DAC Network on Poverty Reduction

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE POVNET TASK TEAM ON IMPLEMENTATION

1 July 2009, OECD, Paris

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I. Adoption of the draft agenda [DCD/DAC/POVNET/A(2009)5]

1. The draft agenda was adopted.

II. Update on recent developments

a) Debriefing on the POVNET meeting on 17-18 March 2009

2. The Chair (Hitoshi Shoji, Japan) informed the Task Team that there had been a lot of interest in the implementation work stream at the last POVNET meeting. While the Task Team’s draft terms of reference had been broadly endorsed, a more precise version, containing more details on outputs and timeframes, should be prepared for the next POVNET meeting (scheduled for 21-22 October 2009).

b) Debriefing on the discussion at the 30 June 2009 DAC meeting on the DAC Communication Strategy

3. The Secretariat (Hilary Balbuena) reported to the Task Team on the lively discussion on communications at the previous day’s DAC meeting. To date, implementation of the DAC Communication Strategy had focussed on branding (a common visual “look and feel”) while further progress still needs to be made on determining how to move from agreed policy messages to changing donor behaviour. Comments from DAC delegates indicated that more could also be done to prioritise among the DAC’s messages, to clarify who the DAC’s audience is, to use more accessible language in DAC products and to include developing country representatives more in dissemination activities. The DAC agreed to conduct a review of its communication activities although the methodology is still to be defined. POVNET’s work on implementing and field testing its policy guidance will be a useful input for this review.

III. Encouraging greater take up and implementation of the POVNET messages: Where to next?

4. The OECD had hired a consultant, Hunter McGill, to help POVNET clarify the entry points and types of activities that will lead to increased awareness, debate, use and impact of its policy guidance on promoting pro-poor growth. In introducing his initial findings, the consultant emphasised the following points:

- There is a great deal of competition for attracting decision makers’ attention on pro-poor growth messages in headquarters (and in the DAC itself).

- POVNET should be more opportunistic in disseminating its policy guidance. The paper for the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting on food security is a good example of the approach to take. There is great scope to relate the POVNET work on employment to fragile states.
Dissemination of pro-poor growth strategies are not a free good and involve additional costs. Experience shows that successful implementation of pro-poor growth policies requires visible buy in at the political level to provide the necessary incentives. Effective champions of pro-poor growth are also important and should be backed by resources.

POVNET work is seen as particularly valuable in moving from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness.

One of the most consistent messages coming through is that the POVNET material still holds up well but should be taken a step further, e.g. to the country desk level. POVNET could usefully develop some practical tools for practitioners at field level.

POVNET work is valuable and the consensus that has been achieved in POVNET is a key achievement. Implementing this guidance is now more a question of tactics than strategy.

The Chair then summarised some of the main points from the written comments that had been received:

- POVNET should be clearer on the impact it wants to have and how success can be established. It would be beneficial to work more with other DAC subsidiary bodies.

- POVNET should do more to operationalise its messages. At the moment, policy makers, who prefer short documents with clear messages, are served well by POVNET whereas programme managers are less well served.

- More should be done to gather empirical evidence on the results achieved by partner governments in pursuing pro-poor growth approaches. There is a market for country case studies on promoting pro-poor growth. Including treatment of the pro-poor growth agenda in peer reviews would be an incentive for DAC members to operationalise these agreed policy messages.

- The future implementation of POVNET’s pro-poor growth agenda is probably best served by choosing a country perspective, e.g. through additional country workshops or by scaling up the learning events currently being developed and implemented jointly by Train4Dev and POVNET. Highlighting pro-poor growth in DAC peer reviews should also be pursued as much as possible.

6. During the subsequent discussion, it was agreed that POVNET’s implementation activities should be linked to or embedded in “bigger” issues or processes such as aid effectiveness, development in situations of fragility, the post-2015 MDG debate, the DAC Action Plan on responding to the financial crisis or climate change. The challenge is to identify appropriate and propitious entry points. While the consultant’s work is usefully helping to shape an operational plan for disseminating and field testing POVNET messages, it would be helpful to take this work one step further in a pilot exercise and apply some POVNET messages in a particular context, such as promoting employment in fragile states. As few DAC members have chosen the optional topic of agriculture and poverty reduction in the current round of DAC peer reviews, some doubts were expressed about the likelihood of using the peer review mechanism to track donors’ behaviour change in respect of adoption of pro-poor growth policies.

