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DAC Network on Poverty Reduction

DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD
1st Workshop of the Infrastructure for Poverty Reduction Task Team

Meeting held on 29-30 (a.m.) March 2004

This document is submitted to the infrastructure task team and workshop participants FOR COMMENTS, by 30 June 2004. A revised version will be circulated in time for the 2nd Workshop of the Infrastructure for Poverty Reduction Task Team to be held on 27-29 (a.m.) October 2004 in Berlin.

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DAC NETWORK ON POVERTY REDUCTION

DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29-30 MARCH 2004

I. Introduction

1. The first workshop of the Task Team of Infrastructure for Poverty Reduction was held on March 29 and 30 (a.m.) March, 2004 in Room 4 of the OECD Headquarters in Paris.

II. Participation

2. Fourteen member countries were represented at the workshop, which were Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and US. Representatives of the European Commission also attended the workshop. Four multilateral development agencies attended this workshop as observers and active discussants, which were World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and African Development Bank.

III. Overview of the discussion and outcomes

Session I: Infrastructure for Pro-Poor Growth: The Global Picture

(a) How important is infrastructure for achieving pro- poor growth?

3. A consultant financed by the UK presented ways of measuring and targeting pro-poor growth (PPG). The presentation summarized the main results of research on the infrastructure's contribution to growth and identified mechanisms for contributing to pro-poor growth. Infrastructure mainly contributes to PPG by increasing the productivity of the poor. The consultant indicated that there are trade-offs in growth vs. distribution effects from public rural investments (drawing on IFPRIs China dataset). As regards to investment analysis, the consultant proposed transparency on opportunity costs when making investments that target low potential areas and/or do not maximize growth. After examining the concept of pro-poor growth and infrastructure's contribution to it, the presenter concluded that quantity and quality of infrastructure services were important for attaining pro-poor growth, and that any pro-poor growth strategy would typically require greater investment in infrastructure than a simple growth strategy. The consultant proposed (i) that infrastructure bodies should become the leading agents for pro-poor growth (ii) that these agents should seek out hidden bottlenecks and black spots of viable projects (and consider that project viability can be increased by synergistic interventions) iii) to minimize monopoly by regulating for competition, promoting PR activities and enhancing accountability.

4. The subsequent discussion focused on (i) *urban poverty* (not covered in the presentation) (ii) ways to include supportive productive activities for economic growth (iii) *fiscal space* issues for both investment and maintenance requirements (iv) cost recovery (access versus affordability) and (v) efficiency issue (particularly corruption associated with procurement) and (vi) accountability on project intervention impact. As regards to current knowledge, the discussion raised the need for better baseline data and improved understanding of the production function of the MDGs. Reliable baseline data should be informative about both initial access and initial affordability. Different *initial conditions* of partner countries should be taken into consideration in comparing pro-poor growth experiences.

5. <u>Key messages</u>: The preferred PPG measure is the *growth of the mean income of the poor.* The main mechanism by which infrastructure contributes to *PPG is by increasing the productivity* of the poor. Infrastructure is even more important for pro-poor growth, than for growth *per se*. Trade-offs between growth and distribution in the infrastructure area may exist and should not be brushed over by non-transparent cost/benefit analysis which bear the danger of leading to distortions. When faced with such trade-offs (growth/distribution), policy choices should be fully informed by and transparent on all associated costs. Some suggested that growth should not be sacrificed for the sake of distribution; others considered that infrastructure projects need a positive rate of return since they bear high opportunity costs. Identifying hidden bottlenecks and blackspots for viable infrastructure investments therefore becomes a major challenge. Some viability gains can be achieved through synergistic investments and more attention should be given to exploiting such benefits.

(b) Measuring the impact of Infrastructure Projects: Some examples

6. Analytical studies and thematic works on poverty impact assessment and measuring tools were introduced by participants. The presentations were divided by sectors.

7. *Transport:* The impact studies presented for the transport sector included the Transport Infrastructure Project in Northern Vietnam (Japan), the My thuan Bridge-Mekong River Crossing in Vietnam (Australia) and Chongqing Railway line project in Huaihua China (Germany). The discussion focused on i) the importance of baseline surveys in examining the impact of infrastructure projects (ex ante poverty assessment); ii) problems of attribution in conducting impact studies; iii) difficulties in defining the assessment (i.e. project area vs. impact area); and iv) the need for better assessment of service affordability. *External factors* or interventions (i.e. rural credit, human resource development and agricultural support) were considered important for transport project impact. Sector integrated approaches were also highlighted as well as the relevance of area based approaches and sector level dialogue in designing pro-poor growth strategies and integrating sector strategies into the PRSPs.

