

Transport and Social Responsibility Thematic Group
Improving Environmental and Social Indicators:
Follow-up to the Transport Result Measurement Workshop
Summary points, July 7, 2004

Present: Julie Babinard (TUDTR), Robin C. Carruthers (TUDTR), Marc-Olivier Castaing Rubin (SDV), Sandra Cointreau (TUDUR), Maria Concepcion J. Cruz (SDV), Cynthia C. Cook (TUDTR), Rosemary M. Cubagee (AFTTR), Poul Engberg-Pedersen (PRMPS), Estanislao Gacitua-Mario (SDV), Isadora Gaviria (SDV), Satoshi Ishihara (ECSIE), Shyam KC (TUDTR), Zarafshan H. Khawaja (SASES), Hakon Nordang (SDV), Binyam Reja (SASEI), Peter Roberts (TUDTR), Wendy E. Wakeman (PRMGE).

Purpose and Background: The meeting sought feedback on Environmental and Social Indicators that are currently proposed for the data collection activities and that the regions are undertaking in the Transport Sector as initial responses to the Infrastructure Action Plan. These indicators had been considered by some 40 specialists from the Transport Sector and related disciplines who participated in an international workshop held June 28-29 at the Bank. The workshop aimed to take stock of and exchange experience on current work in all regions on measures and indicators for Transport. The principle of indicators on Environmental and Social issues was confirmed as being important and they were generally felt to be set at an appropriate level. However, there was no time to consider the indicators in more detail and it is now necessary to agree on specific modifications in preparation for the next phase of data collection. There was a lively discussion and below are the most significant points discussed at the meeting.

Multiplicity of purposes: The objectives of the indicators should be clearly identified as this will help determine which component(s) to focus on and the appropriate level of detail. a) These indicators respond to the policy agenda and help raise awareness of and to mainstream rather neglected components into a broader transport agenda; or b) They help transport projects address requirements in certain important areas.

Disaggregating the components: The indicator on mainstreaming environmental assessment, like the indicator on social assessment mainstreaming, is too general to capture a potential discrepancy in a country's ability to comply with the three main components that should be part of an environmental assessment: design, operation and monitoring. A distinction should perhaps then be made between indicators measuring the design/construction process, and the actual transport operation.

The indicator should attempt to go beyond merely asking whether an environmental/social assessment law is in place – which frequently is not very indicative of the level of mainstreaming. Instead, the indicator should reflect the following three questions: i) Is there a legal framework in place?; ii) Is there institutional capacity; and iii) What has happened in practice?

There is also a need to disaggregate these questions at different levels of government (national/federal; provincial/state; municipal/local, etc.), depending on the country in question. Different transport agencies operate at various levels of government, and are thereby subject to a variety of legal regimes, capacity-constraints, etc. The complexity of the issues at stake was illustrated with the case of Argentina and Brazil. These countries both have local agencies in

charge of implementing federal regulations; they may not have the skills and resources to implement the laws. How would this problem be reflected in the current indicator?

Form of measurement: There are strong arguments in favor of following a numerical approach when seeking to measure results/ status. The proposed three level 'Yes, No, and Progress' scheme was considered by many to be too simplistic: a) It gives little incentive to countries to improve their status; b) It does not capture the wider spectrum of implementation levels among countries. A numeric system, index or other quantitative measure could bring light to country differences, allowing for comparison, and would give incentives to countries to make progress in their status (assuming they are competitive); c) On the other hand, similar rankings can represent quite different combinations of characteristics.

Communicable disease control: It was generally argued that this indicator should not be within the Environmental Assessment category but under Social Assessment. The type of health problems to be reconsidered should include the full spectrum of diseases that can be associated with transport projects and facilities, including diseases related to plant and human. Established practice for dealing with such aspects in international travel by air or sea may help to demonstrate good practice.

It was agreed that a small working group should review the points that have been raised and recommend how these indicators should be revised. The group will be jointly convened by the Social Analysis group and TUDTR with the aim to meet again around the end of July and to agree on revisions based on consultation toward the end of September.