

Opportunities to maximise the benefits of motorcycle and motorised three-wheeler taxis in rural Democratic Republic of Congo

Key policy implications

- Relevant government departments, associations, and training schools should work together to coordinate the motorcycle and three-wheeler taxi sector. The provision of quality training – including learning to be conscious of passengers' needs - and increasing compliance with current legislation would be strong steps in professionalising riders. An operational task force should be established to coordinate these efforts, comprising key stakeholders from across the sector.



- Association membership among riders is high in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and associations appear to have a strong influence over their members. As such they should play a key role in improving the professionalism of the sector.
 - Research shows that association members in DRC generate more income than non-members. This finding should be promoted by regulators and provincial governments to encourage riders to join associations. The operations manual for associations developed during the first phase of this research will assist in maximising the potential benefits of association membership.
 - Associations are well placed to sensitise riders about the importance of safe riding and to provide essential guidance on the 'Code de la Route' through radio, social media and meetings with their members. The relationship between

associations and provincial and national level governments should therefore be strengthened to increase their impact.

- Associations are also well placed to promote the use of helmets and high visibility jackets and should sensitise their members to ensure compliance with government legislation. Associations have the ability to impose rules within their organisation to improve the enforcement of the 'Code de la Route'.
- Rates of helmet use in DRC are poor by both riders and passengers. Improving the uptake of helmet use is essential for improving safety. Import standards should be reviewed and potentially modified to allow for quality and climate appropriate helmets to encourage use. Quality helmets should also be subsidised by the government in order to overcome barriers related to affordability. Mandating the purchase of two helmets with the sale of a motorcycle (both new and used) could also increase the access of helmets to both riders and passengers.
- Access to quality training is very limited in rural areas. Innovative ways of funding the provision of quality training should therefore be explored.

Ministry of Transport and Communication Channels

"The motorcycle is a means of transport used by all for many reasons. It is probably the most important means of transport here (in the city of Kinshasa) and in rural areas. But the sector is not regulated. It is informal because one does not need a license to exploit it, one does not have to respect the laws because it is unregulated and unorganised, one does not need to be registered, and it is very easy to access this mode of transportation."

Mr. Bagula – Ministry of Transport and Communication Channels, Kinshasa

- There is currently no reliable crash data in DRC. All countries in sub-Saharan Africa (with the exception of South Africa), are classified by the WHO as 'countries without eligible death registration data'¹. While official statistics in DRC report the number of road deaths in 2016 around 385, the WHO estimates the actual number of fatalities to be 26,529¹.

Background

The use of motorcycles has increased greatly in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. Motorcycles are often used as taxis, with riders charging a fare to carry passengers or goods. Motorised three-wheelers are also used in some rural areas, although their numbers are far fewer.

Motorcycle taxis play a critical role in enabling rural mobility in Africa. In many countries, they are the only available means of affordable motorised transport for people living in rural communities and have become an increasingly popular mode of transport.

They provide access to healthcare, including in medical emergencies, as well as access to markets and social amenities. They also provide employment and generate a reasonable income, predominantly for young men.



This policy brief has been developed based on a 2019 study of motorcycles and motorised three-wheeler taxis in rural areas of DRC. The aim of the study was to improve the current knowledge and understanding concerning the effective ways of enabling rural people to benefit from the safe use of motorcycles and motorised three-wheelers. The results of the study can be used to

¹ [Global status report on road safety 2018](#)

enhance the operation of these vehicles to provide safe, affordable and socially inclusive access for rural communities.

The project was supported by the Government of DRC through the local AfCAP partner institution Cellule Infrastructure, a technical body of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Public Works and Reconstruction, and funded by UK Aid.

Research methodology

This research builds on the research undertaken in 2018 in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Following a brief literature review and a stakeholder engagement exercise, a set of research activities was developed. Reviews of the regulatory framework, enforcement methods, and of current training provision were then carried out. In addition, a comprehensive survey targeting riders, owners and users was undertaken in six rural settlements in Tshopo and Kinshasa Provinces, covering topics including finance, accessibility, injuries and links to crime.

The findings of the research were presented to policy-makers and other stakeholders for discussion during a workshop in October 2019.



Key findings

The study has revealed that motorcycle taxis are the most available and accessible form of transport in rural DRC. They are especially important for creating employment opportunities, generating income, supporting the agriculture sector, and increasing access to social services, such as to healthcare services, in rural and peri-urban areas.

Despite the fact that a very small proportion of people in rural communities do not – or cannot – use motorcycle taxis, the vast majority reported using this mode as the most common form of day-to-day transport. The data also shows that in many areas, motorcycles are simply the only type of motorised transport available.

The survey found that passengers valued riders who ride slowly and carefully (23%), whom they know and trust (19%), who offer an affordable price (19%), whose vehicles are in good condition (14%) and who are older (8%).



Motorcycles are also frequently used in emergencies. Forty-two percent of passengers stated that either they, or a member of their household, had used a motorcycle taxi in an emergency.

Although based on rider perception and unverified, eighty-five percent of riders surveyed claimed to have transported passengers to a health facility in an emergency. Eighty-eight percent of riders believe they had saved a life by providing transport in an emergency.

Transport for pregnant women

A freight owner explained the experiences of pregnant women in his area:

“Even pregnant women take a motorcycle to go to the hospital. Others give birth on the motorcycle because there is no other means of transport” Male, 61 years

The survey also showed that motorcycle taxis are particularly important for female farmers and business women, with 69% of freight owner respondents being female. The most common items being transported by motorcycle taxis were agricultural produce (36%), items for sale in a shop (24%) and cooking fuel such as charcoal and firewood (16%).

