

Comments by the Transport LCG on the IPRSP (A National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development)

General

The National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development (December 2002), makes highly relevant points concerning the importance of effective transport links to economic and social development in Bangladesh, as well as to the reduction of poverty. Some of the key points, however, are made only in Annex 6 rather than in the main report. The Transport LCG members consider that Chapter 5 section B of the main report should include references to *Institutional; Policy & Planning; Finance & Budgeting; Road Safety; and Affordable Public Transport issues*.

The Transport LCG members also note that the policy does not include a Sectoral Reform matrix that reflects priorities within the sector or the role of the national and regional road network in the reduction of poverty or the growth of the economy. Similarly there are no references to national or regional roads in the Poverty Reduction Indicators. The Transport LCG is proposing to arrange a meeting with key government counterparts and the Transport and Infrastructure Task Force to discuss the development of the matrix and the poverty indicators in relation to transport.

Institutional: It is important that the various institutions involved with transport have clear roles and that the responsibilities of the departments are clearly set down. This is particularly important in the road transport sub-sector where the division of responsibility between the different parts of the road network should be allocated in a logical way between the Roads and Highways Department (RHD); the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED); the City Corporations; and the community roads under the District (Zila) and sub-district (Upazila) Councils. A good step in this regard has been taken by the recent reallocation of Feeder Roads between RHD and LGED. The confirmation by the Government of Bangladesh that it looks to establishing a Ministry of Transport in place of the present fragmented approach under separate ministries is also endorsed by the LCG members. The group is also pleased to note the focus given to the utilisation of the private sector by the IPRSP.

Policy & Planning: Following long and exhaustive consultation with the key stakeholders, the National Land Transport Policy was approved by the Ministry of Communications in early 2003 and is currently awaiting Cabinet approval. The policy should be approved and gazetted without delay. A Strategic Master Plan for Transport, based on the National Land Transport Policy and including the improvements in inter-modal links, should be developed linking transport sector needs to the Poverty Reduction Strategy for the country.

Finance & Budgeting: A hypothecated Road Fund dedicated to the maintenance needs of the road network has been discussed within the government departments for some time, in recognition of the funding shortfall that this part of the sector has traditionally suffered from. Donors look forward to working with the government to take forward the establishment of the Road Fund and the creation of a Road Board so that the road assets, that are vital to the country's economic and social development, are appropriately maintained. The transport sector receives a significant proportion of the budget allocation and it is important that the departments within the sector account for the funds received and are able to monitor and evaluate the economic, social and environmental impacts of their work.