



“Imbi indlela eyihamba kuyo, okokuqala nje”

Report on Focus Group Discussions with Migrant Workers resident in vicinity of proposed N2 Route from Port Edward to Lusikisiki

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Methodology

As part of the research project to determine public perceptions regarding the possible construction of a new section of the N2 between Port Edward and Lusikisiki, the South African National Roads Agency commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council to conduct a representative sample survey of the attitudes of residents living in the vicinity of the proposed route. In preparation for the survey, a series of four focus group discussions were convened in the relevant area, with migrant workers who were at home during the Christmas holiday period. The purpose was to factor their concerns into the design of the sample survey instrument that will be administered when most migrant workers are likely to be back at their places of work in cities and towns elsewhere in South Africa.

Four localities were selected along the proposed route:

1. Nkunzimbini (about 11 km from Lusikisiki, Qaukeni Local Municipality)
2. Goso Forest (about 9 km from Lusikisiki, Qaukeni Local Municipality)
3. Zangotshe (about 23km east of Bizana, Mbizana Local Municipality)
4. Madiba (about 20km from Bizana, Mbizana Local Municipality)

At each of these localities, chiefs and their respective headmen were identified. Meetings were held to inform them about the research and to consult about arrangements to convene the focus groups. In all instances there was a high degree of cooperation and willingness to assist the process. The authorities applauded SANRAL for consulting them before meeting with the communities, as an appropriate protocol. They indicated that they would like to see the construction of N2 as it would assist in mitigating traffic congestion on existing roads. They also expressed the hope that the new road would be well maintained, unlike the existing roads. They were confident that their communities would appreciate being approached and asked their views on the topic. They were informed that the intention was to collect information about people's issues, concerns, perceptions and suggestions regarding the possibility of the N2 construction.

One chief shared the story about a company that did not take people's views into consideration. The company simply began planning the establishment of a mine in their community. He said the community therefore filed court papers opposing the construction of the mine in response to this lack of consultation. Another chief expressed support for the road provided that local residents were informed about the meaning of road signs and the danger of crossing the road without checking properly for oncoming traffic. He also indicated the need for the erection of fences to prevent livestock or people from being hit by passing vehicles. The chiefs were forthcoming in suggesting the names of individuals who were spending the holidays at home. A sample of these were contacted by cellphone and invited to participate in the discussions. At the appointed venues for three of the four groups, more than the 8 to 10 invitees arrived. All who genuinely worked in towns and cities away from the Lusikisiki or Bizana

regions were allowed to participate. The time and venue of each of the four groups is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Date and venue of each focus group discussion, December 2010

Date & Time	Venue
21 st December 2010; 10:30	Ndlovimile Junior Secondary School- Zangotshe
21 st December 2010; 13:30	Baleni Junior Secondary School- Baleni, Madiba
22 nd December 2010; 09:00	Chief Mavela’s place- Nkunzimbini
22 nd December 2010; 13:00	Sanele Mkhutshwa’s home – Goso Forest

Migrant workers’ work locations and travelling habits

About two-thirds of participants were male and one-third female. In introducing each discussion, the participants were asked to indicate where they worked, how they travelled between their villages and places of work, which routes they took and how frequently they made these trips. Where such information was provided, it is listed in Table 2.

The migrants indicated that they had jobs in many of the major cities, including Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth and east London. Some had employment in smaller towns such as Peddie, Mthatha, Alice or Mzimkhulu.

The majority said that they made use of public transport, especially “Kia motors”, a local taxi company. A smaller proportion indicated that they make use of their own private cars. Where route details were provided, there was frequent mention of travelling to their workplaces via Bizana in the case of residents of the northern villages of Zangotshe or Madiba; and via Lusikisiki, in the cases of the southern villages of Nkunzimbini or Goso Forest.

Trips between workplace and home were made between one and twelve times each year. About one-third of participants made the trip only once per annum. The frequencies of visits listed in Table 1 are those that constitute the norm. The figures thus exclude irregular events such as family funerals or other family events or celebrations.