Motorcycle taxis were considered an important means of generating income for both riders and owners in rural areas. Eighty-five percent of riders reported that the ‘best thing about motorcycle taxis’ was generating a source of employment and income.

Motorcycle associations were found to be popular amongst riders. According to the survey on benefits and disbenefits, 62% of riders interviewed were members of a motorcycle association.

Riders reported that after paying all expenses related to operating the motorcycle taxi, the average rider’s weekly net income was CDF 46,309 (GBP 22.54). This compares to an average weekly net income of GBP 19.25 that riders reported earning in their most recent previous job. Figure 1 shows a comparison of the net income earned while riding compared to riders’ most recent previous employment.

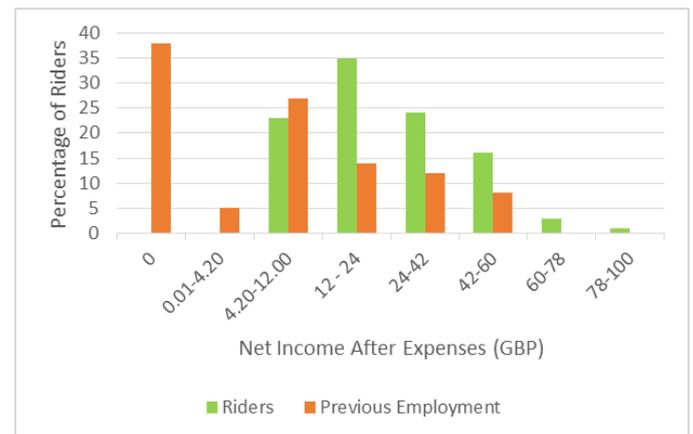


Figure 1. Profit of riders after expenses in the last 7 days compared to profit generated during their previous employment in DRC

Comparatively, using the latest Gross National Income figures from the World Bank, the average yearly income in DRC in 2018 was around GBP 398.00, which equates to GBP 7.65 per week. While it should be noted that this includes both rural and urban populations, the survey found that motorcycle taxi riders earned more than three times the national average.

As well as the many benefits that motorcycle taxis provide to rural communities, there are also considerable challenges. Riders, passengers and other road users are frequently the victims of motorcycle related crashes, crime, abuse and are susceptible to health issues. Riders also lack formal training and, in most cases, the legally required documentation to operate commercially.

There is currently no standardised national training curriculum for riders of motorcycles and motorised three-

wheelers. However, both the national Ministry of Transport and Communication Channels (MTCC) and the National Road Safety Commission (CNPR)² are in favour of the development of such a curriculum in order to improve the competence of riders. There is however, a standardised handbook from which drivers and riders can upgrade their skills (Remise à Niveau) issued in 2018 in the DRC.

Both riders and users were worried about the risk of crash and injury. They were also concerned about crime. When questioned, 72% of passengers did not feel comfortable using a motorcycle taxi at night.

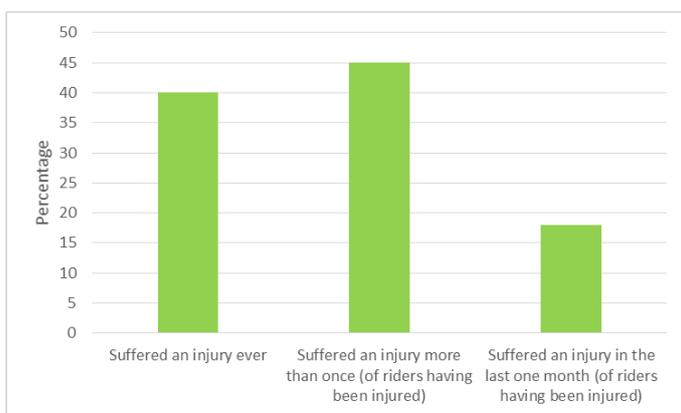


Figure 2. Frequency of motorcycle rider injuries in DRC

Figure 2 shows that 40% of motorcycle taxi rider survey participants had suffered an injury. Of these, 45% had suffered more than one injury, and 18% had suffered an injury within the last month.

Of the riders who had suffered an injury, 79% had been carrying a passenger at the time of the crash. ‘Rider error’ (41%) was stated as the most common cause of the incident.

Forty-two percent of riders said that they have suffered health issues that they attribute to riding a motorcycle. The most common health issue reported was general pain (57%), often specified as back pain.

None of the riders interviewed had ever undertaken a formal training course. The vast majority of riders interviewed said they had either been taught by friends or family, or were self-taught.

Only 15% of the riders interviewed had a driving licence, 12% had a motorcycle taxi operator’s licence, or business licence, and only one percent (one rider) had insurance.

Only five percent of riders reported that they ‘always’ wear a helmet – the lowest of the five countries in this study.

Conclusions

Overall, motorcycles and motorised three-wheeler taxis bring considerable opportunities to facilitate rural mobility in DRC and appear to improve rural access and employment opportunities for rural and peri-urban communities. However, concerted efforts are needed to manage, regulate and professionalise the motorcycle and three-wheeler taxi sector and to improve safety.

The provision of affordable and quality training, testing and licensing needs to be significantly improved and reinforced with strengthened enforcement.

In order for efforts to be effective, relevant government departments should collaborate and engage with other stakeholders including motorcycle and three-wheeler taxi associations.

Associations have the potential to support riders in accessing training and to influence compliance with existing legislation. Support to associations by local government can be used to improve the development of a professionalised sector.

Deliberate and concerted efforts by a number of stakeholders are required to ensure motorcycle and motorised three-wheeler taxi safety, improve the enforcement of regulation, increase the proportion of riders who receive formal training, and to address health concerns to maximise their impact and potential.



For more information:

www.research4cap.org/SitePages/MotorcycleSafety.aspx

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² Commission Nationale de Prévention Routière