

# **CREATING DEMAND-DRIVEN KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION IN THE TRANSPORT AND RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR**

**PROCEEDINGS FROM UK WORKSHOP  
THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2002  
DFID Offices, London**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The first of the series of workshops held in relation to the TRISP Demand assessment for Information was held in DFID on Thursday, June 20<sup>th</sup>. There were nine self-selected participants, who responded positively to a call for participation sent out by email to everyone in the UK on the IFRTD mailing list, and through the rural-transport-development email discussion group. Participants comprised men (and one woman) from academic and consulting backgrounds, all of who are as much producers of information for DFID (and the World Bank) as they are users. The one NGO that expressed an interest in sending a participant, did not.

The Workshop agenda comprised the following elements:

- An introduction to participants and objectives of the workshop
- An overview of the World Bank Transport and Rural Infrastructure Learning and Sharing Project (in general) and the Demand assessment activities in particular
- Mapping of the information needs for decision making and the role of the World Bank and DFID information in meeting them
- Sharing of the literature search findings
- Developing recommendations to make information demand driven: sharing best practice and overcoming constraints
- A brief evaluation and a discussion of what next.

The UK workshop was in essence piloting the methodology for subsequent workshops to be held in Africa and Latin America.

The literature review is attached to this report. The next sections describes the key outputs from the workshop.

## **WORKSHOP OUTPUTS**

### **MAPPING SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR DECISION-MAKING**

Participants worked in pairs and identified a recent activity (decision made, paper written, query answered) for which they had to look for additional knowledge and information to supplement their own. They recorded the particular activity, what information they required and where they looked for this information and with what success. They considered what they expected to find from the different sources, what were the gaps and why (was the information just not there? Was it in the wrong language? Was it inaccessibly written etc). This led them to reflect on how they access knowledge, and what might help information producers to better meet their needs.

#### **Sources of Information identified**

- Other consultants/researchers
- British Library of Development Studies
- University of Bath development library references
- World Bank

- World Bank Rural Transport site
- DFID
- Personal contacts
- Save the Children Fund
- Own institutional systems (e.g. libraries, databases)
- Transport Research Laboratory libraries
- Internet search engines (specifically Google)
- Hard copies of reports (grey literature)
- Private sector suppliers
- User groups
- ATNESA website
- IT Transport
- Transport Links

**Reasons for not using World Bank/DFID information in decision-making:**

- Too specialised
- Not accessible to students
- Useful case studies if they relate to the subject you're looking for
- Includes bad practice (without meaning to)

**Information not found during investigations:**

- Overall assessment framework for local transport service delivery
- Children and transport
- Water transport and poverty connections
- Links between corruption and rural access
- Harness designs
- What conditions necessary for earth roads

**Issues arising from the exercise of looking for information for decision-making**

- First source is often our own knowledge base, then the people that we know
- The most useful source of information is people, acting as brokers (both to other people and making linkages between different sources of information), and acting as filters to direct you to quality information
- Internet sites aimed at policymakers and lack technical depth and detail necessary for engineers (not everyone agreed with this point)
- Engineers tend to provide advice on how to implement e.g. pro-poor transport policies once they have been agreed, rather than influence the policies themselves, but internet sites lack the 'how to' details to implement policies (???)
- Institutional memory of an institution – potentially very valuable – is made available on an 'ad-hoc' basis if at all, and isn't even held by the individuals working in them because turnover tends to be fast. Consultants who are increasingly engaged to do the research and advisory work on behalf of e.g. DFID and WB are the holders of this information but we don't know who they are and therefore cannot access this knowledge
- Updates on the internet mean that valuable information (which we saw last time we accessed that site but didn't have time to download) is lost

**MAPPING USEFULNESS AND ACCESSIBILITY OF DFID AND WB INFORMATION**

The purpose of this exercise was to rank the different information products produced by the World Bank and DFID from the perspective that each person requires different kinds of information delivered in different ways. Participants brainstormed the different channels of communication that are used to deliver and receive information (eg newsletters, radio, CD-Roms, grey literature, via individual advisors/staff, consultants etc).