8. Energy: The impact studies presented for the energy sector include the Orissa Rural Community's electricity supply in India (UK), a joint US/Japan program on the Rural Electrification Project in Bangladesh (USA) and the Thematic Evaluation Study of Rural Electrification Projects (Sweden). The discussion on the energy sector focused on importance of local ownership and participation and linking projects to production activities and growth. For the latter, the objective of increased agricultural production was pertinent for PPG impact in Bangladesh. Some participants emphasized that energy infrastructure, to be most poverty relevant, should (i) more directly promote productive activities of the poor, and ii) include more public goods such as street lighting (with strong impact on poverty reduction, and gender safety). The importance of energy for achieving the MDGs was pointed out by one participant; while another mentioned the impact of an electricity tariff increase on water tariffs for irrigation, thereby stressing the need to consider the comprehensive effect of cost recovery measures.

9. *Water and Sanitation:* The impact studies presented for the energy sector include a project on Irrigation in Sri Lanka (Japan) and the PROSPECT-Community Urban Water Supply in Lusaka (UK). Despite project success (such as a significantly reduced cost of water for the poor in Lusaka), methodological limitations applied; the baseline data could not be used to monitor poverty reduction and data management was not linked to local authorities, thus reducing the usefulness of the new dataset. The discussion focused on i) sustainability issues (cost recovery and subsidy); ii) integrated or multi-sector approaches (i.e. the need for health assessments to maximize health benefits from water projects); iii) the need to establish linkages between the infrastructure investment strategy and PRSPs and iv) infrastructure safety nets for transition periods.

10. Key messages: While baseline poverty information is needed for meaningful impact assessment this information is more often than not missing. In order to maximize other benefits from infrastructure investment, such as productivity/growth gains or health benefits, an upfront integration of this component into project design is paramount. Causal relationships (i.e. between infrastructure and productivity gains) cannot be assumed, highlighting the need to formalize such linkages in project design to maximize synergistic benefits. Other central challenges include financial viability and cost recovery.

Session II: Donors activities on Infrastructure: Tendency, Strategies and Examples

(a) Current Donor Practices and the Development of Bilateral Donors' Infrastructure Portfolio

11. A consultant financed by Germany presented recent trends in donors' infrastructure portfolio. The major findings were the following:

- Approximately 70% of infrastructure investment in developing countries in the 1990s was financed by national governments. The private sector and ODA accounted for the remaining 25% and 5%. This data masks the importance of ODA financed infrastructure in poorer countries, particularly in sub-Sahara Africa.

- Bilateral ODA commitment on infrastructure declined over the 1990s. This is due to the withdrawal of key bilateral donors from the sector. Multilateral donors (including EC) did not compensate for this shortfall. Overall this resulted in both a smaller infrastructure share and reduced total ODA spending.

- Transport is the leading sector of ODA commitment for infrastructure, which is followed by energy and water. Recent financing has shifted to roads and water and sanitation

- Regional analysis showed stable financing over the 1990s with most resources going to Asia (59%) and only a fraction allocated to Africa (17%).

- Private sector involvement in infrastructure funding has shown an increasing trend during the 1990s, but has not developed as strongly as expected, and has not leveraged the decline in other funding sources. Private sector funding for infrastructure substantially declined after the Asian, Mexican and Russian crises in 1997. Furthermore, private sector investment for infrastructure was concentrated on ICT and energy and on a few (8) middle income countries. The private sector is not the driving force for poverty relevant infrastructure in poor countries.

- Public funding for infrastructure also declined since the late 1990s, due to the reduced fiscal space after the above mentioned economic crises and other reasons. Overall little is known about public infrastructure financing patterns in developing countries.

12. The subsequent discussion focused on the following questions posed to the group.

- *What is the rationale behind the general decline in ODA commitments for infrastructure?* The discussion focused on the main reasons for decline, such as i) shift of attention to poverty reduction due to the introduction of MDGs; ii) weak performance of past infrastructure projects, i.e. isolated from other interventions and not generating benefits to the poor (white elephants[1]); iii) critical attitude to credit schemes as shown in adoption of the Helsinki Package and iv) shift in instruments to grant financing amongst several donors. Given the World Bank estimates of future demand for infrastructure investment, some argued that there is no rationale to reduce ODA budgets for infrastructure investment.

- *Did / Do we rely too much on the private sector to provide funding for infrastructure?* The discussion focused on the rationale for private sector decline in infrastructure funding following the Asia crisis. It was highlighted that the public sector seemed to show the same risk averseness after 1997. In the first half of the 90's, Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) were seen as a tool to get over the rising financing gap but it did not happen as expected. Most of the private infrastructure service contracts were revised after the first contract period was over and the fiscal burden for providing infrastructure services under such scheme became even larger. In certain developing countries, a shift from private to public debt has been observed.

