

Chapter 6: Infrastructure

The MPRSP (page 40) highlights the need to provide good rural roads (including bridges), water and sanitation, energy, and telecommunications. It points out that investment in rural roads has a direct impact on linking rural, urban and peri-urban areas. While rural feeder roads are highlighted as a PPE under Pillar 1, the MPRSP further highlights that the rural population will also benefit directly (page 41) from the construction of the rural roads through employment generation under the Public Works Programme (Pillar 3).

The MPRSP (page 42) also highlights that government will combine an expanded borehole rehabilitation and construction programme with effective borehole maintenance strategies. These are also included under Pillar 1 on pro-poor growth.

In total, Budget Document 4a allocated MK 1,431 million to rural feeder roads under the PPEs (out of a total budget for the National Roads Authority of MK3,566 million) and borehole construction was allocated MK 100 million (out of a total domestic budget for the ministry of water development of MK 644 million – of which 187 million is recurrent and 456 million development). According to advertisements placed in the national print media the budget for rural feeder roads was subsequently reduced to MK400million (equivalent to the amount allocated under HIPC)²⁷, further, the amount released to date has been considerably below the amounts released in other areas (the equivalent of 20 per cent of the allocation).

Under the heading of infrastructure respondents to the survey were specifically asked about access to the nearest trading centre, maintenance of the roads in the area, number of boreholes in the area, and their satisfaction with access to water. The most striking finding is the number of months in a year that the respondents consider the roads impassable – almost eight months in total, this is despite the fact that almost 60 per cent of all roads have received some form of maintenance in the past 12 months, most of which the respondents are happy with. Directly related to this is the fact that over 60 per cent of respondents take over one hour to reach the nearest trading centre, which they view as impinging on their ability to purchase inputs and sell outputs. Further, while each community visited had, on average, access to a borehole, 16 per cent of these were reported to be non-functional. Notwithstanding, almost 60 per cent of respondents who had access to boreholes responded that they were very satisfied with their access to water.

6.1 Roads and Road Maintenance

Respondents were asked for how many months of the year the main access road to their community is inaccessible – on average, the communities visited considered that they were cut off from the outside world for almost eight months of the year. Areas surrounding Blantyre City said that they were isolated for over nine months of the year, whereas in some of the rural areas, such as Phalombe and Nkhata Bay respondents said this was for slightly over six months (See table 6.1). Part of the reason for this apparently unusual situation is that the respondents who live in areas close to the urban centres consider their roads to be inaccessible when motorised vehicles cannot pass through them, whereas in rural areas respondents are much less stringent in the standards they set. To ensure that these assessments are completely comparable in future rounds of the exercise, the question will be refined to consider issues of accessibility by motorised vehicles.

²⁷ Weekend Nation Newspaper, Vol 7 No 7, 15-16 February 2003

Table 6.1: Average Number of Months Communities Have Impassable Access Roads

	Months
Mulanje	9.0
Phalombe	6.6
Blantyre City	9.4
Mchinji	8.6
Salima	7.1
Nkhata Bay	6.5
Total (n=973)	7.8

