



Source : Simon B. Opladen

« The roads are at the core of the fight against poverty, they are like the veins through which blood flows, they enable populations to travel for different tasks, to move and to live. »

Secretary General  
of the Eastern Transport Union

## KEY RESULTS OF THE EASTERN

### ACCESS ROADS PROJECT

- More than 300 km of all-weather roads and 126 crossing structures
- 50 villages and 500'000 inhabitants with improved access
- Increase in the volume of economic activity and of profits in the villages
- Increased mobility and considerable travel-time saving
- Improvement in the access to social services, and in particular for schooling and to health centers
- Improvement in road-side soil fertility, as well as in water management for agriculture and livestock (water retention)
- Regular income, allowing investments in food, health, housing and production
- Improvements in gender relations through shared work
- Increase in social networking and in household pride

## PERSPECTIVES

- Guide local government and local communities towards sustainable management of their rural road network through the establishment of sustainable management and maintenance mechanisms
- Assist local government, the local private sector and communities to develop the capacity to undertake rural road construction and maintenance operations
- Support the legal recognition of local rural access roads committees within local decentralized bodies
- Ensure the transfer of knowledge acquired by PrEst to the sector's actors (Local Government, Small and Medium sized Enterprises, Economic Interest Groups, Technical Consultancy Companies, Decentralized State Services, Technical Schools)
- Assist the State and local government in the transfer of the PrEst experience to the national level by its incorporation in sector policies and by investments in other regions of the country

> The report is available at [www.helvetas.org](http://www.helvetas.org)

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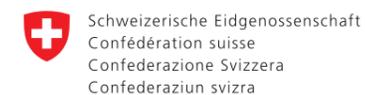
Source: Peter Schmidt

## RURAL ACCESS ROADS:

### GENERATE MOBILITY, REVENUE AND PRIDE

#### Impact study of rural access roads in Eastern Burkina Faso

The Rural Access Roads programme – «Désenclavement à l'Est (PrEst)», which is financed by SDC and implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, was initiated in 2002. The Government of Burkina Faso considers that the improvement of transport in rural areas is an efficient tool for socio-economic development and to alleviate poverty. PrEst contributes to the building of all-weather rural access roads using the «HIMO», or High Labour Intensity method. It is the village inhabitants who build the roads in return for wages, following initial training and with the support of technicians. A field study, undertaken in 2011 by Intercooperation in collaboration with the Burkinabe Experts d'Afrique consultancy firm, has shown that PrEst improves not only access for rural populations but also their living conditions.



Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC



Source : HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

## THE CONTEXT

The adoption in 2002 of the Rural Transport National Strategy confirmed the will of the Burkinabe Government to improve access in rural areas. This policy has obtained the support of several partners, including that of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) which in 2002 designed, with the Burkinabe Government, the Rural Access Roads' programme – «Désenclavement à l'Est» (PrEst). PrEst's implementation was granted to HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation.

Since 2004, PrEst has enabled the building of more than 300 km of roads which has improved access for 500'000 inhabitants from about 50 villages spread over 11 municipalities in the eastern part of the country. The construction of 126 crossing structures has resulted in permanent access links between localities which had previously been virtually isolated from each other during the rainy season.

However, the specificity of the PrEst project lies in the approach to road construction which relies more on labour (and little on machinery), hence the coining of the «HIMO» (High Labour Intensity) method. The construction of all the rural access roads has been undertaken by the beneficiary populations once trained on technical aspects of construction. More than 30 masons have been trained and employed on the crossing structure construction sites. In return for their participation, the populations have received wages.

Women's participation in the works, which is on an equal basis as men's, is the major achievement of this «HELVETAS/PrEst» approach, given the marked discrimination against women in the prevailing socioeconomic and cultural environment.

The process promotes attitude change, with equitable participation (as far as possible) of men and women on the HIMO construction sites, while taking into account the arduous nature for women of some of the tasks. Women have convinced men that they are able to undertake tasks which the latter thought them incapable of.

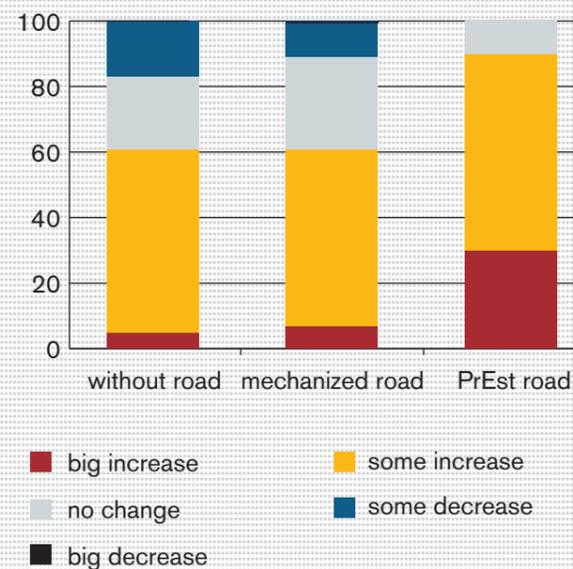
## STUDY METHODOLOGY:

The 2011 impact study was undertaken on the basis of a sample of 765 households in 9 villages located in three of the provinces where PrEst operates. The control group included on the one hand villages which had no all-weather access road, and on the other villages which had an access road built according to the «traditional» method – hereafter referred to as a «mechanized road» (little labour and a lot of machinery). This enabled one to measure the impact of improved access as well as of labour employment on HIMO sites. Household surveys were complemented with individual and focus group interviews.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

The impact study shows that the building of rural access roads with support from PrEst has a positive effect on household profits, due to a combination of better access to markets and of supplementary income generated by the HIMO working sites.

### Change in profit margins



The existence of rural access roads has a significant impact on the increase in the volume of economic activity (number of clients), resulting partly in an increase in profits, and is explainable by the greater mobility of goods and people. The number of clients of people interviewed has increased between 2006 and 2010 by 81% in PrEst villages, 71% in villages with mechanized roads and 55% in those without a road.

Concerning prices, the households in PrEst villages have suffered less from the inflation in the price of food products and essential non-food products, as well as in the price of inputs. This is explainable by a higher purchasing power in these villages due to the increased volume of economic activity, higher product selling prices and a lower rate of price increases for product purchases.

## USE OF ADDITIONAL INCOME

In the villages supported by PrEst, one or two people from each household have been able to participate in road construction, for a total income of approximately EUR 225 per household between 2006 and 2010. These monetary gains have especially enabled households to improve their health status (79% of responses), to increase their capital (74%) and to improve their housing conditions (72%). 81% of households have mentioned that to work on HIMO construction sites is a source of pride for the family.

## SOCIAL IMPACT

In the PrEst supported villages, more than 80% of households judge that time saved in travelling is important. In villages with mechanized roads only 25% of households feel that there is an important time saving. Time saving and increased mobility of populations have marked impacts on life quality, children school attendance, adult literacy and, most significantly, on access to health services.

Concretely, an all-weather road enables pregnant women to get to health centers at any time. In one of the villages studied, the proportion of pregnant women who travel to give birth in the health center has increased from 57% to 97% as a result of the construction of the road, thereby avoiding potential complications from giving birth at home.

The roads are also important for ambulance drivers who can therefore reach villages to evacuate the sick during the whole year and for health workers on their extension and child vaccination programmes.

In terms of the environment, the negative effects which road works could have generated are considered to be marginal. On the contrary, road-side land productivity has increased due to higher water retention levels. The water course crossing structures provide for animal watering over longer periods.

### Change in access to health services

