

Xochitl – presentation – Introduction

Hello and welcome. My name is Xochitl Benjamin & I am the social development theme champion for the global Transport Knowledge Partnership or gTKP. On behalf of gTKP, the ADB, SEACAP and our other partners as well as me personally, I would like to thank you all for coming to this session.

Before I start my presentation, I'd just like to quickly remind you all that gTKP is a project focussing on providing free access to the best available knowledge on road transport in our key theme areas, to the people who need it in order to make good transport decisions and policies. You can join gTKP through our website, gtkp.com, or you can fill out a form which you will find in the reception hall at the gTKP table. Joining is free and very easy and will help us build a strong network for information exchange and dissemination.

I know this is one of the last sessions so I do hope that at this point you will all be able to bring what you've discussed in other sessions to this one. I've sat in on earlier sessions so I know that social issues have been addressed elsewhere, and that many of you have asked questions about the social aspects. Running parallel to this session is the road safety session which is in itself, an issue with enormous social implications. Social development is, above all, a theme that needs to run through decision-making in all aspects of the transport sector if all of our many development aims, including the Millennium Development Goals, are ever to be successfully achieved.

This session is entitled 'social development and inclusive transport' and while I don't have the time here to talk about all of the factors that are involved in making transport more inclusive, I would like to address a few general issues. First of all what do we mean by 'inclusive transport'? Obviously means different things to different people and in different contexts. The way I will use the term today is to refer to transport seeking to be equally available to all who need it. Which is, of course, everyone. However, to be equal is not necessarily to be the same and so we, as practitioners and policy-makers, are faced with the difficult task of seeking very specific solutions to all the many different transport needs of diverse populations. This is one of the things that makes achieving inclusive transport such a huge challenge – people's needs can be so complex that is often easier for transport projects and policies to simply disregard them, to assume that building a road is enough, or to treat people's needs rather superficially, arguing that the cost of

doing more would be too high compared to the benefits of providing, for example, a wheelchair accessible bus, or that it would take too long to effect social improvements. The transport needs of a rural woman who has to get to work within a reasonable amount of time so she can balance her job with her domestic responsibilities is not the same as for that of a single elderly person in a suburban area or one of the millions of disabled people living in developing countries, many of them in rural areas. Yet solutions must be pursued for all of these people. If that isn't happening yet, after all of these years of talking about how important transport is to social development then we need to understand why and we need to know what more we can do about it. One thing I've heard several times this week, is how difficult it is to measure social impact, how limited the available data is and how we lack effective methodologies.

At the same time as we seek to make transport more inclusive and more available to all segments of society, we must also recognise that improving mobility – of people and goods – also has negative consequences. In terms of social development, this includes the role of transport in the spread of HIV and other diseases, in enabling the trade of human trafficking and migration, in contributing to environmental degradation and climate change and in displacing people from their land, to give a few examples.

This session today is an opportunity to share experiences, good and bad, and to hear of the experiences of others throughout the Asia Pacific region, and the world. We are lucky to have with us a great range of people from different partner organisations, different backgrounds, interests and expertise and from numerous countries.

The session is divided into 2 parts. In the first part we will hear the experiences of speakers working on mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS in the transport sector, incorporating gender considerations into transport decision-making and countering the growing trade of human trafficking.

The speakers will be followed by a 30 minute question period facilitated by Bob Dobias of the ADB.

Finally, Priyanthi Fernando will be facilitating a panel discussion which we hope all of you will participate in. I will let Priyanthi explain that further when the time comes but will just say here that our panel is a very good mix of representatives of many issues and so is our audience so

taken together, we anticipate the panel will be an excellent means of covering a lot of issues from many points of view.

I noted the objectives of this session at the Tuesday morning welcome assembly but they are probably worth repeating now. They are:

- to present the issues surrounding the major challenges in social development & transport
- to discuss 'inclusive transport' from various perspectives – that of the Banks, governments, civil society and NGOs and regional conditions.
- Finally, and probably most importantly, to address how we can optimize efforts towards achieving inclusive transport and minimize the negative impacts.

Again, thank you all very much for coming. I hope you find this session, practical, useful, challenging and interesting.