

Changing the Game for Africa's Infrastructure: What Role does South-South Co-operation Play in Addressing Africa's Infrastructure Gap and under What Terms?

Jeff Turner¹, Frances C. Hodgson², Gina Porter³, Emma Mawdsley⁴ and Gerard McCann⁵

¹Independent Consultant, Leeds, UK

²University of Leeds, Institute for Transport Studies, Leeds, UK

³University of Durham, Dept of Anthropology, Durham, UK

⁴University of Cambridge, Dept of Geography, Cambridge, UK

⁵University of York, Dept of History, York, UK

jeffreymturner@hotmail.com

One of the key (re)emerging concerns among African governments is the need for improved infrastructure. However, there is capital deficit in infrastructure in Africa – latest World Bank estimates put this as equal to US\$ 31 billion a year. Thus, the meeting of Africa's need for infrastructure and its financing is a significant challenge. One of the most important developments in meeting this challenge is the growing role of South-South co-operation, including aid. This paper explores the role and effectiveness of South-South cooperation and considers how its benefits might be maximised.

Emerging financiers with African interests include China, India, the Arab States, South Africa and Brazil. As well as providing infrastructure investment and finance, a number of these actors offer the services of highly competitive state-owned and private construction and communications firms. Sometimes their role is essentially a condition of the financing, in other cases they are successfully bidding for open tenders. This paper will focus particularly on the transportation and telecommunications sectors in order to highlight some of the variations across sectors and the relative roles of different providers. It also explores the role of technical assistance and technology in infrastructure as a way of understanding some of the intangible impacts of aid on the everyday lives of poor people and their appropriateness and effectiveness.