

Minutes of the 1st TransNet Meeting - August 19, 1999.

Participants: Heinz Bender (Bender und Partner GmbH), Andreas Beusch (Intech Beusch & Co.), Pierre Charles Bugnon (Frisa Engineering SA), Juerg Christen (SKAT), Hubert Eisele (SDC, Asia I), Armon Hartmann (SDC, WIS), Patrick Kilchenmann (SKAT), Esther Oettli (Helvetas), Pius Rohner (SDC; SDR), Ueli Scheuermeier (Viltec), Peter Winkelmann (Freelance Consultant), Thomas Zeller (SDC, East & Southern Africa), Peter Züst (Iteco)

Excused: Beat Gruber (Freelance Consultant), Christian Poffet (SDC, West Africa), Urs Schaffner (Urs Schaffner & Associates), Peter Tschumi (SDC, Asia II).

Chairperson: Roland Python (SDC, WIS)

Minutes: Patrick Kilchenmann (SKAT), (These minutes do not describe the whole proceedings but summarise the main findings and conclusions).

Distribution: Participants
Dora Rapold (SDC Head Technical Division), Paul Peter (SDC South East Europe), Ruedi Fankhauswer (SDC, SDR, FG Bau)

Venue: SDC, Eigerstrasse 80, Bern

Welcome and Introduction

- Armon Hartmann, Head of the Water and Infrastructure Division welcomed the participants to this 1st TransNet meeting. He reminded the group about the reasons for setting up such a network and recalled the positive experiences of other well established networks such as AGUASAN or WasteNet particularly regarding the sharing of experiences and information exchange.
- Roland Python reviewed the principal purpose of the meeting which was:
 - 1st Part
Establish/confirm need for a forum for sharing of information and experiences about transport infrastructure in lower and middle income countries and discuss and agree on operational procedures for TransNet.
 - 2nd Part:
Presentation of an outline of SDC Transport Sector Policy and studies on self-help in road construction as well as capacity building for contracting.
- Participants introduced themselves.

TransNet Concept

Juerg Christen and Patrick Kilchenmann opened the first thematic part of the meeting with a presentation of the purpose and operational set-up of TransNet. Proposed objectives, operational procedures and level of participation were introduced. Participants were then requested to give their comments on the proposed TransNet guidelines. The main expectations were discussed and a lively exchange of ideas took place. Main propositions and concerns are summarised below:

Purposes and objectives:

- The area of focus of TransNet should not be confined in Transport Infrastructure but widen up to Transport in general;
- TransNet should actively promote the exchange of information between donors and the private sector as well as with existing international networks such as SSATP or IFRTD;
- TransNet should become a forum for the discussion of innovative solutions for new projects or identification of new trends in donor organisations;
- Platform for the discussion of controversial issues and “crazy” ideas;
- Promotion of a critical mass of transport initiatives within SDC programmes to ensure generation of experience based on practical examples;
- Promotion of lessons learnt;
- Like AGUASAN, TransNet should be a think-tank for SDC.

Level of participation:

- Broaden the base of participation;
- Creation of a committed core group that will guarantee continuity of TransNet;
- There will be always the element of competition among participants;
- TransNet should not only be restricted to the development community, but integrate other organisations and institutions dealing with similar concerns;
- The combination of participants should be such as to create a “win-win” situation for all;
- Participants should not only represent the technical component of transport but also consider social, economical, cultural and environmental aspects.

In order to broaden participation proposals will be sent to SKAT. Together with the above comments and remarks the TransNet Guidelines document will be revised and forwarded to participants for final comments.

SDC Rural Transport Policy

Roland Python shortly gave an overview of SDC’s Rural Transport Policy presently under elaboration (see Annex I). The most important and recurrent comment from the participants was on the formulation of the strategic orientation for the Transport Sector. The policy should consider that Transport Infrastructure can only indirectly solve the problems of poverty. Transport should be integrated within a set of other means and considered as a part of a whole. It was decided that a reduced group be formed in order to formulate objectives and further work on the policy document (WIS / Geographical Sections / SKAT).

Presentation of Studies

Two recently published studies were presented during part 2 of the agenda.

Peter Winkelmann presented the report on Self-Help for Road Construction (see Annex II). Low-cost technology has proven to be very cost-effective in the Indonesian context. He advocates that SDC revises its policy according to these new findings and increases its budget for research and education in low-cost technology and self-help approaches. Participants pointed out that this strategy can hardly be generalised and applies for particular cases only.

Andreas Beusch finally presented the new manual “Capacity Building for Contracting in the Construction Sector” (see Annex III). He explained the reasons which led the authors to write such a guide. They are mainly the shift, in the field of infrastructure construction, from public (government agencies) to the private sector (small private companies). He identified a need in the collection and dissemination of lessons learnt, as well as the urgent need for practical guidance on labour-based road construction.

Next Steps

It was decided that minutes and findings of future meetings will be put on Internet (SKAT Website?) and be readable for a wider audience. It was also proposed, as a feedback from the participants, that present members commit themselves to TransNet by determining their role in the “level of Participation’s” sketch. A respective proposal will be circulated with the revised TransNet Guidelines.

Agenda for the next TransNet meeting will be organised based on the contribution of the participants.

Date for the next TransNet meeting: 23 March, 2000

Agenda and Chairperson for the next meeting: WIS/SKAT

List of Annexes

- I Strategic Orientation of SDC Rural Transport Policy
- II Notes of Peter Winkelman’s presentation
- III Notes of Andreas Beusch’s presentation
- IV Address List of TransNet Members (available on SKAT Website soon)
- V TransNet Guidelines 7th Draft

St Gallen, 3.9.99