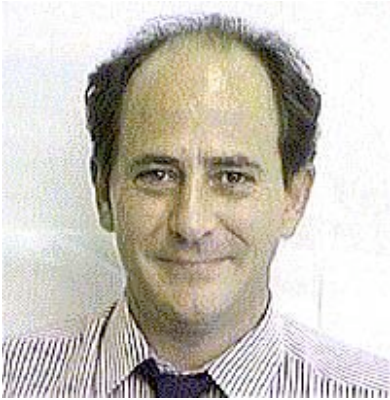


EDITORIAL

The CIB and Developing Countries

by



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Is the CIB relevant to developing countries?

To try to answer this question, I will touch on three issues here, namely (i) what are the needs of developing countries and how do they differ from developed countries, (ii) is there a focus within CIB on developing countries, and (iii) what are the benefits of participation in CIB activities that are relevant to developing countries?

What are the needs of developing countries?

Developing countries are typically characterised by lower resources per capita than developed countries, and for the most part by shortages and/or inadequacies in socio-economic infrastructure - including housing. Inequalities in poverty and in the distribution of infrastructure and access to basic services also exist in many developing countries. In developing countries, national objectives therefore usually have a strong focus on improving the quality of life of the people, economic growth of the country, and reducing inequalities.

From a technology perspective, the needs of developing countries are to develop and/or adapt knowledge and technology that are appropriate to the socio-economic conditions and to the available resources existing within that country.

Furthermore, a key requirement for the successful adoption of technology in developing countries is that the technology has to be appropriate to the technical assimilation capability that exists within the country - in other words, to the production capacity and technical capability within that country. (There are far too many cases throughout the world of technology from developed countries being inappropriately transferred to a developing country - because the technology was not appropriate to the socio-economic conditions or to the technical capacity within the developing country.)

The needs of the developing countries around the world are huge, and technology deployment and skills development hold the key to the growth and development of these countries. Technical collaboration between developing countries, and between developed and developing countries, and the development of appropriate technologies will contribute significantly to uplifting the developing countries.

Is there a focus within the CIB on developing countries?

As is illustrated in this issue of INFORMATION, there is a very definite focus within the CIB on

developing countries - and a focus which the CIB aims to strengthen. At present the CIB has at least two Commissions that focus on issues that are specifically directed to developing countries, namely Construction in Developing Countries (TG29) and Informal Settlements (TG40). There is a specific reference to the activities of both later on. Furthermore, several other Commissions are directly relevant to developing countries, such as Affordable Housing (W063), Urban Sustainability (TG38), and many others.

In addition, the CIB operates a "Developing Countries Fund", which can provide (albeit limited) financial support to people from developing countries to participate in CIB activities. More on this elsewhere.

Representatives from member organisations from several developing countries do participate in various CIB Commissions, including South America, Africa and Asia - but the number of member organisations and the participation from developing countries is disproportionately low. The CIB has in fact much more to offer organisations and individuals from developing countries.

What are the benefits of participation in CIB activities?

As a worldwide network of experts active in the research community, in industry or in education, who cooperate and exchange information covering all fields in building and construction related research and innovation, the CIB has much to offer organizations and individuals concerned with the challenges facing developing countries.

In particular, the CIB affords a network for technical collaboration and transfer **between developed and developing countries** - providing developing countries with access to up-to-date technology and information, but also bringing the experience and expertise of the local conditions in developing countries that is necessary so that appropriate solutions can be developed.

The CIB also offers the opportunity for technical collaboration **between and within developing countries**, in which technologies that have been developed within the developing countries can be rapidly transferred and adapted to similar conditions. TG29 - Construction in Developing Countries, and its sub-Task Groups are good examples of this collaboration between and within developing countries.

And also what should not be underestimated are the opportunities for the transfer of technologies that have been developed within **developing countries to the developed countries** - there are many examples in which indigenous technologies from developing countries have been successfully transferred and adapted to developed countries providing benefits to that country.

In addition to the benefits of access to, and transfer of, technology and information, a further benefit to developing countries through participation in CIB activities is the indirect strengthening of the technical capacity and the manpower development attributes - which are so important in many developing countries.

The CIB is certainly relevant to developing countries, and this role can be strengthened significantly - but this will depend on increasing participation from developing countries.

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