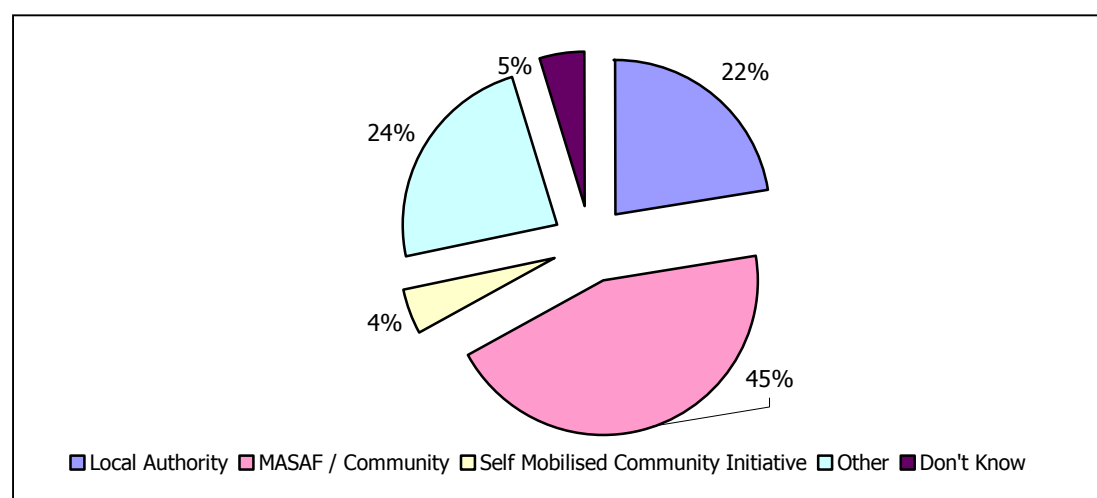
In total, 60.6 per cent of respondents said that the roads in their area had been maintained in the past 12 months. This reply was highest in Mchinji, and lowest in Salima. The greatest proportion of “Don’t Knows” was recorded in Blantyre.

Table 6.2: Respondents saying roads were maintained in the past 12 months (%)

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don’t Know / No Response (%)
Mulanje	63.9	34.4	1.7
Phalombe	65.6	33.9	0.6
Blantyre City	61.1	26.4	12.5
Mchinji	71.2	25.6	3.3
Salima	45.1	51.2	3.7
Nkhata Bay	56.9	39.6	3.5
Total (n=1078)	60.6	35.5	3.9

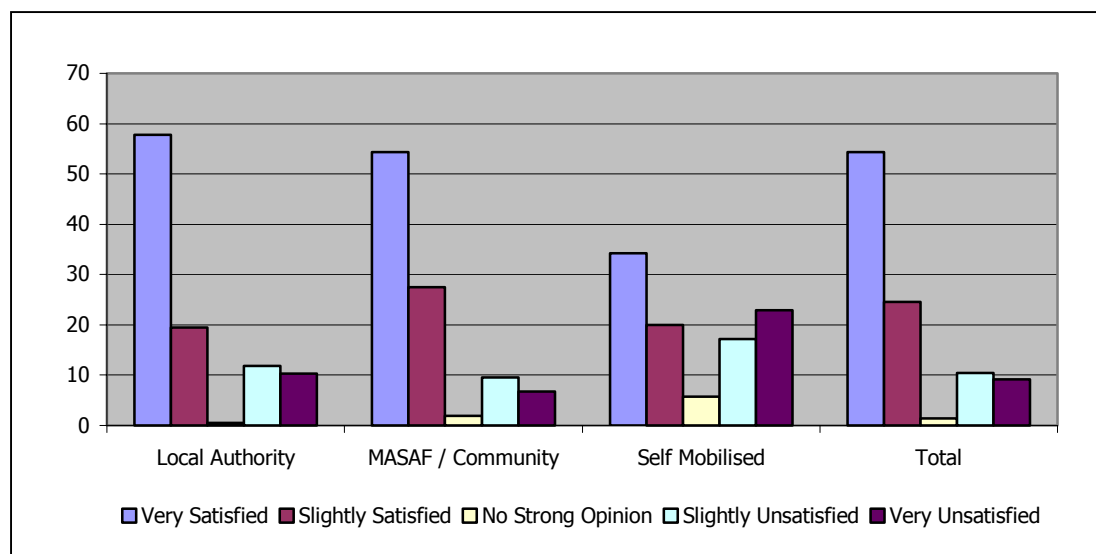
The most common source of road maintenance was MASAF funded, community mobilised initiatives – this accounted for 44.6 per cent of all maintenance efforts, followed by the local authority who accounted for 22.5 per cent of the total (see Figure 6.1 and Annex Table A6.1).

