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An Accident Waiting to Happen: A Study of Taxi Driving Mentality in Yaoundé, Cameroon

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An Accident Waiting to Happen:
A Study of Taxi Driving Mentality in Yaoundé, Cameroon

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Abstract:

Taxis are the most common form of transportation found in Yaoundé, Cameroon. However, they are also a prime example of unsafe driving, causing a large number of minor accidents that often go unreported and uncorrected. Nevertheless, driving is a social responsibility, and smaller accidents have their own set of repercussions. Perhaps the strongest argument to understand and correct this problem is that it is preventing Cameroon's capital city from becoming developed in the way of providing safe commercial transportation. In order to better understand this issue, it is necessary to deconstruct the mindsets of all involved. The focus of this research paper, then, is to perform a case study of taxi driving in Yaoundé – critically analyzing all existing mentalities. Much of the research includes identifying the key players of the transportation sector, surveying, and conducting interviews with representatives from these various groups. Some examples are policymakers, law enforcers, and the taxi drivers themselves. With the assistance of secondary research, the opinions of informants, and a novel look at the current situation, this paper offers a comprehensive study of taxi driving in Yaoundé, as well as highlights areas of improvement and proposes ways to ameliorate the situation.

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Introduction

I. Context and Problem Statement

Driving has been referred to as a social responsibility.¹ Even so, many drivers do not adhere to safe driving practices – putting themselves, their passengers, their vehicles, and others on the road at risk of harm. This is a problem that exists everywhere; however, it seems to be more prevalent in developing countries. In a Cameroon guide book, for example, travelers are warned of the type of driving that exists in the country; “Driving is something of a free-for-all, a sort of military campaign, with cars, trucks, bikes, and motorbikes going in all directions.”²

Although all types of driving pose risks, commercial vehicles transport a greater number of people to a greater number of destinations. In the capital city of Yaoundé, Cameroon the most prevalent type of vehicle is the taxi.³ Taxi drivers are arguably among the most negligent of drivers, taking risks that often result in accidents. By definition, an accident is “an unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally.”⁴ However, there are varying degrees of motor vehicle accidents – those which can be classified as major, resulting in injury or death, and those which can be classified as minor, resulting in small damage to the vehicle. Nevertheless, even minor accidents have a cause – which is most frequently attributed to some form of unsafe driving.⁵ In order to reduce the number of taxi accidents and make taxis a safer form of transportation for the citizens of Yaoundé, it is necessary to study the reasons unsafe driving exists.

¹ “Social Responsibility at the Driving Standards Agency.” Department for Transport. <<http://dsa.gov.uk/Category.asp?cat=520>>.

² West, Ben. *Bradt Cameroon*. 2008.

³ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

⁴ Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford University Press. 2010. <<http://oxforddictionaries.com>>.

⁵ “Accident Investigation.” City of Spokane Risk Management & Safety Manual. Sept. 2000. <www.spokanerisk.org/.../A-5%20Accident%20Investigation%20.doc>.

II. Objectives

This paper has two main objectives:

1. To understand which factors contribute to taxi accidents and instances of unsafe driving in Yaoundé.
2. To determine what is currently being done and what can be done to improve the state of taxi driving in Yaoundé.

III. Hypotheses

In response to the above objectives, the hypotheses of this research are the following:

1. Many taxi drivers in Yaoundé do not respect driving regulations, resulting in accidents and instances of unsafe driving.
2. Taxi driving has not been successfully ameliorated because there is a lack of understanding of driver mentality.

IV. Methodology

At the onset of my research, I planned to use the number of taxi accidents reported to the police and the gendarmerie in Yaoundé as the basis of my quantitative findings. Therefore, I communicated with several officers even before ISP officially began, only to discover the difficulty of attaining clear statistics. As ISP progressed, I found that most accident statistics have not yet been computerized, and therefore are not organized and compiled for easy assessment. In addition, both the gendarmerie and the police keeps its own records and in its own fashion, making it difficult to attain and produce comprehensive findings for a given area.

I also came to find out that many informants did not fully understand the lawful process for attaining statistics. They therefore nicely but unsuccessfully accompanied me to a number of

different locations before I finally discovered that there is a lengthy authoritative process to attain police data – which consists of writing a demand to a head official and waiting for approval. As it was the beginning of the third week of ISP at this point, I submitted the demand, but was unable to attain the statistics before the culmination of my research. However, since the information is not complete, and the majority of inter-urban taxi accidents are not reported by taxi drivers, the statistics would not have been quantitatively sufficient even if I were granted authoritative approval.

Though it was initially discouraging not being able to gain access to the actual statistics, I quickly found myself less reliant on the number of reported taxi accidents, as it would be insufficient to show how many accidents actually occur in the city. Thus, what seemed more important was to focus my research to assess why this is a reality – meaning fully researching the mentality around taxi driving in the transportation sector. I quickly found that this is original work, as there is very little relevant literature on the subject. Therefore, I had to use secondary sources sparingly; however, driving documents, laws, and reports were vital to the research process.

In order to assess mentality, I slightly refocused my research plan to examine how taxi driving is perceived in Yaoundé. Through doing so, I hoped to determine how people view driving, classify accidents, determine their causes, assess their repercussions, and evaluate their fault. Without understanding and considering the mindset of everyone involved, there would be no viable way to offer recommendations to improve the taxi driving atmosphere in Yaoundé.

Once I clarified my research scope, I had to identify all of the key players in the taxi transportation sector. This was a rigorous process, as commercial transportation affects nearly everyone. Upon much consideration, I was able to focus my study on the following major

groups: the policy makers (government), the control (policemen and gendarmes), the inspectors (taxi specialists), the evaluators (insurance companies), the educators (driving school representatives), the defenders (taxi unions), the social sector (NGOs), those at risk (the passengers), and the taxi drivers themselves. By focusing on these groups, I was able to complete a comprehensive case study of taxi driving in the city of Yaoundé, and more importantly, how it can become a safer form of transportation for all.

To complete my research, I used four different methodological tools – interviews, surveys, participant observation, and a control group:

To begin, my first step was the interview process of the policy makers, the control, the inspectors, the evaluators, the educators, the defenders, and the social sector. For policymakers, I chose to interview a representative from each the Ministry of Transport, the Yaoundé Urban Council, and the Ministry of the Urban Community and the Habitat. These are the three most relevant Ministries in the sector of taxi transport. For control, I intended to survey two police officers and gendarmes who report accidents and hand out traffic violations. However, after I began my investigation, it came to my attention that control are not allowed by law to conduct formal interviews. Fortunately, though, I was able to communicate with a couple of police officers through informal, anonymous interviews. For inspectors, I conducted an interview with a representative from CATSIA, one of the companies who performs taxi inspections. For evaluators, I interviewed representatives from two different insurance agencies to get an idea of the role car insurance plays in taxi accidents. For educators, I interviewed two different driving school representatives – both of which are formation teachers. Notably, I also attended a course at a driving school as a form of participant observation to get a sense of how driving techniques are taught in the classroom setting. For defenders, I conducted an interview with a representative

from one of the more successful taxi unions in Yaoundé. For the social sector, I interviewed the founder of a driving-related NGO whose focus is accident prevention.

