PANEL DISCUSSION: Potential Resonance of OMEGA Lessons in Developing Countries

Observations from Africa

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Introduction

The observations I am going to present are based on:

- The experience in Tanzania
- Observations of and what I heard about some African countries, mostly sub-Saharan

The observations therefore do not claim to comprehensively cover all African situations

LESSON 1: MTPs as 'Agents of Change'

- A few projects are planned as 'agents of change'.

- The majority are planned as purely providers of transport infrastructure with the private sector taking advantage of any subsequent developments in the event that the projects turn out to be agents of change.

LESSON 2: MTPs as 'Open Systems'

- The majority of projects in Africa would be considered as 'closed systems', thought to be easier and less complicated to handle.

- Transition from a closed to an open system is usually not due to pressure from local residents/ stakeholders but mostly as a result of inadequate resources.

LESSON 3: MTPs as 'Organic' Phenomena

- Original project visions, concepts and objectives remain firmly fixed in most cases.

- Time to breathe is usually not planned for in MTP which have strict timelines.

- If an opportune time to breathe presents itself, little advantage is taken.

LESSON 4: The Framing of MTPs

- The nature and clarity of MTP visions, goals and objectives are mostly not very clear, thus starting on the wrong footing

- Over-dependence on consultants, donors and funding institutions to set the visions and objectives

- Success is mostly measured in terms of completing projects on time, on budget and as per specification

LESSON 5: The Power of Context

- Context is not adequately considered as the planning, appraisal and delivery of MTPs tend to follow 'best practices' with little consideration for local context. Failure to acknowledge context is probably one of the major reasons for failure of some projects

- Institutional capacity is usually not adequately considered leading to many problems to MPTs

LESSON 6: Role of Sustainable Development Visions

- It is not clear what constitutes 'sustainable development', leading to unrealistic visions in some cases

- Due to the need for funding, most African countries are forced to accept elements of sustainable development that mostly define developed societies. Context is in most cases not a priority.

LESSON 7: Engaging with MTP Stakeholders

- Those funding the projects have more say than stakeholders.

- It is difficult to build effective relationships with stakeholders because of lack of trust, credibility and transparency. Low levels of democratization and education exacerbate the situation.

- Stakeholders are mostly seen as a liability, consulted only to fulfil requirements.
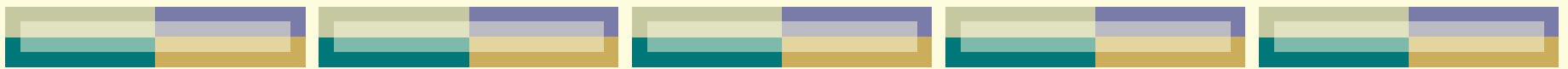
LESSON 8: Institutional, Policy and Legislative Support

- Underdeveloped institutional, policy and legislative frameworks affect the delivery of the full range of transformational benefits. Where well developed, observance is sometimes a problem

- Most successes are attributed to powerful political champions. However, the political influence is sometimes counterproductive as technical advice is overruled

LESSON 9: Lesson Learning and Sharing

- Most MTPs are planned, designed and delivered by international companies with proven experience. Local public institutions are usually less interested in sharing and learning but private companies/consultants are
- Post-project evaluation is a rarity unless a big problem arises

The End