Table 2: Workplace particulars of participants (where provided)

Group venue	Workplace	Sex	Transport mode	Route taken to work	Yearly visits
Zangotshe (G1)	Peddie	M	2 taxis	via Bizana	4x
	Port Elizabeth	M	3 taxis	via Bizana, Mthatha	3x
	Pietermaritzburg	M	Own car	via Kokstad	12x
	Pietermaritzburg	M	Own car		3x
	Mzimkhulu	F			2x
	Alice	F	4 taxis	via Bizana, Mthatha, East London	3x
	East London	F			3x
	Durban	M	2 taxis	via Bizana	1x
	Mthatha	F	Own car	via Bizana	12x
Madiba (G2)	East London	M	Own car		5x
	Mthatha	M			2x
	United States	M	3 taxis, plane		4x
	Johannesburg	F			1x
	Mpumalanga	M			5x
	Mpumalanga	F			6x
	Cape Town	F	Taxis		1x
	Durban	F	Public transport		1x
	Pietermaritzburg	F	Public transport		4x
	Port Shepstone	M	Taxis		2x
Nkunzimbini (G3)	Durban	F	3 taxis	via Lusikisiki	2x
	Johannesburg	M	Public transport		1x
	Pietermaritzburg	M	Public transport		3x
	Mthatha	M	Own car		12x
	Krugersdorp	M	Bus, taxi	via Lusikisiki	1x
	Cape Town	M	Bus, taxi		1x
	Port Elizabeth	M	Taxi		1x
	Johannesburg	M	Taxi		1x
	Welkom	M	Own car		1x
Goso Forest (G4)	Cape Town	M	Own car or plane		6x
	Durban	M	Public transport		3x
	Cape Town	M	Own car or taxi		4x
	Johannesburg	M	Public transport		3x
	Rustenburg	M	Bus, taxi		1x
	Uitenhage	M			1x

Emergent issues

A sense of gratitude emerged amongst participants for being engaged on the issue of the potential construction of the new section of the N2. One person said that nobody had ever consulted them and they were particularly thankful that consideration was being given to the opinions of workers who were not living in their communities for most of the year. Another mentioned that the prospect of a new road had existed for

many years; investigations had been done to determine the availability of local stones for the construction of the road. If the road were to be constructed “we would be like kings” [*ukuba ungakhiwa singathi siziNkosi*]. Another participant was cynical, saying that promises had been made about the road before and he wondered whether these were simply in order to encourage votes for the ruling party [*Bazakuza apha nge-4X4s besithembisa izulu nomhlaba*] in anticipation of the local government elections that were expected in 2011. One participant asked that local communities be kept up to date in regard to decisions being made about the new road. The lack of options became evident in the comment by one of the migrant labourers that “There are people who do not come to their homes because it discourages them to drive on these roads. But we are forced to come because our families are here, our friends are here. We grew up here.” Another encapsulated the importance of the issue in his statement “There is no life without good roads”. (G4)

The group discussions were facilitated by a group moderator, who introduced topics and posed questions, encouraging participation by all present. Several positive and negative issues arose in all or most of the four groups, as outlined in the section that follows.

Potential positive impact

Slow travel on existing poor quality roads

Most participants referred to the poor quality of existing roads in the region and the impact thereof on speed of travel between towns. This prolongs the journey to and from work. The prospect of this new section of the N2 would be of great benefit [*Ingasinceda kakhulu lendlela intsha*]. Currently, travellers between Port Edward and Mthatha have little option but to use the R61 which is routed via Mbizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki. The new road would reduce travelling time and the inconvenience of passing through these towns. One participant expressed the frustration of even contemplating making the journey home [*Akukhonto icaphukisa njengoba kwiveki elandelayo ndizakuya ekhaya*] in view of their poor quality and the hazards of encountering stray livestock. Another said that in the event of a new road he would be encouraged to visit his family more often. Another told of the warnings received from an employer owing to arriving late for work, which would not happen in the event of a better quality road.

“The road affects me at the moment. I leave my place at 7am, and I arrive late at Mthatha. I am unable to perform all the duties I am supposed to do”. (G1)

“We are unable to reach our destinations on time, because we are driving on a gravel road”. (G1)

“It takes us hours to reach town. There are also potholes. We would be very grateful if the government can build us proper roads”. (G2)

“It is extremely difficult to have parties, more especially us youth. For instance, on 25 December you feel like inviting your friends who are residing out of Bizana. But you cannot because of the road. Number two, you want to invite the DJ to come and entertain you, but he is not able to drive to our place”. (G1)

“Wow, life would be easy [if the new road were to be built]; we would shoot straight to where we are going without going via neighbouring towns and locations.” (G3)

“There will not be a need to wake very early in the morning when we want to go for shopping”. (G3)

Enhanced access to government services

Additionally, access to health, education and other services would be enhanced in comparison with existing difficulties in transporting patients to hospital or medical supplies to clinics or blood samples between clinics and laboratories. Several told stories of delays in getting results of medical tests or access to medical attention owing to problems such as impassable muddy roads [*imoto ayizukufika kuba kumanzi*]. The construction of a new section of the N@ would encourage qualified teachers and nurses who had hitherto been put off by poor accessibility to the rural villages would be attracted to settle there.