The next step of the research process was creating and distributing two different sets of surveys. I surveyed 35 taxi passengers and 10 taxi drivers. This was an important step of my study because it helped me to assess the mentality of both taxi passengers and taxi drivers. In regards to taxi passengers, my target population was anyone who takes taxis as a means of transportation in Yaoundé. I decided to use a sample population of third year university students from the University of Yaoundé I because these students have taken taxis for many years, but are also literate, knowledgeable, and critical thinkers. A university classroom proved to be a good place to distribute surveys because students were available and eager to help with research. I originally planned to do a sample size of 20 taxi rider surveys, but decided to do 35 instead because it was a welcoming setting and would only further help to solidify my findings.

I also surveyed 10 taxi drivers and completed one interview with a taxi driver and one interview with a taxi owner. Originally, I wanted to survey an equitable number of taxi passengers and taxi drivers, but once my research was underway, I realized that it was much more difficult to survey taxi drivers than I had originally thought. Although there are many taxi drivers in the city of Yaoundé, they are often unavailable because they are busy driving. I was able to locate small pockets of drivers to survey, but with their limited time frame, often just quickly switching taxis with another driver, they did not always follow through and return my surveys. In addition to my 10 surveys, though, I also utilized the techniques of participant observation and a control group to gain insight into driver mentality. I attended a weekly Saturday taxi union meeting and observed how drivers reacted and voiced concerns during the meeting. I also took this opportunity to complete a focus group discussion, where I asked the

entire group, about 15 taxi drivers, a few specific questions and opened the floor for discussion. This process allowed me to see various opinions in a small group setting of solely drivers.

One challenge that I faced while performing my research resulted from my own biases and perceptions. From being an American, I tend to associate safe driving with a Western point of view. I had to remind myself that the American way of viewing transportation is different from that of the Cameroonian situation, and it cannot always be used as a point of comparison. In addition, I initially had some difficulty deciphering what constitutes a taxi accident. It quickly came to my attention that many people do not automatically think that minor accidents are accidents worth consideration. This was a matter of perception I decided was important to include as part of my study, as it contributes greatly to the discussion of driving mentality.

V. Plan of Work

The plan of work is as follows:

Chapter 1: The Process of Becoming a Taxi Driver

Chapter 2: The Choices Taxi Drivers Are Faced With

Chapter 3: The Driving Regulations

Chapter 4: Taxi Accidents

Chapter 5: Improving Taxi Driving

Chapter 1: The Process of Becoming a Taxi Driver

I. The Attractiveness of the Profession

There are more than 6,000 registered taxis in Yaoundé, and even a larger population of drivers – making taxi driving one of the city’s most popular jobs.¹ Therefore, in order to better understand the mentalities that exist around taxi driving, it becomes necessary to assess the reasons why so many people choose to become taxi drivers. One reason is that there is a demand for service, as many people are dependent upon taxis as a means of transportation. This means that drivers may not worry as much about job security as people in other professions.² Another possible reason that many people are taxi drivers is that it does not require a formal education. Therefore, it is possible to complete the training process in just a couple of months and begin driving. According to one driving school teacher, it is a job that nearly everyone can do.³

There are also educated people who become taxi drivers. For instance, many students choose to become taxi drivers to make extra money as they are concurrently completing their studies. Some people have received their university diploma and become taxi drivers because they cannot find other work because of high unemployment rates in the country. Moreover, sometimes people take up taxi driving as a second job, as the hours are flexible around individual schedules. In a further example, perhaps an engineer is out of work for a couple of months; he may become a taxi driver in the downtime to support himself and his family financially.⁴ The reasons for choosing to become a taxi driver are diverse; however, it is important to recognize that the profession is one that affects a wide range of citizens in Yaoundé.

¹ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

² Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mbounda, Frederic. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

II. The Training Required

A. The Quality of Driving Schools:

In Yaoundé alone, there are over 165 driving schools.⁵ Candidates may choose to enroll at any driving school they wish, following that they pay the registration fees. Candidates choose their driving school based on various criteria, such as the size of the building the cleanliness of the establishment, and their proximity to the school. The fees for each the license and the capacity courses are around 100,000 CFA, varying slightly by institution.⁶ This is because driving schools are classified as private-run businesses, but are in reality under the larger umbrella of the government – most specifically the Ministry of Transport. When a driving school wishes to open, they must apply through the Ministry, completing a specific approval process. In the approval, it is made clear that the government has the prescribed control. The Ministry therefore has some control over the fees driving schools can charge their students, as they regulate that the prices can not vary far from 100,000 CFA per customer.⁷ This can be compared with the much higher cost for students for similar training in surrounding African countries, such as Gabon at 450,000 CFA and Senegal at 400,000 CFA. One of the biggest problems driving schools face is finding the means to perform at their best level, including paying their help well, and purchasing items such as new computers to improve the educational experience for their students.⁸

With this problem of securing means in mind, it is also important to note that although the Ministry determines the instructive program to be used by every driving school, they do not

⁵ Mbounda, Frederic. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

⁶ Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010.

⁷ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

⁸ Mbounda, Frederic. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

provide the schools with the necessary documents to fulfill this program. Examples of these documents are copies of the driving regulations and manuals, as it has been determined that driving schools must locate the majority of the materials themselves.⁹ There is no way to be certain that this practice is being perfectly followed. Even though the Ministry has the power of oversight, they lack the personnel to perform regular examinations of all 165 driving schools that are open in Yaoundé, let alone those situated in other areas of the country.¹⁰

B. The Quality of Licenses:

By Cameroonian law, a driver's license is required of everyone who wishes to operate a motor vehicle. There are many different categories of licenses with different regulations; however, the most relevant to this research is Category B – the license required for operating vehicles which hold between three and nine people. Beginning at age 18, a person may enroll at a driving school of his choice to complete the course sequence required for Category B.¹¹ Students take theory and practical courses, teaching them both classroom style and hands-on driving experience. They can choose between normal or accelerated lessons, meaning training could be as long as two months and as short as one month. At the conclusion of the course sequence, candidates are able to take their final driving exam. If they pass the exam, they are issued an official driver's license from the Ministry of Transport.¹²

This process for attaining a driver's license is very similar to that of developed countries. The real problem, then, is when this process is not respected. In Cameroon, and most assuredly in Yaoundé, there are many drivers on the road who do not have proper government issued driver's licenses. According to one driving school teacher, it is a large problem, as people

⁹ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010.

¹² Ibid.

without valid licenses are a danger on the road.¹³ One reason that makes it difficult to distinguish false licenses is that there are a number of different types circulating in the system. For instance, there are those qualified as fake-real. These are licenses that are registered at the Ministry, but the person did not actually pass their driver's test. There are also those licenses classified as real-fake. These are the licenses that are not registered through the Ministry.¹⁴

In addition to it being difficult to distinguish falsities, another large reason that this problem has gone unresolved is because the Ministry of Transport only just began using a computerized system to log licenses as of 2009. The licenses have now changed to be computer generated, as compared to the previous paper editions which were easy to replicate.¹⁵ However, this does not mean that there are no longer people driving without proper licenses. In less than a year's time, it would be impossible for the Ministry to have been able to detect all fake licenses through their new computerized system. However, it is a start. According to one source, the system has identified over 6,400 fake licenses. However, if a driver is not registered with the Ministry, his false license may go undetectable for a long period of time.¹⁶

C. The Quality of Capacities:

Also by Cameroonian law, anyone who wishes to become a taxi driver is required to hold a capacity certificate. After holding a Category B driver's license for at least two years, a driver is qualified to reenter a driving school to complete a new set of training – this time specific to taxi driving. The driver is considered to already know how to drive successfully, so his training is comprised of learning the destinations of locations in the city. If these courses are successfully completed, the driver may take the final exam. If he passes this exam, he will receive a capacity

¹³ Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010.

