was in the use of bicycles for jobs like small business activity/tourism (70%). The conclusion drawn from these two studies is that the parents have interest in the cycling sport and are aware of the health issues like obesity facing humanity though they are faced with the reality of road safety. School pupils in turn display maturity in indicating that they need training in safe use of bicycles on the. The business acumen displayed by school pupils needs to be harnessed in this generation to encourage job creators rather than job seekers. This would advance South Africa's economy thus simultaneously solving the unemployment problem that also manifests itself in crime. Whilst taking the young generation on board in the cycling sport, this will in future prevent problems of group representativity in cycling.

1. INTRODUCTION

In August 2001, the late National Transport Minister Dullah Omar, responding to a question in parliament asserted that the purpose of the broad transport policy is to pave the way for a better quality of life [Mail & Guardian, 2001]. Such a policy rests on the cardinal principle that mobility is a fundamental human activity and need; and assisted transportation, a right. Consequently, the ministry devised the *Shova Kalula* Program, an initiative to introduce bicycles into rural areas to kick-start the implied social contract to “get the people moving”.

The first phase of the program involved setting up eleven Afribike shops in seven provinces in mostly rural areas. Over 5000 bicycles were distributed. In KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the sights were located at Mbazwana on the northern Natal coast, at Muden in the Natal Midlands and at Ezingolweni on the south coast. The later two pilot projects were known as the KwaZulu-Natal Schools Bicycle Pilot Projects.

In his opening address at the 21st South African Transport Conference, late Minister Omar indicated that his department was “ready to move into the second phase, to roll-out *Shova Kalula* on a large scale”. In addition to these plans, the KZN Department of Transport has also investigated and announced the intention to introduce Cargo Tricycles, and a task team is in place investigating various alternatives to importing the tricycles, with an eye on job creation and aiding economic growth through multiplier effects (KZN Department of Transport Budget Speech, 2001/2002).

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This paper summarizes findings of two research projects conducted by UNIARC in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Emphasis is in the experiences, challenges and expectation by rural community participants. Of major interest is the contrasting bicycle prioritization pertaining to cycling experience between community members and school pupils.

3. SAMPLE DESCRIPTION AND STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

3.1. Demographic Information

In the first study, a total of 158 respondents were surveyed. Fifteen percent (15%) of them lived in Mbazwana on the North Coast, 17% in Muden in the Natal Midlands and 68% lived in Ezingolweni. This skew in the geographic distribution is not surprising given that the Izingolweni pilot project has been running for almost three years, while Muden is fairly new, about one year, and Mbazwana only a little more than six months old.

There was evidence, by the number of bicycles parked in all the schools yards, that the bicycle culture was taking root at school going level, while 'not-at-school' youth were also seen riding around aimlessly in the villages, especially in Ezingoleni. The communities have found the bicycles to be most helpful for scholars who have long distances to travel to school. The age and sex distribution of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Age and sex distribution

Age group	Percentage in age cohort		
	Male N=137	Female N=21	Total %
13 - 17	43	57	50
18 - 22	40	3	23
23 - 30	3	10	8
31 - 40	3	24	15
41 - 50	10	3	3
51 - 60+	1	3	

Males comprise 87% of the entire sample and females 13%. Further deductions show that the majority of those males, about 71%, were scholars between the ages of 13 and 17 years. (In rural areas it is often the case that older youth of more than 17 years, are still at school, up to about the age of 20 years or more). It is therefore the youth, in particular boys, who comprise a significant mass for analysis of bicycle usage in this study. It is widely acknowledged that in the African community and especially in the rural areas, there are cultural restrictions preventing women from engaging in particular activities such as riding a bicycle. There is evidence however in this table that those younger women may be determined to learn to ride now that bicycles are increasingly available and owned by their peers. We found fewer older women who actually rode bicycles or were willing or felt competent to talk about bicycles and bicycling.

Meanwhile, the second study was mainly about evaluation of the Road Safety Education Programme presented to the Hlabisa District in the Mtubatuba area, KwaZulu-Natal.