Figure 6.1: Source of maintenance of roads in the past 12 months



Further to this, respondents were asked about their levels of satisfaction with the work carried out, in total 54.3 per cent said they were very satisfied, with less than 20 per cent saying they were either slightly or very unsatisfied. Respondents appear to be more satisfied with work carried out by the Local Authority or MASAF than through their own self-mobilised initiatives (See Figure 6.2 and Annex Table A6.2).

Figure 6.2: Satisfaction with road maintenance, by type of initiative

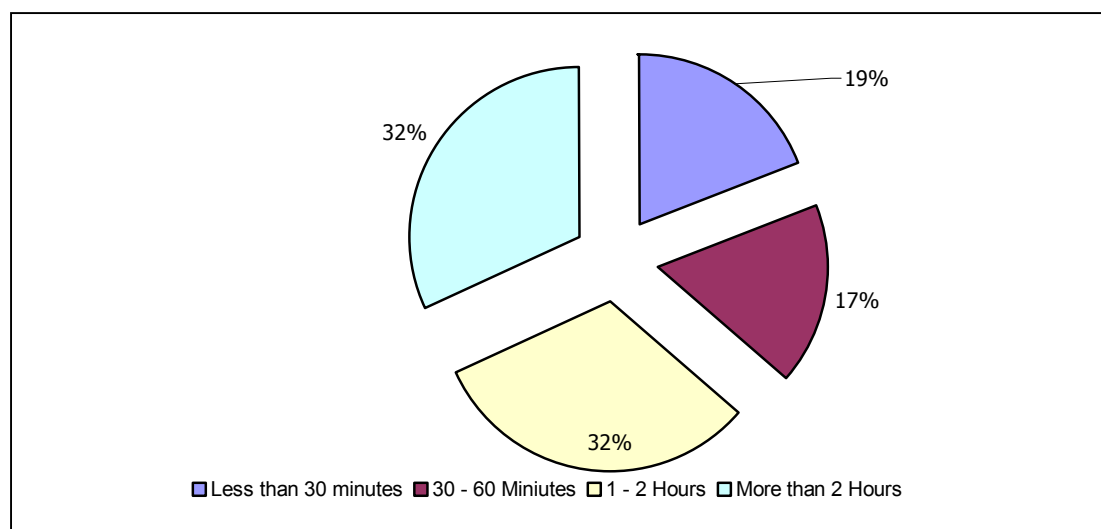


6.2 Access to the nearest trading centre

As a means of assessing what the quality of rural feeder roads actually means to the communities in question, they were asked about their access to the nearest trading centre. The predominant way of travelling to the nearest trading centre is by foot – almost three quarters of all respondents used this means, the only other response of note was by bicycle, which one fifth of all respondents said was how they access the centre (See Annex Table A6.4).

Slightly less than 20 per cent of respondents are able to access the nearest trading centre in under half an hour. This figure is as high as 34.8 per cent in Mulanje, where population densities would suggest that market centres will generally be more proximate than in less densely populated areas. It is lowest in Salima (44 per cent), where almost 60 per cent of respondents have to travel for more than two hours to access the nearest trading centre (see Figure 6.3 and Annex Table A6.3).