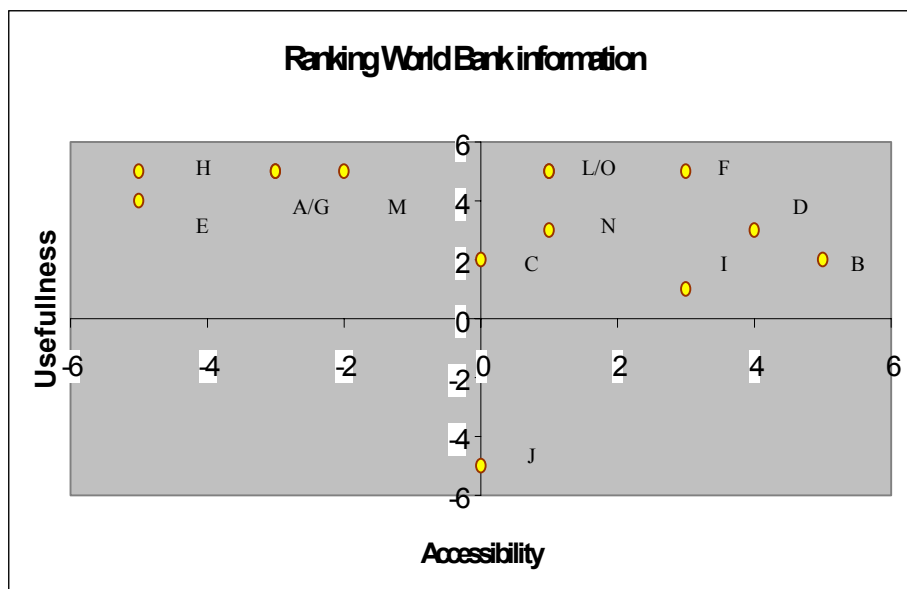
In two groups they then looked at these different information products/communication channels used by the two institutions and ranked them in terms of usefulness and accessibility; and usefulness and potential to influence. The last criteria aimed at trying to understand how interactive the process of knowledge production was, and how much the participants felt they had a say in the type of information that was shared. One group looked at DFID information and the other at World Bank.