3.2. Occupational and Income Distribution

The sample was loaded in favour of scholars because they were the main target of the study and also the easiest bicycle riders to find, because they were concentrated in schools. As a result, scholars together comprise 74% of the total, while adults comprise only 26%. A further breakdown in Table 2 shows the occupational distribution of the sample.

Table 2: Occupational distribution of the sample

	Percentage Occupation in cohort		
Occupation	Male N=137	Female N=21	Total 100%
Scholar Grade 8-9	2	0	2
Scholar Grade 10-12	76	57	66
Adult employed	12	29	20
Adult unemployed	10	14	12

Seventy six percent (76%) of respondents recorded nil incomes. It can be assumed that the majority were scholars who obviously do not earn an income. Barring those who did not report their income status, Table 3 reflects the incomes reported by the adult earning component of respondents.

Table 3: Income structure of adults in the sample

Income	N = 38	%
R0 – 500	18	41
5001 – 1000	6	15
1001 – 1500	4	10
1501 – 2000	1	2
2001 – 2500	2	5
2501+	7	17

As is widely acknowledged, rural residents suffer from a lack of employment opportunities and many of them live in poverty. In this sample, those earning between R1000 - 2000 were mainly respondents who held formal employment in the local shops (Mbazwana) and in the sugar cane farms (Ezinqoleni and Muden). Since some teachers in Ezinqoleni offered to complete the questionnaire, it may be safe to assume that those who reported incomes in the higher income brackets from R2001 upward comprise the local gentry, the teachers and community workers.

Even though the base numbers are small, given that the majority in the sample were school children who do not earn an income, percentages in the Table 4 are significant.

Table 4: Income comparison by geographic area

Income in Rands	Percentage in area		
	Mbazwana N=23	Ezingoleni N=108	Muden N=27
R0 - 500	80	87	92
501 - 1000	5	4	4
1001 - 1500	15	-	4
1501 - 2000	-	1	-
2001 - 2500	-	2	-
2501+	-	7	-
	100	100	100

It reinforces the impressions that were gleaned with regard to comparative levels of unemployment in the three areas, that there was comparatively more visible unemployment in Mudén and Ezingoleni than in Mbazwana. This however, is not conclusive, as we did not approach adult individuals who did not have bicycles in their possession at the time.

Therefore, small sample and inclusion of Ezingoleni teachers notwithstanding, more people were visibly gainfully employed in Mbazwana than Ezingoleni. By the same token Mudén had more people milling around in the town centre doing nothing, while only a few worked in the surrounding cane fields. Whether this is a fair representation is questionable.

While in Figure 1, the two categories self employed and pension, are self-explanatory, the concept of remittance needs explaining in this context. Remittances are viewed as those funds that are sent home by family members who are employed away from home in the towns. In the past terminology they would have been referred to as ("migrants"). Here it is differently used, as a catchall phrase for various types of handouts from friends and relatives and in some cases, even neighbours. In isiZulu the majority of respondents expressed this as "*Ngiyinikwa abantabami nezihlobo abasebenzayo*" (I get money from my children and relatives who work).

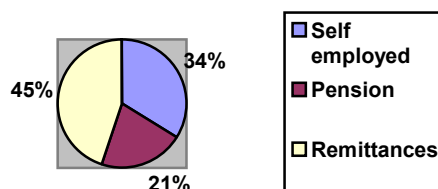


Figure 1: How do the unemployed earn a living?

3.3. Bicycle Ownership

In this section we set out to assess the extent to which the bicycles pilot projects have been embraced in these communities by asking a wide range of questions as set out below.

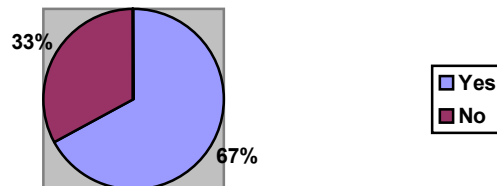


Figure 2: Do you own a bicycle?