¹⁴ Mbounda, Frederic. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

certificate from the Ministry of Transport, which is the official document that allows him to serve as a taxi driver.¹⁷

The only qualification of completing the training for a capacity certificate is that the person must have had a Category B driver's license for at least two years. However, because accidents are often not reported or logged, there is no easy way to tell whether the person has had accidents in their past driving experience.¹⁸ In essence, all drivers, even bad ones, are qualified to complete the training for a capacity certificate – driving schools accept everyone. When asked if the process is easy or difficult to become a taxi driver, driving school teachers admitted that there are many candidates who receive their capacities, and the process is relatively easy. Since drivers have previously attended driving school for a driver's license, their training is focused on studying a map of the area and doing practical courses to locate various destinations.¹⁹ However, without a person's driving record to analyze, it is difficult to truly determine the quality of his driving. Since attaining a capacity certificate allows drivers to operate commercial vehicles, they should arguably be the safest drivers on the road, as they are responsible for many lives other than their own.

¹⁷ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

¹⁸ Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 2: The Choices Taxi Drivers Are Faced With

I. Independency vs. Dependency in the Business

Taxi drivers have the option to work as an individual, most often responsible to just himself, or as part of a business, most often responsible to his taxi owner or boss. There are many reasons why a taxi driver would choose to work individually or as part of a larger company – such as income differences, job security, and flexibility. For instance, a taxi driver who decides to work as an individual may have to pay to purchase his taxi in entirety. However, he may have the ability to choose his own hours, and not worry about whether a boss could take away his job at any time. However, he is usually the person responsible for the maintenance of his vehicle, and he also has to worry about following all regulations required of taxi owners.¹

A taxi driver who is part of a company may, on the other hand, have to pay more out of pocket to his boss. He may not have as much flexibility in determining his work schedule, as he has to fit his schedule around other people. However, he may not have to worry about as many of the finer details of owning and maintaining a car, as his boss may take that responsibility off his shoulders.² The decision to be independent or dependent in the workforce is just one of the decisions taxi drivers must face after they achieve their capacity certificate.

One factor that affects both independent and dependent taxi drivers is the difficulty of being associated with the CNPS –the official government pension fund in Cameroon. It can be a very long and difficult process for an individual worker to secure the benefits of the CNPS. But the same holds true for drivers as part of a company, as many bosses choose not to hold contracts with their employees, meaning that they will not be entitled to the benefits of the CNPS after their retirement. There are benefits of not being associated, however, as taxi drivers generally

¹ Jean Claude. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2010.

² Asen. Personal Interview. 23 Nov. 2010.

make more money in the short-term, giving less to their bosses to pay into the fund. However, they are at risk for welfare in the future.³

II. Belonging vs. Not Belonging to a Taxi-Drivers Union

A further decision taxi drivers must consider is if they are going to belong to a taxi-drivers union. The main goal of a taxi-drivers union is to defend the drivers, as well as to negotiate on behalf of the taxi industry to the government. A major example of driver and union collaboration is the 2008 worker strikes in Cameroon. The taxi-drivers unions aided the drivers in striking against the government because of the rising price of fuel in the major cities of Douala and Yaoundé. Their work was successful, as a union official remarked, “the government had conceded to the taxi drivers' demand of reducing the price of fuel.”⁴ In addition to defending the drivers, the unions also offers subsequent moral training for taxi drivers, such as teaching about the risks of drinking and driving.

However, the benefits of belonging to a union do not come free. If taxi drivers choose to register, they have certain responsibilities. All drivers are required by law to hang a badge in their taxi, showing that they are officially registered. These badges are only available at taxi unions, and cost 5,500 CFA if purchased without a membership. However, it costs a driver 500 CFA to register as a member of the union and to receive their badge. But if a driver is a member of the union, he must also pay certain other fees. For instance, each driver must give 5,000 CFA annually into a community fund that aids one another in times of need. Also, each driver is required to give 300 CFA per week to the union as a form of dues. Drivers are also expected to

³ Asen. Personal Interview. 23 Nov. 2010.

⁴ “Cameroon: Unrest Spreads to Yaoundé Even after Taxi Strike Ends.” IRIN. 27 Feb. 2008. <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47cbc62619.html>>.

attend union meetings and trainings.⁵ I had the opportunity to observe one meeting, and listened as the drivers gave oaths, reports of the previous week, and received instruction on various situations – such as how to react if a client does not have money to pay for his fare.

Even though most drivers choose to belong to a union, both the drivers and the union face certain difficulties. For instance, many members cannot attend the union meetings because of schedule conflicts, meaning that they are missing out on moral instruction.⁶ In addition, drivers note that there is sometimes a conflict of interests, as the leadership of the unions are not the drivers and cannot always understand their concerns.⁷

III. Which Taxis to Drive and What Security Precautions to Take

A. The Vehicles

Another decision that most taxi owners consider is what car they are going to drive. Taxi owners have the liberty to choose any type of car they wish to use as a taxi. However, the majority of cars for purchase in Cameroon are imported from Europe. They are generally used, and often times older makes and models that people have chosen to replace.⁸ According to recent economic research, the purchasing of used vehicles in developing countries has been on the rise; “the total number of registered vehicles in non-OECD [Organization for Cooperation and Development] countries increased from 110 million to 210 million between 1990 and 2005.”⁹ This is a growing trend, as lower income people typically prefer to purchase used cars from abroad because they are cheaper. In an interview with a representative from CATSIA, a car inspection company in Yaoundé, he argued that the major concerns a person has when

⁵ Boudolaye, Abdoulaye. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

⁶ Boudolaye, Abdoulaye. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

⁷ Asen. Personal Interview. 23 Nov. 2010.

⁸ Boudolaye, Abdoulaye. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

⁹ Davis, Lucas W and Matthew E. Kahn. International Trade in Used Vehicles as an “Alternative” Cash for Clunkers Programme: Evidence from NAFTA. 18 Aug. 2009. <<http://www.voxeu.org/index.php?q=node/3882>>.

purchasing a vehicle are that it is inexpensive and has a good sized gas tank.¹⁰ Arguably, then, a taxi owner may be willing to sacrifice a particular car's safety for its price.

It is important to recognize that not all taxi drivers have the opportunity to purchase their own vehicles, as some are the property of a company. However, all arguably have the ability to choose what safety precautions they take while driving. With this in mind, it becomes important to assess both the safety of the taxis currently on the road in Yaoundé, as well as the habits of individual drivers. Firstly, the majority of taxis are small sized cars with seats available for a maximum of five people – one driver and four passengers. One of the most common marks of taxis in Yaoundé is the Toyota Corolla. The majority of Corollas currently being used as taxis were made between 1990 and 1992.¹¹ Because of the elderly condition of these cars, there are safety concerns to explore – one of which is the availability and use of seatbelts.