- *Why did donors shift towards transport and water in the context of the poverty agenda of the late 1990s?* The discussions focused on how the introduction of MDGs influenced budget allocation for infrastructure interventions. For example, with the advent of the MDGs, water projects have received more budget than the others, despites their lower rate of return. Lower private sector investment was also given as reason for more public investment in these sectors.

- *What are the most relevant sectors for poverty reduction?* The current sector priorities are seen as most relevant for poverty reduction. The question then becomes what are the most relevant sectors for pro-poor growth? Are water and sanitation still as relevant under this new objective?

- *What are we doing in Africa, where we have high poverty incidence and relatively low infrastructure investments?* The discussion on this point was not conclusive. Some donors

[1]Projects that yield less return that the opportunity cost of capital in the country.

indicated recent percentage increases in their infrastructure financing in Africa more than in other regions (for example the EC).

13. Key messages: Many bilateral donors have moved out of infrastructure funding or have reduced their shares due to a programmatic change to non-economic infrastructure assistance. This conflicted with the past record of infrastructure ODA. In the new debate, the infrastructure sector is attracting more and more attention and donors are increasingly interested in the linkages between infrastructure development and poverty reduction. In order to achieve higher ODA shares for infrastructure development (and recent World Bank data indicate huge demand) infrastructure ODA's contribution to pro-poor growth has to be strengthened and become more outcome oriented.

(b) Innovative Components for Effective Poverty Reduction: Project Examples

14. Best practice infrastructure projects were introduced by several participants, focusing on the innovative components of the projects to achieve PPG objectives.

15. Transport and ICT: Projects presented included the Rural Road Networks in four African countries (Ireland), Cairo Transport Master Plan (Japan) and GrameenPhone's Village Phone Program in Bangladesh (Secretariat). The importance for conducting baseline surveys was stressed again and there was agreement on the need of developing a *common analytical framework* to measure poverty reduction impact. Participants suggested that some further information on a) the cross sectoral planning (complementarity) done at local government level and b) specific targeting of the poor would be useful. It was suggested that the method of poverty assessment used for the Irish road projects could be regarded as a good "template" in assessing poverty impact of other road projects. Many participants were interested in the experience of GrameenPhone coupled with the innovative financing mechanism of the Grameen Bank. Some participants asked about the replicability of this experience to other countries, particularly as ICT requires – as a precondition – major investments in basic infrastructure (telecommunication, fibre lines etc) which is not available in many countries. The existence of nationwide railway networks alongside of which the fibre optic cable network in Bangladesh was constructed was one of the factors to make this project successful. This raised the question of how to mobilize financial resources and recover costs from such huge investments. Further, given that the GrameenPhone system is closely affiliated with the Grameen Bank's microfinance service, countries without such services may face difficulties in introducing similar mobile phone systems.

16. Energy: The presentations on energy included the joint Japan/US donor program on the Rural Electrification in Bangladesh (presented by Japan) and the Solar Home System Program in Namibia (Germany). The discussion on the latter focused on the lack of growth impact from the solar power system project and the limitations of renewable energy for the poor. Several participants questioned whether donors should implement a project that would only improve *social, or non-income, benefits* but would not result in the promotion of productive activities. Such projects would, therefore be less relevant for pro-poor growth, while they may well be relevant for the social living standards of the poor.

17. Water and sanitation: The projects presented include Domestic Drinking Water in Mali and Haiti (France), Small Town Water Supply in Senegal (Belgium), Irrigation for Agrarian Reform Communities (Japan) and a Water and Sanitation project in South Africa (EC). Participants highlighted the need to establish a mechanism to facilitate sector wide approaches in all countries and questioned which sectors and project designs should be promoted for pro-poor growth. In addition, the role of the water sector to contribute to other social MDGs (MDG 4-6) and to reduce income poverty (MDG 1; related to irrigation) was highlighted. Furthermore, the need for a closer look on the importance of irrigation within the water sector was stressed.

18. Throughout the sectoral sessions, participants repeatedly highlighted the need for *coordinated and integrated donor* approaches. The US and UK also raised the issue of how to secure the use of subsidies to provide an incentive to service providers to target the poor specifically. In addition, the following issues were raised by various participants: cost recovery, affordability and accessibility, (including use of subsidy in this context), capacity building and accountability of infrastructure institutions, role of private sector in providing infrastructure services, integration of social sector components, the need to enhance institutional aspects in providing physical investment, the need to conduct baseline surveys with standardized methods and the capacity building of both donors and the developing country institutions.

19. <u>Key messages</u>: Participants agreed on the importance of i) developing standardized methods for conducting baseline infrastructure surveys, ii) institutional settings for sustainability in addition to physical investment; and iii) coordinated and integrated approach (such as developing sector wide diagnostic and frameworks with multi-sectors). So far unanswered questions of participants include how to increase infrastructure coverage in the PRSP process and how to maximize synergies across sectors and integrate sector strategies into PRSPs. Not all infrastructure sectors are contributing equally to pro-poor growth; transport and energy appear more successful in this regard than water and sanitation. This however, does not imply that water and sanitation projects are not important for achieving poverty reduction impact.