“You call an ambulance, but it does not arrive on time due to bad roads. Sometimes it does not arrive at all”. (G2)

“Teachers do not want to stay here due to bad roads. They leave this place and apply for schools to other places because they are saying this is a bad place to live in. Education would improve. They would sit down with the kids”. (G2)

“I am of the view that there would be garages [petrol stations]. That means it would be easy to connect as the garages will not be built far away from where we live”. (G1)

Reduced cost of travel

A quicker journey conjured up the potential for lower public transport costs owing to enhanced accessibility. Many participants commented on their existing requirement for multiple taxi journeys between home and destination and the resultant high cost of using taxis. Another consideration would be to institute lower tolls for local regular

users of the new road in the event of the introduction of a toll system. This would encourage local usage and thereby enhance local quality of life.

“We pay too much for public transport. You know why? Because you pay a local taxi to town. From town you pay to Mthatha. From Mthatha you pay to King. From King you pay again to Port Elizabeth. If there was one thing you catch to your workplace it would be much better. You leave early in the morning, at five in the morning. These taxis must wait until they are full before they go. You spend many hours sitting in the taxi. You cannot tell these silly drivers that you are in a hurry, you are late for work. They tell you to buy your car. Can you see how frustrating it is?” (G3)

“The problem is that if the toll gates would be introduced a due consideration must be given to those who are using them often”. (G2)

Better quality and maintenance of a national road

Some perceived that were the N2 section to be constructed, it would be more reliably and better maintained because it would be a national road and not under provincial administration. The existence of potholes would be eradicated. The potential for damage to vehicles would be reduced [*iyazimoshu imoto zabantu*]. It was also presumed that a national road would be fenced, thereby preventing stray livestock from wandering onto the road. An important consideration would be that the road should be properly completed to high standards. A story was told in one group about a local bridge that had been poorly constructed and prematurely approved by the authorities. An appeal was therefore made for consultation with the local communities before the project was signed off as completed. One participant appealed for tar roads within the villages as well, to improve access to the new N2.

“...the roads we are using are full of potholes. These roads are not maintained because they belong to provincial or local government”. (G1)

“The public transport I was using got stuck in the road. We had to wait until the car got fixed”. (G2)

“I had to wait until I was told that it was not raining anymore as I am using a small car. It is very difficult to reach home as roads are being damaged by the rain”. (G2)

“The roads are small and there are lots of curves more especially on your way to Port St. Johns”. (G3)

“I can't tell you how many times I've had to have my car repaired.” (G3)

Creation of jobs

Other participants pointed out the possibility of new employment opportunities involving the construction of the road as well as hawker trading options along the road. One suggested that in the event of the establishment of toll booths, local people could be employed. Youth who currently spend excessive amounts of their time in shebeens and who steal money from local pensioners, would be presented with new possibilities of employment both during the construction phase, and thereafter with their newly acquired skills. Additionally, the current low level of profitability would be enhanced for existing small businesses in need of regular supplies transported by road. A request was made that chiefs should be asked for lists of local unemployed people from whom employees could be selected. From a slightly different perspective, one participant said that the construction workers would want to date local girls. The implication was an increased birth rate and demand for child rearing allowances from the girls.

“If this road were to be constructed they [the youth] would get jobs, work, and the crime would decrease”. (G2)

“Should this road be constructed we would be able to run our businesses, we would own petrol stations. Many people would get jobs. Our lives would be improved”. (G2)

Potential negative impact

Environmental degradation

Others mentioned the potential occurrence of air pollution as a result of the construction process. One pointed out the need to ensure that damage to natural environments such as forests and nature reserves did not happen. Another said it would be important that quarries used for access to local sand and stones for road construction should be rehabilitated on completion of the. Another stressed the value of the local river and the need to maintain its quality and another asked that their fields for crop cultivation should not be destroyed as it would cause them “to die of hunger”.

“...nature must be taken into consideration. I mean our forests must not be destroyed, and eco-tourism, our game reserves”. (G1)

Long distance driving

Concern was expressed by one participant about the longer distances that might be travelled on a high quality road, leading to drowsiness and the possibility of accidents if the drivers did not stop to rest.