Table 5: If "NO", why don't you own a bicycle?

Reasons	N	%
Lack of money	22	44
Bicycles not available	7	14
Gender/cultural prohibition	6	12
Fear of danger on roads	4	8
Cannot ride a bike	5	10
Personal choice	4	8
Project not in our area	2	4
<i>Total</i>	50	100

Respondents referring to either gender or cultural reasons merely stated facts that they themselves had obviously internalised such as, "*Ngingumutu wesifazana angikwazi ukugibela ibhayisikili*" (I am a woman I cannot/may not ride a bicycle).

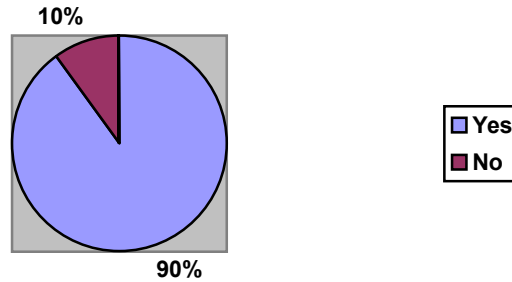


Figure 3: Would you like to own one?

Table 6: What would you need it for?

Reasons	<i>N</i>	%
	50	100
For children in family	9	18
Business/personal use	37	74
Fitness/Relaxation	4	8

4. ROAD SAFETY ASPECTS FOR SCHOLARS AS ROAD USERS

Since scholars seem to have been the primary target of the programme from the start, and also because they formed the majority in the sample, they were asked a range of questions to determine their road safety awareness

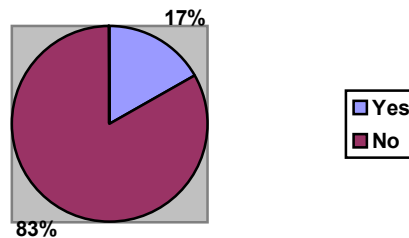


Figure 4: Have you had special bicycle riders' training?

and knowledge. Teachers and community leaders were most concerned about the lack of a concentrated effort to give in-depth education on road use and the responsibility of cyclists on roads. They specifically stated that the absence of scholar patrols and road training in the community was a definite disadvantage affecting the entire bicycle programme. They were most concerned because children tend to cross the roads at many points.

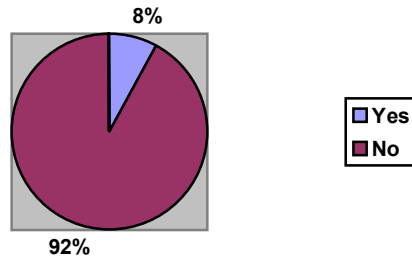


Figure 5: Is there a scholar patrol programme in your school?

However in both Muden and Ezingoleni scholars stated that “Department of Transport officials” had come to the school to “warn” them about road safety, which accounts for the ‘yes’ responses in both Figures .

5. BICYCLE UTILITY AND ROADS SERVICEABILITY

The whole purpose of the bicycle strategy is to help rural residents to bridge the distance gap between their homes and their regular destinations such as school, church and work. We asked the respondents about these destinations, how far they were and how long it took to get to them by bicycle.

Statistics in Tables 7 and 8 show without a doubt how significant the bicycles are for travel in the rural areas. As indicated earlier, the school children have had the most benefit out of this programme. It has helped bridge the distance and has hopefully cut traveling time by a wide margin. This can only help to improve their concentration span as they are probably no longer so tired any more. There is no doubt that it has cut down on tardiness at school in the mornings.

Table 7: What is your primary destination by bicycle?

Destination	<i>N</i>	%
Work	14	13
School	89	82
Recreational	5	5
	108	100

Table 8: How far is that in hours?

Number of hours	N	%
0 - 2	81	75
2 - 3	20	20
3 - 4	5	4
4+	2	1
	108	100

With regard to riding on gravel as indicated in Figure 6, two issues need be mentioned. One of the issues was in relation to the suitability of certain type of bicycles for given road conditions. The majority of respondents indicated that the mountain bike was the most suitable bicycle for gravel roads that are typically found in rural areas.