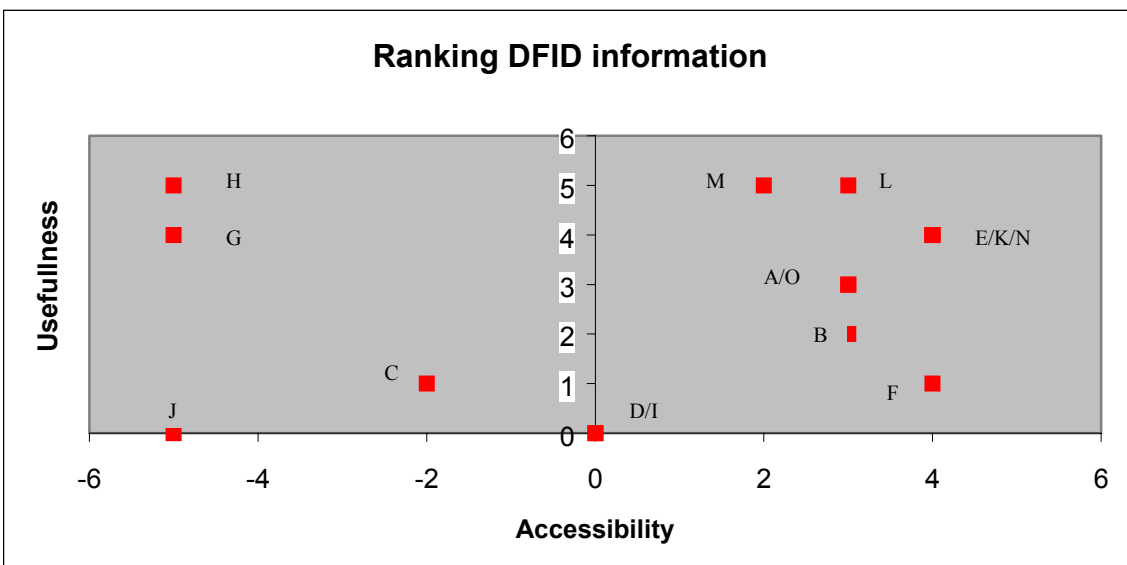
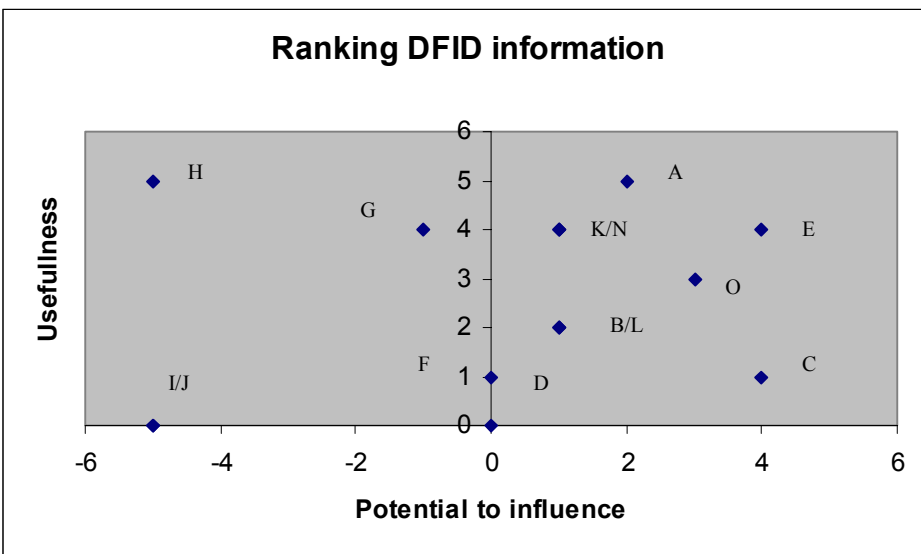
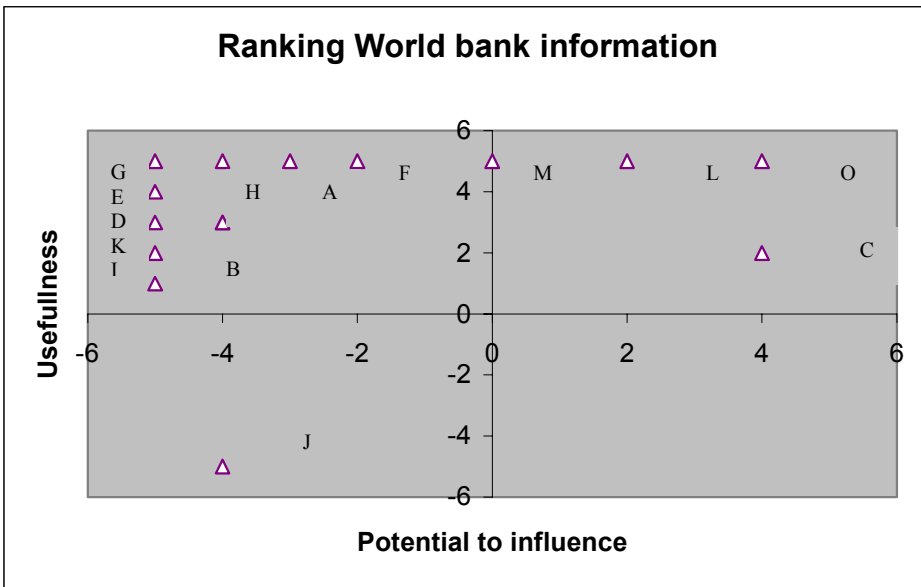
One of the constraints in analysing information products from an institutional source (e.g. DFID and World Bank) as a group is that each person's perception is based on a series of personal experiences of a particular situation where they have wanted information to solve a particular problem. These individual experiences and judgements of the information may be shared in group discussion, but are inevitably lost or 'averaged out' when a group judgement is made. Often, generalised statements emerge which do not describe every person's experience and which do not provide strategic information for the source institution. However, the 'maps' provide an interesting picture.

### Categories of Communications

- A Seminars/workshops
- B websites
- C email forums/discussion lists
- D email newsletters
- E printed newsletters
- F published reports
- G grey literature documents
- H Internal restricted documents (including intranet within organisations)
- I video
- J Audio (including radio)
- K press releases
- L individual contacts (both inside and outside the organisations)
- M In-country advisors and practitioners
- N CD-Roms/DVDs
- O Networks of which advisors are a part

### MAPS





The participants considered “Audio” communications, the only category without any usefulness. The other categories were all useful, but were differently accessible and had different levels of interactivity and potential to influence. The level of accessibility varied between the communications

channels/products of the two organisations. Unsurprisingly there was also a marked difference between the ability of the participants to influence the information of DFID and the World Bank. Despite access to electronic communications, for this group of UK based academics and consultants, individual contacts and networks of advisors continued to be an important source of useful information, and a means to influence the agenda of the two institutions.