“The distance between Port Edward and Lusikisiki is very long for if there is no town between them. You are going to get tired. I think that would cause accidents on the road”. (G1)

Fast moving traffic

Speeding vehicular traffic is currently an unknown phenomenon in the rural environs to be traversed by the N2. This would present a danger to both livestock [*izinkomo zocrosa umgwaqo kuvele imoto itshayise inkomo*] and people, especially children [*Ndinexhala malunga ngabantwana xa lomgwaqo wakhiwe*] who are not accustomed to looking out for fast cars and trucks. It would therefore be essential that the new road be fenced off in order to protect people and animals from being struck by vehicles. One participant expressed it bluntly that the number of funerals would increase in the absence of such fencing [*sakungcwaba yonke imihla ukhe nje nashiya indlela zingabiyelwanga*]. Others indicated the need for public education and the erection of clear warning notices about the hazards of pedestrian carelessness.

“There must be boards warning them [the children] about the road” (G2)

“People must be workshopped. Meetings must be arranged whereby we will be taught [the rules and signs of the road] to look this side and that side before the cross the road.” (G4)

Better access for criminals

Warnings were expressed about the potential for enhanced criminal access [*Ufreeway uzakuzisa ubugebengu*] and getaway opportunities for criminals. This would be a backwash effect of the construction of a new highway.

“The freeway will bring crime. Criminals will come and steal from us and then run to the freeway immediately after”. (G2)

Potential for corruption

Participants in all four groups expressed concern about potential nepotism or the importation of labour from other areas. An important consideration would thus be to engage the local community and to contract local small businesses and employ local individuals [*qasha abantu balapha ekuhlaleni*] in the construction process. Cooperation would thus be enhanced and antagonism reduced if local communities observe and experience increasing household incomes and economic empowerment. Conversely, the

appearance of wealthy outsiders [*abantu abanamagama amakhulu*] monopolising opportunities for an income would not be welcome.

“What will be the criteria to choose people who will be employed? Another question I have: what will be the criteria to choose people who will win tenders?” (G3)

“Are you going to employ us the locals or you will bring people from Pretoria?” (G3)

Removal of existing infrastructure along the route

Several participants pointed out the need for proper consultation about the removal of houses from the path of the new road. Others mentioned the possibility of grazing fields or ancestral graves being affected and the need for alternative arrangements in this regard.

“If they intend to demolish my house because that is where the road will be constructed, they must ask me to choose the place I like where they can build me a new house”. (G2)

Conclusions

This empirical research based on the focus group discussions with samples of migrant workers, and their respective leaders, in the four randomly sampled villages – Nkunzimbini and Goso Forest in Lusikisiki, and Zangotshe and Madiba in Qaukeni Municipality - found that:

- Existing roads in the area are problematic as they are used by many cars and are unmaintained; as a result they have potholes that cause damage to vehicles.
- Without decent roads the communities cannot attract qualified teachers and medical staff, thereby impairing the quality of local education and health services.
- A new section of the N2 would enhance accessibility within the region and between the region and other parts of the province and elsewhere. This would take the form of a faster, safer road that would reduce travelling time and costs.
- Virtually all the participants identified the challenges faced as a consequence of poor roads. They expressed support for the possibility of construction of a new section of the N2 highway between Port Edward and Lusikisiki.

- Participants are optimistic that should the new road be constructed, local job and entrepreneurial opportunities would be created, provided such opportunities were made available to local people and not those from other parts of the country.
- It was suggested that fences should be erected along the new road in order to prevent livestock from crossing the freeway and children or adults from the danger of fast moving traffic.
- It was further suggested that an awareness campaign would be necessary to educate rural communities who are not accustomed to being in close proximity to a national highway.
- Some warned of a potential increase in crime owing to enhanced access and getaway opportunities.
- They cautioned that measures need to be taken to accommodate land uses that might be affected by the new road. These would include housing, fields for cultivation and ancestral graves. They also indicated the need for rehabilitation of the area, including quarries, after the construction process, to avoid permanent environmental damage.

Table 3: Authorities consulted during arrangement of focus group discussions

Village	Leader	Designation	Contact Details
Nkunzimbini	Mr. Mavela	Chief	078 765 0147
Nkunzimbini	Mr. Mguqulwa	Assistant Chief	073 423 1866
Goso Forest	Mr. Veleni	Headman	No cellphone
Zangotshe	Mr. Matukuza	Headman	071 747 7225
Madiba	Mr. Baleni	Chief	082 439 4567
Baleni	Mr. Sonjica	Headman	083 565 6704