Session III: Overview of the Works of Multilateral Development Banks on Infrastructure and Poverty Reduction

20. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) introduced current discussions on infrastructure for pro-poor growth in their multilateral institutions.

21. A representative of the World Bank presented key emerging policy issues related to infrastructure intervention for poverty reduction, such as access, affordability and cost recovery. The newly developed Infrastructure Action Plan recognizes that the World Bank needs to be flexible enough to engage anywhere along the continuum of private to public infrastructure. Targeted subsidies and a plan for gradual cost recovery form part of this new approach. The experiences of the World Bank in supporting infrastructure in Africa and in South Asia were used to illustrate the Bank’s recent projects in the two regions.

22. The presentation by the Asian Development Bank mainly focused on a recent study to assess the impact of transport and energy infrastructure on poverty reduction in Asia. The study analyzed 4-5 energy and transport interventions in Thailand, India and Shaanxi province (China) completed 5-10 years ago. According to the study, transport projects have immediate effects on poverty reduction while energy projects have more long term impacts. The study also concluded that a service provision approach is vital for poverty reduction impact and that perceived inequality may rise since some groups miss out (e.g. the chronically poor). Moreover, complementary programs, such as credit or training, played an important role for poverty reduction impact.

23. One of the most frequently highlighted issues in the subsequent discussion was *subsidization of service delivery* to the poor. It became evident that subsidization would no longer be a taboo and could be discussed within the context of cost recovery and affordability. Some participants were concerned about sustainability and appropriate duration of subsidies. The importance of designing subsidies that minimize corruption ("smart subsidies") was emphasized.

24. Furthermore, the concept of *private provision of infrastructure services* was discussed. It was proposed to enhance communication with the Private Sector Task Team of POVNET. Participants suggested that an additional MDG "Target" should be created, which focuses on the enhancement of productivity by improving transport or energy infrastructure.

25. Finally, the issue of how to organize integrated donor approaches and align coordinating responsibilities in studies and interventions was raised. While regional organizations may seem to be natural coordinators, they are often weak in institutional capacity and other resources.

26. Key messages: This session confirmed that access, affordability and appropriate design, duration and targeting of subsidies as well as the role of the private sector and cost recovery are key emerging issues for this task team. With two multilateral institutions conducting work on infrastructure, growth and poverty reduction, this session also indicated clearly the current momentum for developing guidance for infrastructure and pro-poor growth for bilateral donors.

Session IV: Summing Up and Next Steps

27. The chair proposed the framework and topics for the second workshop; those are i) the themes to be discussed, ii) method for preparation, iii) participants and iv) voluntary financial contributions. Following the presentation, the discussion mainly focused on the selection of themes for the next workshop. The key issues raised at this session are summarized.

28. Several participants emphasized the *importance of cross cutting issues* such as governance or domestic financing, and showed reluctance to discuss features of infrastructure investment by sector. Other participants, however, pointed to *the benefit of a sector focus* in examining pro poor aspects of infrastructure projects. There was consensus that the task team is to discuss *concrete measures* that make infrastructure projects more pro-poor. Some donors suggested creating a guiding principle for pro-poor growth and infrastructure investment as the final outcome of the workshop. The following issues were raised in this session

- How to secure financial resources for huge infrastructure investment needs;
- The necessity to agree on concrete and applicable *indicators* to measure the impact of infrastructure on the poor;
- The importance of having (ex ante) *poverty assessment data* in planning infrastructure investment and;
- The linkage between the *MDGs and pro-poor growth*.

29. The representative from the World Bank offered to provide the task team with basic *data on infrastructure profiles* of each developing country prepared by the Bank for the next workshop. It

was agreed to invite p*articipants from developing countries* to this workshop. The representative from the ADB offered to contribute to the cost of inviting participants from developing countries, and asked the budget estimate. The representative of the GenderNet, as an ex officio member of the POVNET, proposed to contribute a gender related study of infrastructure for the workshop. It was furthermore suggested that the Private Sector and the Agriculture Task Teams might play a supporting role in the second workshop by introducing cross cutting issues on private sector finance for infrastructure and urban vs. rural infrastructure needs. Furthermore, it was agreed that ICT discussions should be integrated in this task team work.

ANNEX 1

FINAL PARTICIPANTS LIST FOR NETWORK ON POVERTY REDUCTION - INFRASTRUCTURE WORKSHOP

LISTE FINALE DES PARTICIPANTS POUR RÉSEAU SUR LA RÉDUCTION DE LA PAUVRETÉ - ATELIER SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE

29 March 2004 - 30 March 2004
OECD, Château de la Muette, Paris

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