The ranking shows that for the participants, the useful and accessible communications from both the Bank and DFID were the websites, published reports, individual contacts, networks of which advisors are a part, and CD Roms/DVDs. The World Bank had email newsletters and video that were considered useful and accessible, and DFID, its printed newsletters and press releases. Even though World Bank and DFID in-country advisors were considered highly useful sources of information, the participants felt that they had access only to the DFID advisors and not to those of the World Bank.

There were a large number of World Bank products/channels of communications that the participants felt they could not influence, particularly the grey literature and the internal restricted documents, the newsletters (email and printed), the press releases, the videos and the websites, and, to a lesser extent, the published reports and the seminars/workshops. They felt that the only ways in which World Bank communications/information products could be influenced was through individual contacts, networks of advisors, and email forums/discussion lists.

On the other had, the ranking indicated that the potential to influence DFID's information products/channels of communication seemed to be greater. Email forums/discussion lists and the printed newsletter had a high potential to be influenced. Participants felt also that they could influence the networks of advisors, DFID seminars and workshops, the press releases and CD Roms, the websites and individual contacts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS OR USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION**

Finally, the participants made some recommendations to the World Bank and DFID.

- Everything to be made 'soft'
- Selective archiving of past materials
- Technical papers and discussion papers of World Bank, to be supplied for free
- Databases of key contacts
- Simple portal with good links
- 10 key documents on different subject areas – brief quality review
- include document references in the Terms of reference for new work
- synergies between different dissemination routes
- networking (e.g. PIARC, IFRTD)

## **EVALUATION & WHAT NEXT?**

Participants were asked to write down two negative things about the workshop, and two positive things. These are provided in the table at the end of this report. Overall, everyone felt that they had good discussions, and that meeting colleagues and networking was an important aspect of the day. The pilot nature of the workshop methodology was evident and some participants felt that there was insufficient clarity about the process. It was evident during the discussions that participants found it difficult to consider themselves (and not those they were trying to assist) as the users – and this was mentioned in the evaluation.

The organisers explained that there will be a website which will enable people to continue to participate in the process and to have access to the outcomes of the other workshops. The website will be accessible through transport-links, DFID's website, managed by TRL.

## EVALUATION

Two negative things	Two positive things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generalising from specific examples without mentioning its specific example/reason e.g. 'CDs are expensive and therefore inaccessible' when this was referring to CDs for libraries not CDs for individuals which may be cheap or free. This information is carried forward without reasons.</li> <li>The rest was useful: thank-you!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking and meeting colleagues and learning new sources of information</li> <li>Importance of human contacts rather than web/printed documents</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pairing exercise</li> <li>Not identifying how data in particular could be made more readily available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping exercise</li> <li>Meeting colleagues and learning of some of their use of information sources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approach to the half day was a little ad-hoc, which is fine but should have been explained at the beginning</li> <li>Initial meeting space was too noisy/inappropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping was useful visual way to stimulate discussion</li> <li>Meeting people and old friends</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initially we were not focused on DFID/WB</li> <li>Didn't have time to discuss knowledge gaps fully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping exercise good</li> <li>Final brainstorm useful. Good ideas</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need some opportunity to review suggestions after the workshop day</li> <li>More women participants if you can get them in subsequent workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enough time in group discussion to learn about specific data sources/websites</li> <li>New contacts</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Nothing serious). Problems of being a pilot exercise and 'feeling' the way. However, experience should help with other workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plenty of opportunity to raise and air issues</li> <li>Networking</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping must be clearer (lost opportunity to capture more information on positive and negatives)</li> <li>Need to be clear from the start on whose needs we are thinking about (i.e. us as UK based experts in this case not those we are trying to assist)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good informal discussion</li> <li>Good collection of people</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choosing one latest decision does not allow great flexibility and subtlety to express our experience of DFID/WB information etc.</li> <li>Mapping did not really bring out information that was unclear before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good blame-free atmosphere</li> <li>Great to be usefully involved in extending info xxx??</li> </ul>

## PARTICIPANT EMAIL ADDRESSES

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