



TAI and DEVELOPMENT

Information Note

on the TAI and Development project Closing Conference and the Development Session of the TAI Global Gathering held at 29 and 31 October 2008 in Sligo, Ireland

The participating organizations in The Access Initiative¹ (TAI) and Development project (Reference Number: PF/07-3 EMLA, funded by the Presidency Fund) have come together at a closing conference called the “Development Day” at 29 October 2008 in Sligo, Ireland in order to discuss the findings of the project as well as to formulate a common position towards the issues raised within its implementation, with special regard to the questions of good (environmental) governance, aid effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

The Position Paper is available in a separate document at www.emla.hu at the English language site.

The Development Day

Nearly 20 participants represented almost as many organizations at the Development Day, *viz.* the Closing Conference of the TAI and Development project. The list of participants is in Annex I.

The day followed a logic where first and foremost, an introduction to the project was presented. Then Global South CSO participants introduced the audience to their TAI assessment findings, followed by the New Member State CSO participants who talked about their experience during the implementation of the project, with special regard to the meetings at their respective Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the content of their national strategies. Then in the afternoon, following a presentation on the role of EU institutions in the development problematic, the floor was opened for discussion. The agenda of the day is in Annex II.

¹ TAI is a global coalition promoting the concept that transparent, participatory, and accountable governance is essential to achieving sustainable development. It was established to engage civil society in an agenda for action. TAI is led by a Core Team composed of six organizations: **Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment** (Uganda), **Corporación PARTICIPA** (Chile), **Environmental Management and Law Association** (Hungary), **Iniciativa de Acceso-México** (Mexico), **Thailand Environment Institute** (Thailand), and **World Resources Institute** (United States). By joining TAI, civil society organizations “become part of an international network of like-minded groups that are committed to ensuring that citizens have a voice in the decisions that affect their environment and the quality of their lives. TAI partners build and participate in coalitions with other NGOs, set priorities for national-level policy reform, establish guidelines for creating public participation systems, and use common tools for tracking government progress”. Currently, NGO coalitions in 44 countries are involved in TAI.

Certainly interesting ideas came up during the discourse, such as

- EU New Member State governments lack knowledge of the problems and main questions regarding international development and ODA
- World Bank, somehow contrary to the public perception of its role in the past, has improved conditionality dramatically and also Asian Development Bank plays a positive role by applying conditions of a positive nature
- the word “conditionality” (frequently implying unilateral conditionality imposed by the donor to the recipient) is not any more acceptable in the vocabulary of international development and ODA
- the governments should not be in certain cases the single recipients of ODA but CSOs of the same country should also be part of the primary development beneficiaries in order to empower their monitoring (watchdog) functions – this needs to be institutionalized, e.g. to prevent recipient governments from their efforts to silence CSOs
- the business sector is a possible target that should be turned away from the concept of growth to the one of development
- there seems to be a need for a complete paradigm shift in development policy, e.g. it should not be the development aid and the donor institutions that would shape the public policy of the developing countries but the needs of the affected public

Participants of the Development Day have agreed that both the event and the entire project were very useful and relevant and would like to see its continuation. Photo of the participants is in Annex III.

The Development Session

As part of the official agenda of the TAI Global Gathering, participants of the TAI and Development project had a chance to present their findings and experience to the broader family of TAI on 31 October 2008 in the morning, when 1,5 hours were devoted to the topic of international development and environmental governance. The approximately 40 participants – to a major part representing countries in development – have received the message of the project with great interest and enthusiasm and searched for the opportunity to join in.

Conclusions formulated by project participants at the Development Day were presented as an initial topic for further discussion; however, participants did not limit themselves to such topics. Issues discussed ranged from stereotypical donor behavior through environmental governance problems to the relative values of indigenous knowledge and modes of societal coexistence.

Here again voices of definite support for not only the continuation of the project but for the broadening of the circle of participants were phrased.

TAI & Development *November 14, 2008*

ACODE (Uganda), ECAT (Lithuania), EMLA (Hungary), IGO (Poland), LEAT (Tanzania), PILF (Sri Lanka), REC (Latvia), SEIT (Estonia), TEI (Thailand), VACNE (Vietnam)
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