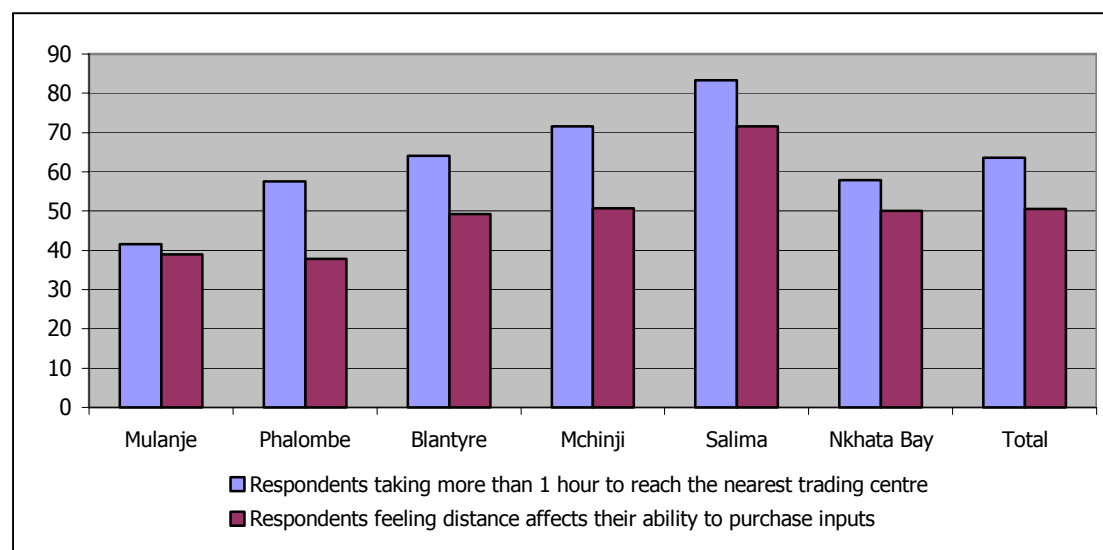
Figure 6.3: Length of time to reach the nearest trading centre



Half of the respondents felt that the time they had to take to travel to the nearest trading centre affected their ability to purchase inputs and sell outputs. The figure was understandably highest in Salima (71.6 per cent) where a larger number of respondents had to travel for more than an hour to reach the trading centre. The figures were lowest in

Phalombe and Mulanje, where only 37.8 and 38.9 per cent of respondents felt that the length of time taken to access the nearest trading centre affects their ability to purchase inputs. These are also the districts where respondents took less time on average to reach the nearest trading centre – figure 6.4 illustrates the relationship between length of time taken to reach the centre, and the likelihood of respondents saying that this distance impinged on their ability to purchase inputs.

Figure 6.4: Distances to nearest Trading Centre (%)



6.3 Boreholes and access to water

The provision of boreholes and improved access to water is a major component of the MPRS, it highlights (page 42), however that only about 60 per cent of existing boreholes are currently functional²⁸. The strategy sets a target for 2005 of them all being functional, and a further target of constructing 7,500 new boreholes in the same period. Budget Document 4A highlights that 650 new boreholes will be constructed in the current financial year.

On average, each community visited had 1.1 boreholes – this was as high as 1.6 in Mulanje and 1.5 in Nkhata Bay and as low as .7 in Phalombe. A total of 16.2 per cent of boreholes were reported to be not working – in Salima, very few (1.7 per cent) did not work, while in Phalombe, who already had the lowest number of boreholes per village, the largest percentage were not working (36.7 per cent) (See Table 6.3). The results from this do show a major improvement on the baseline figure contained in the MPRSP and shows that the target set for 2005 appears to be attainable, at least on a national level.

Table 6.3: Average Number of Boreholes Per Community

	Average No.	Average No Working	Proportion not working (%)
Mulanje	1.5828	1.2857	18.8
Phalombe	0.7095	0.4494	36.7
Blantyre City	0.8261	0.7826	5.3
Mchinji	0.9832	0.7826	20.4
Salima	1.1127	1.0938	1.7
Nkhata Bay	1.5036	1.241	17.5
Total (n=1009)	1.108	0.928	16.2

Respondents were also asked about the length of time it took them to reach the nearest borehole – the majority of respondents who said this was applicable to them said it took less

²⁸ This figure is taken from the Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS) of 2000