The availability of seatbelts in taxis found in Yaoundé differs somewhat between driver seatbelts and passenger seatbelts. To begin, seatbelts are almost always available for drivers, so it is more of a question as to whether or not taxi drivers choose to wear them. According to survey results, 40% of taxi drivers said they do not always wear a seatbelt while operating a taxi. The main reasons they listed for not wearing seatbelts were that they are uncomfortable and that they drive at low speeds.¹²

The case of passenger seatbelts is a somewhat different discussion. Although many taxis in Yaoundé are equipped with a seatbelt in the front passenger seat, rear seatbelts are not always available. In the year 1987, the UK mandated that all vehicles produced in the UK must be

¹⁰ Jean Claude. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2010.

¹¹ Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010.

¹² Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010.

equipped with rear seat belts.¹³ This certainly offered an improvement to the transportation sector; however, it is important to note that some of the cars being used as taxis in Yaoundé were made prior to 1987, and therefore do not have rear seatbelts installed. In addition, not all vehicles used in Yaoundé are from the UK, but instead are shipped from other countries where the laws are different. In addition, the majority of taxis are Toyotas, such as the aforementioned Corolla, of which are produced in Japan, Europe, the US, and many other countries.¹⁴ This becomes quite complicated, as each country has its own production regulations, and therefore may differ by model and make of the cars. In essence, it cannot be guaranteed that all taxis currently being driven in Yaoundé are equipped with seatbelts for all aboard.

This is consistent with research done through surveying taxi drivers and passengers. Keeping in mind that drivers officially have space for four passengers, when asked how many seatbelts are available for passengers in their taxi, just 40% of taxi drivers answered “four.” All others answered that there are just one or two seatbelts available, typically for the driver and/or the front seat passenger. Likewise, when asked if they always wear a seatbelt while riding in a taxi, an overwhelming 94% of passengers said no. When asked why not, the most common response was that seatbelts are generally not available in taxis, thus making them impossible to use.¹⁵

B. The Inspection Process

There is an official process set in place for inspecting taxis. Technically, taxis are required to have a car inspection every three months. In Yaoundé, there are two companies to

¹³ Seat Belts: History. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Apr. 2005. <http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/info/seatbelt_history.pdf>.

¹⁴ “Corolla Features.” Toyota Motorola Sales, U.S.A., Inc. <<http://www.toyota.com/>>.

¹⁵ Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

choose from. The cost of the visit is 4,900 CFA, and if there are problems, the inspector fixes them for no additional costs, provided that the owner returns within 15 days to pick up his taxi. The inspection process is relatively standard, as the inspector is supposed to do a thorough examination of the exterior and interior of the vehicle.¹⁶

Although this inspection process is in place, there are challenges to take into consideration. For instance, it cannot be assumed that all inspectors thoroughly perform their duties. According to an informant, sometimes a driver will slip money in between his forms, and the inspector will pass his vehicle without providing an examination. Notably, there are many taxis being driven that appear to have escaped thorough inspections, often causing danger on the road.¹⁷

¹⁶ Jean Claude. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2010.

¹⁷ Anonymous Interview. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2010.

Chapter 3: The Driving Regulations

I. The Quality of the Regulations

In order to eventually assess the causes of taxi accidents in Yaoundé, it is important to first analyze the quality of the existing driving materials and regulations. Experts argue that the materials used in Cameroonian driving schools, such as the French Rousseau manual, are internationally recognized and universal.¹ The actual text of the regulations is what differs by country. However, the driving regulations that govern Cameroon are international laws in place as part of CEMAC – the community partnership that Cameroon and neighboring Central African countries belong to. License holders from all CEMAC countries are permitted to drive internationally, and are subject to the same regulations while abroad.²

In assessing the quality of these regulations, one informant argues that, “In Cameroon, the driving laws are not respected. But the same people who drive abroad behave differently, so it’s a difficult problem to understand.”³ In addition, when asked if taxi drivers always respect the driving regulations, 97% of passengers surveyed said that they did not.⁴ With this in mind, it can be argued that the texts of the laws themselves are of good quality, but it seems to be a problem of disrespect on the part of the drivers.

II. The Problem of Respect

In order to analyze why taxi drivers often disrespect driving laws, a necessary next step is to assess the quality of comprehension of the laws on the part of the drivers. Certain experts have argued that not all taxi drivers thoroughly understand the existing driving laws. Specifically, one

¹ Mbounda, Frederic. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

² Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

³ M’Bokob, Stephane. Personal Interview. 15. Nov. 2010.

⁴ Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

informant raises the point that some taxi drivers did not pass through driving school. Therefore, they are not equipped with the knowledge of the driving laws.⁵ Though driving school is required for all drivers, it is a reality that some have manipulated the system. Another argument is that driving schools do not teach their students all of the driving regulations. A lot of times, people come out of driving schools maybe knowing how to drive, but without a thorough knowledge of all of the laws.⁶

To give an example of common situation in which the driving regulations are disrespected, there is the instance of taxi overload. When asked what the greatest number of people they have ever ridden in a taxi with at one time, nearly 50% of passengers surveyed answered five or more – meaning that they have experienced more people in a taxi than there are seats available for.⁷ This shows that many drivers are willing to transport more people than they have actual seats for, thus disrespecting the driving regulations which clearly state there should only be the number of people riding in a vehicle in which there is seats available for.⁸ However, regardless of whether all taxi drivers understand or do not understand the driving laws such as this one, it is the job of the law enforcers to regulate their behavior.

III. The Problem of Enforcement

In Yaoundé, both police officers and gendarmes are in charge of controlling the roads, although police have the most direct responsibility as a figure of law enforcement.⁹ In the past, police were placed on all streets to perform vehicle checks and monitor traffic. However, one complaint was that their main role was to check car documents, and not to actually regulate

⁵ Tchussieu, Samuel. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010.

⁶ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

⁷ Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

⁸ « Les Conditions et Les Modalités D'Exploitation Atitre Onereux Du Service De Transport Urbain Par Autocar ou Autobus. » Ministry of Transport. 16. Feb. 2006.

⁹ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

driving behavior.¹⁰ As of recent, however, police are currently not allowed on the streets of Yaoundé during the daytime. In 2010, the government officially enacted a bill written in 2005 removing them, with the reasoning being large-scale complaints of police corruption.¹¹ One informant comments, “You know that when you have money, even if your speed is 200 km/hr, you can pay maybe 5,000 CFA and be relieved.”¹² However, a government representative argues that fault is also shared with drivers who flatter the police into relieving or reducing their sanctions.¹³ Regardless of whose fault it is, corruption exists in the area of law enforcement, making it difficult to impose that drivers follow the established regulations.

This belief is also consistent with survey findings from both taxi drivers and taxi passengers. When asked what their thoughts are concerning the role of the police and the gendarmes in regards to taxi security, the most common responses from drivers were that they do not perform their jobs well, and that they take money from them. When asked the same question, passengers answered that they are not interested in security, and actually provoke the violations of the law. This is followed by the justification that they are corrupt and accept bribes from drivers.¹⁴ Although the answers are similar, it is useful to see the difference in wording between the answers of the drivers and the passengers. Both groups argue that the police and gendarmes are corrupt, but drivers state that they “take” money, while passengers claim that they “accept” money. It seems, then, that much problem with disrespecting the driving regulations comes down to a difference in mentality.

¹⁰ M’Bokob, Stephane. Personal Interview. 15. Nov. 2010.

¹¹ Boudolaye, Abdoulaye. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

¹² M’Bokob, Stephane. Personal Interview. 15. Nov. 2010.