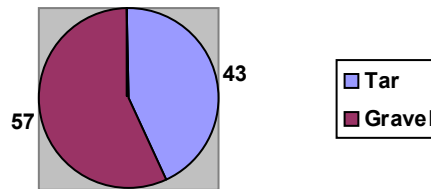


Figure 6: Do you ride on gravel or tar road?

The mountain bike is robust and has large wheels that make it easier to manoeuvre in either muddy or sandy conditions. The other matter was with respect to the state of roads. That it is difficult to ride on the regulation side if there are potholes on the road. Swerving about is one of the major causes of accidents especially collisions with pedestrians.

This question sparked a discussion around the quality of bicycles and the availability of spares. Many respondents complained that their bicycles had no mudguards, which caused spinning mud to splash on their clothing. For this reason they avoided riding bicycles on rainy days as indicated below on Figure 7. Respondents were however swift to explain that this was a minor detail compared to the savings they made buying the bicycles, and indicated that this could easily be solved if there were spares available in the Afribike shops.

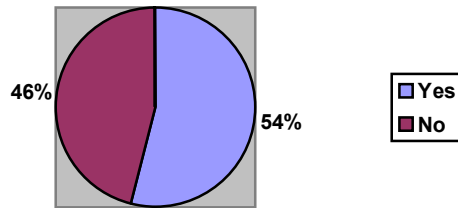


Figure 7: Do you ride on rainy days?

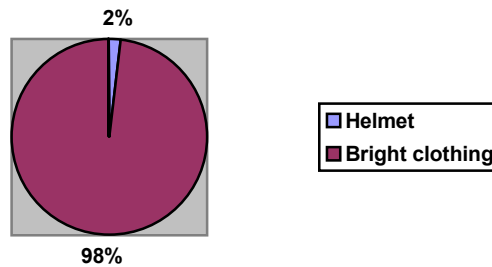


Figure 8: Do you wear reflective clothing when you ride?

Of course school children thought their bright school shirts passed for bright clothing. We could not disagree! Because interviews were in doors, researchers did not see one soul with a helmet!

6. PROBING BICYCLE USE FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION & SAFETY

With SANRAL's (South African National Roads Agency) commitment to poverty relief and dedication to job creation and empowerment, coupled with the National and Provincial Departments of Transport's *Shova Kalula* Bicycle Programme, it was thought prudent to include this section from the second study (Enterprise, 2003; Mpanza, 2002; Mashiri et al., 2002). Bicycle use readiness was included to establish interest in the mode of transport as it is a cheap mode of transport, as well as to anticipate potential infrastructural and road safety problems.

When respondents were asked to indicate their readiness to use bicycles, 59% of school pupils responded in the affirmative as against only 21% of community members who confirmed interest (Noah, 2004). The poor interest from community members can be gleaned from the comments they voluntarily expressed such as:

- "...because many cars are speeding in the area"
- "...there is a problem of road safety with the young children"
- "There is a big problem with N2"
- "...too many cars speeding on the township roads"

These issues raised by the community members support the road safety matters raised earlier in the first study by pupils. Irrespective of the elders' concern, pupils have indicated that they are ready. A further probe focused on the prioritization of certain issues that they consider of importance for cycling experience and these are indicated in Table 9.

Table 9 Prioritisation of issues pertaining to cycling experience

Issues	Pupils			Community		
	Top Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Top Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
More infrastructure like separate cycling tracks	65	14	21	66	35	0
Training in safe use of bicycles on the road	69	19	12	36	46	18
Support/funding of bicycle purchase	65	20	15	66	21	14
Jobs like small business activity /tourism	70	20	10	33	22	45
Sport training and fitness	64	21	15	82	11	7
Total	67	19	14	57	27	16

70% of pupils consider "jobs like small business activity/tourism" as a top priority, compared to 82% of community members who prefer "sport training and fitness." This is followed by 69% of school children who again indicate "training in safe use of bicycles on the road" as top priority.