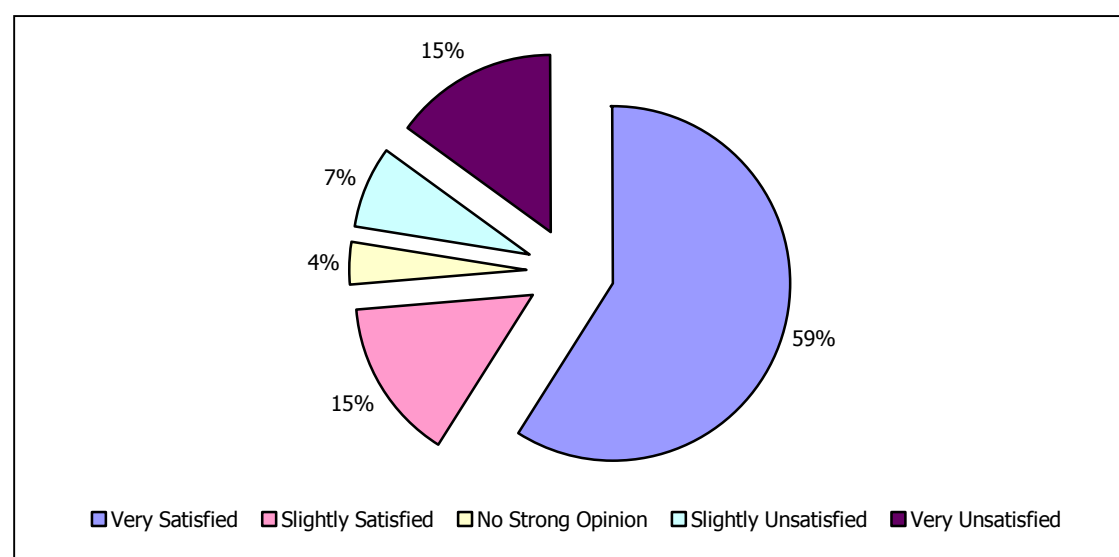
than 30 minutes to reach the borehole. However, a number of respondents said this was not applicable, for instance in Phalombe, due to the large numbers saying their community's borehole was not working, almost 60 per cent said this was not applicable. Table 6.4 gives a breakdown of these responses by district.

Table 6.4: Length of Time to Access Nearest Borehole (%) by district

	Less than 30 Minutes	30 Minutes – 1 hour	1 –2 Hours	More than 2 Hours	Not Applicable
Mulanje	37.4	15.6	6.1	12.3	28.5
Phalombe	34.3	6.0	0.0	0.0	59.6
Blantyre City	41.5	31.7	2.4	0.0	24.4
Mchinji	36.1	15.0	7.2	2.8	38.9
Salima	43.6	19.9	8.5	4.3	23.7
Nkhata Bay	41.0	11.5	5.0	2.2	40.3
Total (n=998)	39.0	16.2	5.2	3.9	35.7

The respondents who did have access to a borehole were then asked about their level of satisfaction with their access to water – almost 58.9 per cent said they were very satisfied (See Figure 6.5 and Annex Table A6.6).

Figure 6.5: General Satisfaction of Respondents who had access to boreholes, with ability to access water



6.4 Conclusion

The issues of infrastructure, borehole construction and access to water are areas that require even more examination. The current SDSS touched on some major issues, but the depth of feeling expressed to the enumerators suggests it is an area requiring further investigation. The importance of these sectors is reiterated in the MPRSP, and they will continue to be important for improving the economic potential of people in rural areas. In this regard, allocations made towards these areas under the PPEs need to be truly protected (initial large amounts appear to have been subsequently replaced by smaller amounts).

Despite the large allocations, the exercise reveals that roads are considered impassable for large portions of the year, impinging on respondent's ability to access social services (as evidenced from the other chapters which reveal the length of time they must travel), and in economic terms with regard to accessing markets to purchase inputs and sell outputs. However, some rehabilitation is occurring, which is generally well received.

The number of boreholes that appear to be non-functioning in the communities the respondents live in (16 per cent) is high, but does represent some progress from the year 2000 figures highlighted in the MPRSP, future rounds of the SDSS will continue to look at this closely, and will endeavour to delve more deeply into issues connected to water supply. Future rounds of the exercise should also look in more detail at the various sources of water that the respondents have access to, rather than just focussing on boreholes.