¹³ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

¹⁴ Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

Chapter 4: Taxi Accidents

I. The Frequency of Accidents

When asked if they have ever had a taxi accident, 40% of taxi drivers surveyed answered yes.¹ When asked if they have ever been in or seen a taxi accident, an overwhelming 80% of taxi passengers surveyed answered yes.² From these results, it fair to say that even in a small survey size, many taxi accidents occur in Yaoundé.

However, it is also a reality that many taxi accidents are not accounted for –meaning that it is actually impossible to attain accurate statistics from authorities, such as the police.³

Nevertheless, this only means that this research, whose goal is to critically analyze taxi driving mentalities, is all the more necessary in order to understand why taxi accidents occur and to improve the quality of taxi driving in Yaoundé.

II. The Perceptions of Accidents

In order to understand the causes of taxi accidents, it is essential to analyze how they are actually perceived. This proved to be an important step of the research, as when I asked representatives from all groups of the transportation sector to offer definitions of the term “accident,” I received somewhat varied responses. For instance, many taxi passengers classified accidents as inattention on the part of the driver, a collision causing damage, and the result of not respecting the driving regulations.⁴ Taxi drivers commonly defined accidents as the result of something hitting the taxi, and not respecting the driving regulations.⁵ All other experts in the

¹ Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010.

² Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

³ Anonymous Interview. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2010.

⁴ Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

⁵ Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010.

sector usually made references to the result of negligence, negative consequences, and not respecting the driving regulations. Within all of these definitions, one theme holds true; most people tend to at least partially define an accident as the result of not respecting the driving laws.

Even with this piece of knowledge, it is very difficult to determine how people classify the types of accidents themselves. When asked to clarify, many people hinted that there is a difference between major and minor accidents. This idea is pertinent to this research, as many of the taxi accidents that occur in Yaoundé do not result in injuries or deaths. This often makes minor accidents seem trivial, as one taxi driver even commented that small accidents are not even really accidents in his opinion, as no one was hurt.⁶ It is very common to see taxi drivers collide with each other or other obstacles, quickly assess the situation, and drive off if they consider it to be minor.⁷ For this reason, it is not uncommon to see dents, windshield breaks, and other signs of minor accidents in most taxis.

III. The Causes of Accidents

When asked the open-ended question of what they believe are the primary causes of taxi accidents, most expert responses commented on three specific causes – the human, the vehicle, and the road. This aligns with research published by the Ministry of Transport, who found that the causes of car accidents in Cameroon are 83% human, 7% vehicle, 7% road, and 3% other.⁸ One informant argues that it is the human at fault; “The cause of accidents is always man.”⁹ Another informant comments that the vehicles are at fault; “The vehicles, like taxis, are old.”¹⁰ Still another informant claims that the roads play a role; “They cause accidents too, like if there

⁶ Asen. Personal Interview. 23 Nov. 2010.

⁷ Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

⁸ Mbounda, Frederic. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

⁹ Tchussieu, Samuel. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010.

¹⁰ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

are holes, degradation, or slippery conditions. Many roads are also not marked with lines, which is bad.”¹¹ In addition to these three specific causes, though, nearly all experts included in their explanations that accidents are almost always the result of drivers not respecting the driving regulations.

It is also important to take into consideration what was found through survey results as causes of accidents. When asked what they believed were the principal cause of taxi accidents, the number one answer of passengers was speeding, closely followed by distractions and irregular passing.¹² When asked the same question to taxi drivers, the number one response was a four way tie between distractions, fatigue, irregular passing, and abusive parking.¹³ These reasons can most certainly be applied to taxi accidents. As outlined in the 2009 Gendarmerie Accident Statistics Report, the major causes of motor vehicle accidents in Cameroon are the following: speeding, distractions, fatigue, irregular passing, abusive parking, false/incorrect driving licenses, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, infractions committed by pedestrians, overload of people in the car, and not properly wearing seatbelts.¹⁴

IV. The Reporting of Accidents

By Cameroonian law, there is a specific process that is to be followed after an accident happens. This protocol is twofold: The first step is that someone must call and alert a police officer or gendarme immediately to assess the accident and to write a report, and the second step is that someone must alert the insurance agencies of the drivers involved within five days of the

¹¹ Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010.

¹² Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

¹³ Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010.

¹⁴ “Statistiques D’Accident 2009.” Gendarmerie Nationale. 2009.

accident.¹⁵ Although this process may seem legitimate on a base level, many taxi drivers choose not to report accidents that occur in Yaoundé.¹⁶ Therefore, it is important to critically analyze both the role of the control and the role of insurance:

A. The Role of the Control

After an accident occurs, anyone is able to contact a police officer or gendarme to prepare an official report – which is typically referred to as an affidavit. The affidavit includes such information as the drivers involved, the state of the vehicles, and the decision of fault. The next step is for the police or gendarme to send the affidavit to the insurance agencies of the drivers.¹⁷ This process seems valid, but still many taxi drivers choose not to involve the authorities.

When asked if they believed that all accidents should be reported to the police and an insurance agency, 60% of taxi drivers answered no. One common justification for their reasoning was related to the police; the police require the drivers to pay for the report, which is another instance of corruption that exists in the law enforcement system.¹⁸ In an interview with a taxi driver, he also commented on this problem; a large reason many drivers choose not to contact the police, and prefer to settle the matter between them is that when the police arrive they demand 3,000 CFA from each driver to produce the affidavit.¹⁹

¹⁵ Benyomo, Ferdinand. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2010.

¹⁶ Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

¹⁷ Anonymous Interview. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2010.

¹⁸ Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010.

¹⁹ Anonymous Interview. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2010.

B. The Role of Insurance

In Cameroon, everyone who owns a vehicle is required to purchase private car insurance from an agency of their choice, of which there are 18 nationally.²⁰ The same process holds true for taxi owners; however, there is a specific structure, called Pool TPV, which governs the process of taxi insurance. This structure was adopted in 2009 because of unfair competition among insurance companies, so all companies agreed to adopt a set of universal policies.²¹ When opening an insurance account, the process is relatively simple. Anyone can apply, including either the taxi driver or the taxi owner. Customers are required to show minimal documents, such as the identity card of the vehicle. After successfully registering, the customers receive just four documents – a contract, a receipt of payment, a presumption of insurance certificate, and a carte rose, which is the document that allows the driver to drive freely in the CEMAC countries.²²

The Ministry of Commerce fixes the rates insurance companies are allowed to charge, based on a set of factors such as the regional zone and size of the vehicle in question.²³ When asked why the government has the control to fix the prices for the privatized insurance companies, one insurance representative offered that driving is a civil responsibility, and if the government did not have the control, insurance workers could not be trusted to serve in the best interests of their clients.²⁴ This is worrisome, but what could also be considered troublesome is that there is no competition among insurance companies based on quality of services, as all services are regulated, and all prices are mandated.

²⁰ Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

²¹ Benyomo, Ferdinand. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2010.

²² Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

²³ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

²⁴ Benyomo, Ferdinand. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2010.

