Moving people to help people move

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Abstract

The 24-km Dakar Toll Road (Autoroute de l’Avenir Dakar – Dianmiadio), built to solve severe congestion problems, was inaugurated in 2013 on schedule and below budget. It has reduced travel times by two thirds between downtown and the outskirts and is spurring the development of the conurbation. Long recognized to be an urgent priority, it took however about 30 years to eventuate, mainly because decision makers were deterred by the magnitude of the resettlement plan needed to insert this infrastructure into densely populated informal settlements. The paper explains (i) how the relocation of 38,000 people was mitigated through a comprehensive compensation scheme combined with the construction of a new town to accommodate some of those relocated, and the upgrading of low-income settlements along the Road and (ii) how this USD760 million project, first greenfield toll road in Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa), and structured as a Public Private Partnersip, materialized through funding from multilaterals, government, commercial banks and the private sector. The paper describes how compensation of affected households, commercial buildings, etc. were estimated, making sure all those affected end up in at least an equivalent position as they were in prior to the project. It also explains how a new city was designed to accommodate 20,000 persons, with schools, health centers, paved roads, community facilities, running water, electricity, market, sewage, etc. In addition, it details the rationale for providing consolidated settlements along this road with better urban roads, community facilities and drainage structures, to ensure that those who are too poor to drive, would still benefit from the project.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the scientific committee of the 20th EURO Working Group on Transportation Meeting.

Keywords: Toll Road; resettlement; social impacts; slum upgrading
1. Introduction

The 24-km Dakar Toll Road was inaugurated in 2013. Even though it was long recognized to be an urgent priority, it took about 30 years to eventuate, mainly – in the last 15 years - because decision makers were deterred by the magnitude of the resettlement plan needed to insert this infrastructure into densely populated informal settlements. This paper describes two key features of the project: (i) how the relocation of approximately 38,000 people, required by the construction of the Toll Road and the upgrading of the neighboring urban areas, was handled and (ii) how this USD 760 million project, the first greenfield toll road in Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) and structured as a PPP, materialized through funding from multilaterals, government, commercial banks and the private sector.

2. Context

Situated at the western tip of the African continent, Senegal covers about 200,000 square kilometers and is bordered by Mauritania, Mali, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Guinea. 25 percent of the 14 million inhabitants of the country live in its political and economic capital, Dakar, where more than 80 percent of industrial and economic activities are concentrated, in less than 0.3 percent of the land space. Almost all the administrative and business services are in the Dakar peninsula.

Thus, massive back-and-forth movements at peak hours between suburban areas and the historic center of Dakar were generating serious bottle-necks and the plateauing of economic growth. Before the Toll Road was inaugurated, traveling on the 2x2 lane National Road (RN1) could take from two to four hours for about 30 km, as it was the only route in and out of Dakar for about 120,000 vehicles per day. The cost of such congestion to the Senegalese economy was estimated at about 4.6 percent of GDP. With a population growth rate of about 150,000 to 200,000 people per year, the city’s infrastructure, initially built to accommodate 300,000 people, was getting more and more over-stretched. As a result, available space to accommodate a highway became virtually inexistent due to the densification of the urban and suburban areas.

At the same time, in the low-income and informal neighborhoods, expansion was continuing, often in flood prone areas without the appropriate land ownership and adequate infrastructure (utility connections, drainage, roads, etc.). In the early 2000’s, the Government of Senegal realized that because of heavy congestion in the greater Dakar, the country was incurring large productivity losses for local and regional businesses. In consequence, its ability to serve as a regional economic hub was threatened. The construction of a Toll Road was eventually deemed necessary, despite the herculean but unavoidable task of having to relocate more than 30,000 people to clear the alignment required for the high capacity highway. The project was envisaged as a comprehensive one and thus not limited to only the road infrastructure. It offered a golden opportunity to improve the lives of thousands of residents in the vicinity of the Toll Road, and to upgrade slums, especially in Pikine Irrégulier Sud, a low-income neighborhood of 240,000 inhabitants.

3. Resettlement Action Plan (RAP)

The project was made possible due to a comprehensive compensation scheme combined with the construction of a new town to accommodate some of those relocated, and the upgrading of low-income settlements along the Toll Road. The latter was deemed key to ensuring that communities beyond car drivers benefited in order to positively impact the poor directly. This was seen by the Government and the supporting donors as a crucial ingredient to the success of the overall project. The basic principle of the compensation scheme for the displaced people was to make sure that they ended up in at least as good a position as they were in prior to the project (home owners, tenants, shopkeepers, religious communities, etc.).
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