The third top ranking priority for pupils are both "more infrastructure like separate cycling tracks" (65%) and "support/funding of bicycle purchase" (65%) similarly with community at 66% each.

7. DISCUSSION OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES IN THE SURVEYS

This section is a discussion of substantive issues arising out of the open-ended questions posed to respondents. Themes covered included general impressions about the entire Bicycles' Project: its impact on community life, on safety and security and its potential for furthering economic growth.

7.1 Attitudes towards the Bicycles Projects

The Bicycles Projects are well received in all the areas. People were full of praise and whatever problems were cited, they were viewed as minor detail in comparison to the "huge relief" that the bicycles had brought to communities, especially to scholars. Some of the reasons were that *"amabhayisikili asenze impilo yangcono kakhulu"* (Bicycles have made life very easy). *"Amabhayisikili asiza kakhulu izingane zesikole ukuthi zisheshe zifike esikoleni futhi zingakhathele"* (Bicycles have helped school children arrive in school on time and not as tired as they normally would be).

Nonetheless there were a number of problems mentioned that have been experienced since the inception of the programmes. These were:

- Bicycle accidents (5 mentioned in Mbazwana, 44 mentioned in Ezingolweni and 10 mentioned in Muden).
- Bicycle theft (1 mentioned in Mbazwana, 22 mentioned in Ezingolweni and 4 mentioned in Muden).
- Safety which is compromised "due to speed and carelessness". This problem received 4 times mention in Mbazwana, 17 mentioned in Ezingolweni and 4 mentioned in Muden.

When asked how some of these problems can be solved, respondents came up with solutions aimed at addressing mainly bicycle quality, road safety education and law enforcement. Forty six percent (46%) wanted roads to be upgraded and better managed because "they have potholes, and car drivers and cyclists often drive on the wrong side of the road trying to avoid the worst of potholes".

Thirty four percent (34%) thought that visible policing on roads might deter both motorists and cyclists from careless driving and riding. 20% wanted Afribike and "the government" to bring in "safer and sturdier" bicycles suited to existing topographical conditions. A vocal 4% felt there should be a reduction in the current costs of bicycles. The logic apparently being, if bicycles and roads are not up to standard then individuals should not be charged for laying their lives on the line.

7.2. Community Relations: Motorists and Cyclists

The inception of the bicycle programme has not adversely affected community relations. However respondents reported certain negative dynamics between cyclists and motorists, and again the emphasis differs by geographic region. The general feelings that were common to all were:

- a) Motorists were the aggressive lot on roads (48%). In Mbazwana they explained that when heavy trucks drive at high speed, they generate cross currents that can “suck you under” as you cycle along.
- b) All road users including pedestrians had no respect for each other (30%) and “failed to share the road”,
- c) Some people ride drunk, and many cyclists are “careless”, but
- d) 30% of the sample, largely from Mbazwana said there were “good relations” all round.

This last was an interesting contradiction because all along respondents had been complaining about riders who drink and ride carelessly. This is especially true of Mbazwana. It had even been explained that in Mbazwana there is an abundance of palm trees, which has spawned a palm wine trade and culture in which people partake regularly. When specifically asked about relations between cyclists and pedestrians, 79% said they were good.

7.3. Road Safety

It may be assumed that rural areas are safer for bicycling because there are fewer cars on the roads. This is an incorrect assumption. In the course of the day we saw ample cars on Ezingoleni –Nqabeni rural roads, vans ferrying their goods to rural shops and also a vibrant taxi rank in Ezingoleni town centre. The rural roads in Ezingoleni were the busiest, and because the roads are awash with potholes, drivers often drove on the “wrong side” trying to avoid potholes. It is therefore important that even on rural roads there should be some enforceable rules governing speed and observance of regulations. In the minds of respondents, the major causes of accidents involving bicycles are as indicated in Table 10.