This seems to be evident in the reasons people choose their particular insurance agencies. As one agent accounts, the common motivations for choosing a particular company is the proximity to one's house, or if the person happens to know someone who works at the particular company. In addition, when asked the typical questions received by people opening insurance accounts, the representative stated that the majority of questions are limited to establishing that the insurance is not very expensive. People do not generally ask questions about the quality of their services; they simply seem to want the cheapest insurance option.²⁵ Another insurance agent also commented that most people apply for insurance just so that they will have the document if the police happen to demand it.²⁶

When asked if insurance workers explain the process of insurance and the client's benefits, one representative remarked that the person who applies for insurance signs a contract, which they presumably read before signing.²⁷ However, it cannot be proven that all clients read their benefits, let alone fully understand them. In addition, another representative argued that not a lot of people are educated in their insurance benefits.²⁸ It is also important to recognize that since a taxi owner may open the insurance account, the driver who gets into the accident may not be aware of his insurance process, or even have received the contract.²⁹

In analyzing the work of insurance agencies, it has been argued that the insurance process is very slow. One informant said that the insurance process is long, as it can sometimes take up to five years to complete. Therefore, he chooses to repair his vehicles himself and send the bill to the insurance company to be reimbursed later on. Although this is an option, it is somewhat

²⁵ Benyomo, Ferdinand. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2010.

²⁶ Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

²⁷ Benyomo, Ferdinand. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2010.

²⁸ Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

²⁹ Boudolaye, Abdoulaye. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

difficult, as the accident still has to be reported to the police and the insurance company has to receive the report within five days to decide if it is legitimate.³⁰ However, many taxi owners and drivers choose to repair their vehicles themselves without reporting the accident to the police or contacting their insurance agencies. One insurance agent argued that it has become an individual choice whether to report an accident or not.³¹ According to survey results by taxi drivers, the another main reason for not reporting all accidents was that many accidents are minor, and are therefore easier to be taken care of without involving the authorities.³² Additionally, in an interview one taxi driver commented that it is more feasible to repair minor accidents himself, as it may cost as little as 5,000 CFA. If he went through the formal process of alerting the police and his insurance agency, he may lose a day or two's work, which would end up more costly than simply repairing the taxi himself.³³

³⁰ M'Bokob, Stephane. Personal Interview. 15. Nov. 2010.

³¹ Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

³² Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010.

³³ Asen. Personal Interview. 23 Nov. 2010.

Chapter 5: Improving Taxi Driving

II. Current Initiatives

In order to successfully establish what needs to be changed in the future to improve the state of taxi driving in Yaoundé, an important first step is to critically analyze what projects have already begun. In this regard, I have identified three focus areas: NGO initiatives, road improvements, and the innovation of Taxi Express:

A. NGO Initiatives

Although there are several driving-based NGOs in Cameroon, there is just focused in Yaoundé – Driving Without Accidents (Conduire Sans Accidents: COSA). The mission of COSA is for the improvement of road security and the prevention of motor vehicle accidents. Hence, COSA's main goals are to improve the existing driving conditions and to create an environment where drivers follow the driving regulations. Although they focus on all types of transportation, they also work to improve taxi driving in Yaoundé.

One such initiative is a recent open air campaign for all road users, including taxi drivers.¹ This campaign was situated in the Central Region of Yaoundé, and had the support of the Ministry of Transport. Representatives stopped vehicles for five to ten minutes, explaining to them the importance to safe driving, such as not drinking and driving, and wearing their seatbelts. They also listened to concerns and took suggestions from the drivers themselves. After the conversation, they asked the drivers to sign a form indicating that they were in agreement with the conditions of safe driving. As of July 2010, approximately 10,000 taxi drivers signed the

¹ Tchussieu, Samuel. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010.

campaign, stating that they would devote themselves to safe taxi driving.² While this may be a strong initiative, it has happened so recently; therefore, it cannot be proven to be successful as of yet.

B. Road Improvements

Many of the roads in Yaoundé are in poor condition, and are considered to be a major cause of accidents. Specifically, many roads are not paved, and are full of potholes.³ In addition, the sizes of the roads are inadequate for the growing population and large number of vehicles – especially taxis.⁴ However, it is important to recognize that there is a governmental system set in place to construct and maintain the roads in Yaoundé, and there have been some accomplishments.

In Yaoundé, the Urban Council and the Ministry of the Urban Development and Habitat collaborate to identify specific focus areas on which to approve, and proposes annual projects to a national assembly. The assembly then decides which projects to fund and qualifies them in an official budget. Financial support is found through both internal and external sources, including the national government, tax revenues, and the aid and debt of such players as the World Bank and the international community.⁵

Even so, the state of many the roads in Yaoundé are still poor. Sometimes, it is also a problem of the quality of the work completed. According to a recent news article, “In less than

² Tchussieu, Samuel. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010.

³ Bradt Cameroon.

⁴ Pafing, Abraham. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

⁵ Ibid.

two years, some of the newly constructed roads in Yaoundé are already covered with potholes.”⁶ One reason why this is the case is that it is a difficult process, because it is very expensive to repair the roads well.⁷ Therefore, it may be a grand priority, but there is a problem of means.⁸ In addition to the general state of the roads, there is a lack of infrastructure and modernity. For example, in a lot of places, the traffic lights and stop signs are either nonexistent or not visible to drivers.⁹ Importantly, though, it also comes down to an issue of responsibility, as many people claim that it is simply the responsibility of the government to construct and repair the roads. While this may be true, the responsibility to maintain the condition of the roads should be shared among all road users, including taxi drivers.¹⁰ Ironically, however, the government does not permit individuals or private groups to construct or repair roads.¹¹

C. Taxi Express

Another initiative to explore is a business called Taxi Express, native to Yaoundé. Taxi Express, which opened in 2008, is a private taxi company that offers what are referred to as VIP taxis. This taxi system is somewhat modeled after how taxi transportation is done abroad, where a customer calls for a taxi and is the only passenger in the taxi with the driver.¹² The main reasons for organizing this business was to combat security issues that exist in public taxis, such as forgetting important items in the taxi and not being able to get them back. Also, in addition to passing driving school and attaining both their license and capacity certificate, Taxi Express

⁶ Yufeh, Brenda. “Potholes Cut-Off Major Roads.” Cameroon Tribune. 4 Nov. 2010. <http://www.cameroontribune.cm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61868:potholes-cut-off-major-roads&catid=2:conomie&Itemid=3>.

⁷ M’Bokob, Stephane. Personal Interview. 15. Nov. 2010.

⁸ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

⁹ Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010.

¹⁰ Tchussieu, Samuel. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010.

¹¹ Anonymous Interview. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2010.

¹² Etoundi, Freddy. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010.

drivers are required to take a private exam to work for the company and receive further training every six months. The company even has its own authorized control staff, which patrols the taxis and holds drivers accountable for their driving.¹³

Although Taxi Express offers a face of security for Yaoundé taxi passengers, its services does not reach everyone. During the day, the tariff for a drop off is 2,000 CFA, and in the night it is 3,500 CFA. This can be compared with the standard tariff of a public taxi, being 200 CFA, and very negotiable by the distance being traveled. When opened, the representative admitted that many people had a hard time understanding the high prices. Even he argued that the taxis are not for daily use, they are to be used for specific needs, like if a person is carrying important goods. In reality, Taxi Express customers are typically foreigners or high class Cameroonians, which is only a small subset of the Yaoundé population. Most people do not have a choice. If they had means, they would have their own cars. In the timeframe of two years, between its opening in spring 2008 and spring 2010, the company estimates that they have transported a total of 74,055 passengers. There are only about 40 Taxi Express taxis in Yaoundé,¹⁴ as compared with 6,000 public taxis, which transport thousands of Yaoundé passengers daily. According to a government official, “Citizens like transportation that is fast, and offers speedy and inexpensive services.”¹⁵