7. The Chair concluded by noting some of the clear messages that had emerged during the discussions. Policy messages are for policy makers and more could be done on developing practical guidance. Existing messages could also be reformulated so as to feed in more easily into on-going political processes. There is no clear agreement on POVNET’s audience but donors’ field-level staff and their
partners are clearly part of POVNET’s audience. It is also important to target ministers and heads of agencies, so that pro-poor growth approaches will have higher priority.

IV. Future Task Team activities

8. Having considered “what to do”, the Task Team then focussed on “how to do it”, which can take a variety of forms. Building on previous discussions within the Task Team, the following types of activities were proposed:
   i) Training
   ii) Workshops in developing countries
   iii) A portfolio of dissemination products
   iv) Stories or case studies on promoting pro-poor growth
   v) A dissemination strategy
   vi) Scanning mechanisms to identify entry points in to on-going processes
   vii) Feedback on successful experiences

9. It was agreed to keep the discussion of the “what” and “how” of the Task Team’s activities open for further electronic inputs until the end of July. The Task Team’s Terms of Reference will then be refined during August, finalised at the Task Team’s next meeting in September and presented to the POVNET meeting in October 2009.

V. Information on other activities that provide an opportunity to disseminate POVNET messages

10. Beyond the activities of the Task Team itself, several other current activities provide opportunities to disseminate POVNET messages or to apply the POVNET policy guidance in specific areas.

a) Learning events, in collaboration with the Train4Dev Network

11. There have been a number of positive developments regarding the series of learning events being rolled out jointly by POVNET and the Train4Dev Network. Pledges of funding have now been received to cover the planned eight developing country-based events in 2009-10. The consultants to implement the programme (ODI/ITAD) have been contracted. Nearly a dozen countries have indicated a tentative interest in hosting a learning event (but not before 2010 for some). However, there is still a need to identify countries to host the two pilot events and there have been some delays in preparing the course materials that will be used by the consultants during the events. Some participants suggested more attention is paid to the content of the pro-poor growth training programme. The Secretariat explained that this is ensured as a POVNET Vice-Chair (Earnan O’Cleirigh, Irish Aid) is also the Co-Chair of the Executive Committee responsible for the learning events on pro-poor growth and he will participate in the pilot learning events.

b) China-DAC Study Group

12. The China-DAC Study Group has now been formed as a concrete follow up to the workshop POVNET organised with the Chinese in February 2008 on poverty reduction experiences. A work programme has been developed and pledges of financial support received. During 2009-10, the Study Group plans to organise a series of events on topics which influence both the pace of growth as well as the extent to which growth contributes to reducing poverty, namely: development partnerships, agriculture and
rural development, infrastructure and the enabling environment for enterprise development. The main
findings from these events will be synthesised and published in a joint report. In addition, the Study Group
will distil from its findings a set of key recommendations for the attention of Chinese authorities and DAC
members which will be presented and discussed at a final event in early 2011. Participants expressed the
view that this initiative is an excellent opportunity to disseminate POVNET messages.

c) Food security, agriculture and poverty

13. The sharp run up in food commodity prices in 2007 and 2008 led to a series of international
initiatives and meetings looking at issues initially around high food prices but subsequently issues around
food security. As a follow up to the OECD’s 2008 Ministerial Council Meeting, work was carried out to
monitor developments in agricultural markets and to promote sound international policy responses to
address the long-term structural factors driving food prices. This work built on the POVNET policy
guidance on agriculture and also benefited from collaboration with the FAO and other relevant institutions
including through a series of joint events organised over recent months. The findings from this work were
presented to the OECD’s 2009 Ministerial Council Meeting. The next steps with pursuing this agenda will
include responding to the outcome of the 2009 Aquila G8 discussion.

VI. Other business including date and place of the next meeting

14. The OECD can host the Task Team’s next meeting on Monday 14 September, Wednesday
23 September or Thursday 24 September 2009. Task Team members were asked to indicate their
availability so that a decision on the exact date can be made.
Participants list for DAC Network on Poverty Reduction (POVNET)  
Task Team meeting on Implementation  
1/7/2009 - 1/7/2009

Chairperson/Président(e)

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Mrs. Hilary BALBUENA  
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Other/Autre

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Consultant