Table 10: Major causes of bicycles accidents

Identified causes	N	%
Faulty bicycles	72	44
Not enough road space	40	25
Road surface	29	19
Livestock and drunks	17	12
Total	158	100

7.4. Improving Road Safety

Finally on the matter of road safety, respondents were asked how road safety could be realistically enforced in their communities. These were their answers in Table 11.

Table 11: Suggestions for improving road safety

Suggestions for road safety enforcement	N=150	%
Educational campaigns	82	55
Build separate tracks	42	29
Have more road signs	13	9
Difficult to do	13	9

7.5. Road Signs

Respondents were also emphatic about the role of street signs in decreasing road accidents, and advised that more should be put up. An overwhelming 91% of the sample wanted more street signs that warn, regulate and direct traffic on the roads.

The whole purpose of the bicycle strategy is to help rural residents bridge the mobility gap and distances between home and their regular destinations safely. It would seem that the safety aspect is not completely assured and that individuals literally run the gauntlet each time they venture onto roads as cyclists. Some respondents' earmarked aspects of road safety to be addressed by signs are indicated in Figure 9.

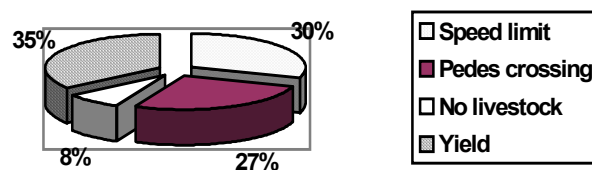


Figure 9: Aspects of road safety to be addressed by signs

7.6. Bicycle Tracks

The question of separate tracks for cycling made its way into every discussion with respondents. Noting the performance of drivers on rural roads, the state of the majority of bicycles and the state of the roads as traffic carriers, respondents kept referring to “separate tracks for bicycles” and more generally to “education about roads”.

46% of respondents have been at one or another time involved in a bicycle accident while about 79% of them had witnessed a bicycle accident. Given that 71% (117) were young children, these figures do not speak well for a programme that is ‘poised to take off on a large scale in the near future’. Further, there are no strong community structures to take care of the injured, in fact 44% of the sample said “*Uvuku’zithathe uma limele*” meaning, you just have to get up and see to your self in the event of an accident.

7.7. Bicycling Skills and Support Structures

In addition to requiring more road signs, respondents also suggested the following remedies or interim measures:

- Skills training in the area of First Aid to local home based care givers “Onompilo”, and scholars.
- Road safety training to all cyclists especially children in schools
- Licensing of cyclists like “like motorists”
- Separate cycle tracks, and
- Secure parking bays.

7.8. Perceived Economic Opportunities around Bicycles

There were a number of suggestions thrown around for creating job opportunities out of the cycling culture, but none very concrete or well explained. Ways of creating employment that were many often times were:

Bicycle Hire: Especially in Mbazwana where respondents explained that they were close to the sea and on the route of tourists and could easily create a business hiring out their bicycles;

Local manufacturing: This was considered in terms of out-sourcing, where communities would manufacture smaller pieces such as leather accessories, bicycle seats, gloves and handle bar covers;

Transportation of Goods: Many respondents thought they could use bicycles if they were adapted for carrying goods;

Regular competitions: Younger people on the whole had a better vision of how competitions could create job opportunities.

7.9 Preconditions for an Enjoyable Bicycling Experience

We asked respondents to rate services or elements they might want attached to a bicycle strategy to make it attractive to a large number of potential riders including more women. Table 12 depicts their ratings of each in terms of priority.

Table 12: Aspects of enjoyable cycling

Attraction	N	Number of Mention	%
Safety and Security	22	128	83
More road infrastructure	21	127	81
Manufacturing of bikes	21	126	80
Subsidisation	19	114	72
Jobs	18	111	70
Attractive surrounds	15	90	57

Note: Respondents had the liberty to choose more than one category hence the excess in 100%

Respondents value their safety and the security of their property more than anything else. In addition, they would like to see more bicycling infrastructure like separate bicycle tracks (81%). Respondents also expressed a need for both subsidisation of bicycles (72%) so that they could be sold cheaper. Quite a number of them are looking for employment opportunities that can be generated from a cycling culture like mechanical training for repairs or actual local manufacturing of parts or whole bicycles. Attractive surroundings were also mentioned.