II. The Vision for Change

Although there are certain initiatives already in place, there still remains a problem of unsafe taxi driving. Therefore, changes must be imposed to ameliorate the situation. Before giving viable suggestions, though, it is important to take into consideration the mentalities of all

¹³ M’Bokob, Stephane. Personal Interview. 15. Nov. 2010.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

groups studied: the policy makers (government), the control (policemen and gendarmes), the inspectors (taxi specialists), the evaluators (insurance companies), the educators (driving school representatives), the defenders (taxi unions), the social sector (NGOs), those at risk (the passengers), and the taxi drivers themselves. When asked how taxi driving can be improved, representatives from the above groups offered the following recommendations:

- Policymakers believe that the driving school curriculum needs to be reformed, drivers need to respect the driving regulations, and there needs to be a professionalization of the transportation sector and a reform of the administration.¹⁶
- The control believes that drivers need to respect the driving regulations, and patrol cars should be better equipped with technologies such as GPS systems to track drivers.¹⁷
- The inspectors believe that vehicles should be properly maintained and inspected, and drivers should respect the driving regulations.¹⁸
- The evaluators believe that taxis should be of better quality, and people should be more financially stable.¹⁹
- The educators believe that all drivers should pass through driving school, receive periodic training, and there should be a better control force.²⁰
- The defenders believe that drivers should be given moral training.²¹
- The social sector replied that the driving school curriculum should be reformed, and that drivers should receive periodic training.²²

¹⁶ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010. Etoundi, Freddy. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010. Pafing, Abraham. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

¹⁷ Anonymous Interview. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2010.

¹⁸ Jean Claude. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2010.

¹⁹ Benyomo, Ferdinand. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2010. Langsi, Charles. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 2010.

²⁰ Bianva, Roderique. Personal Interview. 13 Nov. 2010. Mbounda, Frederic. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

²¹ Boudolaye, Abdoulaye. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2010.

²² Tchussieu, Samuel. Personal Interview. 16 Nov. 2010.

- Passengers believe that taxi drivers should receive proper training and respect the driving violations, there should be a better control force, road conditions should be improved, and taxis should be of better quality.²³
- Drivers believe that the government should reduce the cost of patrol, change the tariff system to be one computed by a gas meter in the taxi, and help taxi drivers to be protected after retirement through membership in the C.N.P.S.²⁴

With representation from all key players involved in taxi transportation, I am now able to assess what needs to be done in order to improve the current situation.

III. What Should Be Done

The final and most crucial step of this research is to analyze all of the factors and mentalities at play to address what can be done to ensure safer taxi driving in Yaoundé. Though there is undoubtedly much to improve upon, I have determined what I believe to be the three most important areas to focus upon, with specific suggestions included in each. They are as follows:

I. Improvement of the driving education system:

As it currently stands, the driving school system for taxi drivers is inadequate. Although the government technically provides each driving school with a program to follow, it cannot be assured that every individual school follows it. As there are 165 driving schools situated in Yaoundé, the government does not have the personnel to perform regular checks on all of the

²³ Survey Results. 24 Nov. 2010.

²⁴ Survey Results. 20 Nov. 2010. Focus Group with Taxi Drivers. 20 Nov. 2010.

schools. In order to combat this issue, the number of driving schools should be limited to only the most serious and stable being allowed to open.

In order to achieve this, the government could require that in addition to completing the approval process, every driving school which wishes to operate must pay a specified amount to receive the materials to be used during the driving courses. This would limit the schools being opened to only the most dedicated and professional types, upping the standards of driving schools and giving them a more serious reputation by all. As it currently stands, driving schools must search for their own materials – including the driving regulations which are often disrespected by drivers. Therefore, as a first step of ameliorating this issue, it should be the government's responsibility to supply each driving school with the proper materials. In addition to providing the materials, the government should explain and give tutorials of the curriculum to the educators, as well as offer regular training. This could be achieved through required meetings or retreats for all driving school employees. With a system such as this in place, students may also take the rigor of the driving process more seriously.

II. Improvement of technology and infrastructure:

Another major problem that prevents taxi driving from being a safe form of transportation is inadequate technology and infrastructure. For instance, most taxis are outdated – often manufactured around 30 years ago. These older models are worn down and not equipped with the features of newer and safer vehicles. In order to improve this issue, the government has started to limit vehicles on the road to not be older than five years.²⁵ However, this has not been enforced as of yet, meaning that there are an abundance of aged and unsafe taxis on the streets of

²⁵ Atengan, Miché. Personal Interview. 18 Nov. 2010.

Yaoundé. In order to really combat this problem, the government needs to impose this law. In doing so, it will mean that taxis are of better quality. In addition, this may also decrease the number of taxis on the road, which has also been attributed as a cause of accidents. As it stands, the newer a car is, the more expensive it is to import it to the country.²⁶ The government should also make a point to reduce the custom duties imposed on car importers, making it more realistic for newer and better cars to be imported and used as taxis.

Another major priority should be to improve the quality of the roads. Though there have been certain initiatives in this endeavor, it is not yet sufficient, since one of the major causes of taxi accidents is the bad quality of the roads. Much of the funds have gone to improving the inter-urban routes, like from Yaoundé to Doula for example, but not enough attention has been given to the streets inside Yaoundé where many minor accidents take place. In recognition that the construction and maintenance of roads is expensive, the government should first put an effort into building more items to control traffic, such as street lights and stop signs. This may help to improve driving where there is heavy traffic, such as intersections. This initial project is feasible and not as expensive as major road constructions, which should be the second priority in Yaoundé.

III. Improvement of law enforcement:

The most important area to improve on is the quality of law enforcement in Yaoundé. Because of problems of corruption, the control has been recently removed from the streets. However, this creates a chaotic driving atmosphere in the city. Without anyone to patrol the

²⁶ Anonymous Interview. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2010.

streets and regulate the driving laws, drivers are able to disrespect the driving regulations without repercussions.

As the government is responsible for the control, they have the greatest authority to improve the situation. To begin, the government needs to delegate some of their own personnel to manage the streets in the absence of the control. The government also needs to prepare and execute training for the control, including as part of it a field portion, where control members accompany the government officials on the street that are performing the correct way of law enforcement. This means that the government also needs to address the problem of corruption that exists. Therefore, the government should offer specific workshops that highlight how being a member of the control is an important role, and requires moral integrity as their job is to protect their citizens. The government also needs to be more involved in offering sanctions to police officers and gendarmes who abuse their role. In addition, the government could offer incentives for the control, such as benefits based on good behavior. After establishing a rigorous training curriculum and schedule, the police officers and gendarmes should be allowed to resume their post on the streets of Yaoundé for a trial period, being closely monitored by the quality of their work.

Conclusion

At the onset of my research, I wanted to find out why taxi accidents and unsafe taxi driving are a reality in Yaoundé. Therefore, I constructed a research plan that identified and analyzed the existing mentalities of people involved. My first hypothesis was that many taxi drivers in Yaoundé do not respect driving regulations, resulting in accidents and instances of unsafe driving. Through my research, I have successfully proven this hypothesis. From my informants, a common theme arose that taxi drivers often do not understand as well as respect the driving regulations. Something additional that I did not anticipate in my hypothesis was that a major reason driving laws are not respected is because there is a lack of enforcement. Hence, one of my major recommendations to improve taxi driving in Yaoundé is to reform the system of law enforcement.

My second hypothesis was that taxi driving has not been successfully ameliorated because there is a lack of understanding of driver mentality. I have partially proven this hypothesis. Through my research, I have identified the key players that are involved in the sector of taxi transportation. Through communication with my informants, I have found that there are many differing mentalities at play – which is seen through the various recommendations they offered to improve the state of taxi driving in Yaoundé. With this information, I was able to identify the major areas to improve upon. However, I did not directly find that the state of taxi driving has not been improved because there is a misunderstanding of taxi driver mentality. Although taxi drivers arguably have a somewhat different mentality than other groups, they have outlets to voice their concerns – for example through taxi-drivers unions. Therefore, it follows that although some people may not fully understand the mentality of taxi drivers, the fact that

there are so many other mentalities at play also contributes to the reason that the situation has not been significantly improved.

In my time constraints, I was able to complete a comprehensive case study of taxi driving in Yaoundé. This is a good beginning to understand and correct the current situation, yet it is important to recognize that unsafe taxi driving is also a national concern for Cameroon. Therefore, if I had had more time I would have liked to continue my research to include other regions of the country. With this in mind, a future study may choose to analyze taxi driving from a different location to see what similarities and differences are present in the mentalities of drivers from settings other than the capital city of Yaoundé. Hopefully in time there will be development made to improve the quality of commercial transportation for all the citizens of Cameroon.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Questionnaire à propos des accidents de routes par les taxis : Les Passagers

Ceci est un questionnaire qui vise à étudier les accidents de routes par les taxis à Yaoundé conçu par Brittany Daniels. Je suis étudiante américaine et je fais partie du programme SIT (School for International Training). Veuillez S.V.P remplir ce questionnaire comme vous le pensez. Sentez-vous surtout libre d'arrêter de le remplir ou de ne pas répondre aux questions auxquelles vous n'êtes pas confortables. Ce questionnaire sera utilisé pour un devoir de SIT. Vos informations dans ce questionnaire seront confidentielles. Veuillez laisser un contact pour une éventuelle interview. Merci beaucoup.

Nom:

Numéro de téléphone:

1. Quel est votre mode primaire de transports ?

- Le taxi
- Une voiture personnelle
- La moto
- Marcher à pied
- Autre : _____

1. Combien de fois prenez-vous des taxis en semaine donnée ?

- 1-3 fois
- 4-6 fois
- 7-9 fois
- 10 ou plusieurs fois

3. Pourquoi prenez-vous les taxis ?

4. De votre expérience, pensez-vous que les chauffeurs de taxis respectent toujours les réglementations de la route ?

- Oui
- Non

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?

5. Que pensez-vous à propos des réglementations de la route ?

6. Que pensez-vous à propos des policiers et gendarmes à Yaoundé concernant la sécurité dans les taxis ?

7. Est-ce que vous mettez toujours une ceinture de sécurité dans un taxi?

- Oui
- Non

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

8. Quel est le plus grand nombre de personnes que vous avez éprouvé pendant un temps dans un taxi ?

9. Comment définissez-vous un accident de taxi ?

10. Avez-vous eu des accidents (grands ou petits) dans les taxis ?

- Oui
- Non

Si oui, expliquez vos expériences.

11. Avez-vous vus des accidents (grands ou petits) dans les taxis ?

- Oui
- Non

Si oui, expliquez les accidents typiques que vous avez vus.

12. Pensez-vous que tous les accidents des taxis seraient rapportés à la police et à l'agence de l'assurance ?

- Oui
- Non

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

13. A votre avis, quelle est la cause principale des accidents de taxis ? (Choisir juste **une** réponse)

- Excès de vitesse
- Inattention
- Fatigue
- Dépassements irréguliers
- Stationnements abusifs
- Défauts de permis de conduire
- Conduite en état d'ivresse
- Infractions commises par les piétons
- Surcharge
- Défaut de ceinture de sécurité
- Autre : _____

Pourquoi ?

14. Pensez-vous que la conduite des chauffeurs de taxis pourrait s'améliorer ? Comment ?

Questionnaire à propos des accidents de routes par les taxis : Les Chauffeurs

Ceci est un questionnaire qui vise à étudier les accidents de routes par les taxis à Yaoundé conçu par Brittany Daniels. Je suis étudiante américaine et je fais partie du programme SIT (School for International Training). Veuillez S.V.P remplir ce questionnaire comme vous le pensez. Sentez-vous surtout libre d'arrêter de le remplir ou de ne pas répondre aux questions auxquelles vous n'êtes pas confortables. Ce questionnaire sera utilisé pour un devoir de SIT. Vos informations dans ce questionnaire seront confidentielles. Veuillez laisser un contact pour une éventuelle interview. Merci beaucoup.

Nom:

Numéro de téléphone:

1. Avez-vous un permis de conduire ?

Oui

Où est-ce que vous avez reçu le permis de conduire ? _____

Non

Pourquoi pas ?

2. Avez-vous un certificat de capacité ?

Oui

Où est-ce que vous avez reçu le certificat ? _____

Non

Pourquoi pas ?

3. Où est-ce que vous avez appris être un chauffeur de taxis ?

4. Respectez-vous toujours les régulations de la route ?

Oui

Non

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

5. Que pensez-vous à propos des régulations de la route ?

6. Que pensez-vous à propos des policiers et gendarmes à Yaoundé concernant la sécurité dans les taxis ?

7. Quel model de taxi conduisez-vous?

8. Combien de ceintures de sécurité sont disponibles pour les personnes abord de votre taxi ? _____

9. Est-ce que vous mettez toujours une ceinture de sécurité dans votre taxi?

- Oui
- Non

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

10. Quel est le plus grand nombre de personnes que vous avez transporté pendant un temps dans votre taxi ? _____

11. Comment définissez-vous un accident de taxi ?

12. Avez-vous eu des accidents (grands ou petits) dans les taxis ?

- Oui
- Non

Si oui, expliquez.

13. Pensez-vous que tous les accidents des taxis seraient rapportés à la police et à l'agence de l'assurance ?

- Oui
- Non

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

14. A votre avis, quelle est la cause principale des accidents de taxis ? (Choisir juste **une** réponse)

- Excès de vitesse
- Inattention
- Fatigue
- Dépassements irréguliers
- Stationnements abusifs
- Défauts de permis de conduire
- Conduite en état d'ivresse
- Infractions commises par les piétons
- Surcharge
- Défaut de ceinture de sécurité
- Autre : _____

Pourquoi ?

15. Pensez-vous que la conduite des chauffeurs de taxis pourrait s'améliorer ? Comment ?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Because I interviewed a variety of different players in the taxi transportation sector, my questions varied based on the person's area of expertise. However, I asked the following set of basic questions to all informants:

1. What is your name?
2. What is your profession?
3. Why did you choose this profession?
4. What are the main goals of your company/organization?
5. What is your role in the transportation sector?
6. What is your role specifically with taxis?
7. What are your thoughts concerning taxi driver mentality?
8. What are your thoughts concerning taxi passenger mentality?
9. How do you define an "accident?"
10. How do you find the taxi driving in Yaoundé?
11. What are your thoughts concerning the existing driving regulations?
12. What are your thoughts concerning the enforcement of the driving regulations?
13. In your opinion, what are the main causes of taxi accidents?
14. Do you believe that safe taxi driving is a priority?
15. How can taxi driving be improved?