7.10. Promotional Considerations for a Bicycle Culture

Respondents had several suggestions for promoting a culture of bicycling for all, including women. Many denied that there were cultural taboos against women riding bicycles and 60% claimed that no girl cyclist had been harassed against 30% who confirmed harassment of female cyclists. In Ezingoleni the majority of respondents felt that it had to be sanctioned by tribal leaders, while in Mbazwana they emphasised educational campaigns, fun days and competitions as the best way of encouraging all community members to ride bicycles. About 3% of the sample said, "all parents should buy their children bicycles... so that everybody could start to ride."

7.11. Most Suitable Bicycle for the Communities

To conclude, we challenged respondents to suggest the types of bicycles that they thought were most suited to their areas in terms of general utility and economic opportunities. Their choices are indicated in Figure 10.

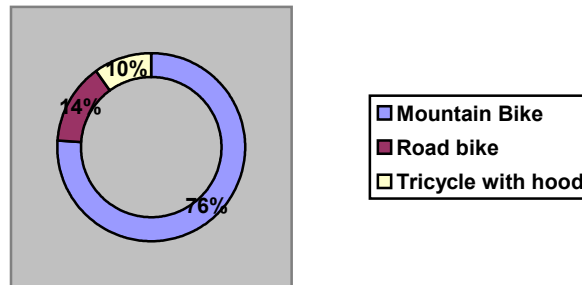


Figure10: Choice of most suitable bicycle for the respective areas

8. CONCLUSION

This baseline research sought to explore pertinent issues relating to a mass bicycle culture, with a view to developing a coherent strategy for implementing such a programme. By assessing the existing bicycle pilot projects from a user point of view, it has been possible to gather extremely useful information, which should serve to complement technical information that already exists.

The bicycles programme is well received in all communities where pilot projects were started. People are keen to see the programmes grow and spread. In particular children have been the major beneficiaries because the bicycles enable them to be on time at school and not as tired when they get there. The schools' principals were most complimentary on this score.

Adult members of the community also expressed their appreciation for the projects. Those who are currently unemployed felt the bicycles enabled them to ride around looking for casual or seasonal employment, while those who are employed used them to commute.

Job Opportunities and Economic Growth: Many communities see a potential for job creation and economic growth around bicycles but they have no concrete plans to follow this through. Bicycle hiring is one such opportunity as is manufacturing of bit parts like bicycle seats, gloves and handle bar rubber tubes. It is conceivable that the majority of opportunities may also come out of road works and patrol/enforcement.

Physical layout: In many areas the roads need some form of attention. On rainy days the roads are muddy, which causes dirt to fly around the wheel

spokes to settle on clothing. Many of the bicycles were without mudguards, and that was a condition they came in.

Secondly, there are no special tracks for bicycles to ride away from cars. These need not be elaborate expensive structures but merely extensions of the road designated for bicycles even away from curbs where pedestrians normally walk. Thirdly, none of the communities have a place to secure their bicycles, be it in church, at school or in town. It is important that if bicycles are being introduced as a mark of progress and development, then they should be provided with support structures that citizens could be proud of and want to own and protect.

Regulation and education: In the short space of time since the inception of the projects, it has been realised by the communities that if more bicycles are released into communities, there will be major road safety problems without prior intense road safety education. The scholars themselves want this training. One could sense that, to scholars, it would be a matter of pride to receive this training especially if accompanied by some kind of certification. (Scholars wanted number or identification plates for their bicycles).

It would therefore be most prudent for government to seize this opportunity to inculcate a culture of road safety and respect for law by using the bicycles programme as such a springboard. The enthusiasm that is being shown by the young should be harnessed and used productively for the benefit of the rest of society. There are many number of creative ways for doing this, all that is needed is the will.

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