Executive Summary

CONTEXT

Many countries are looking for ways to ensure that every member of society has the chance to benefit from economic growth. As part of this, they are examining the role that infrastructure has in achieving that goal.

Inclusivity in infrastructure is quickly becoming a key consideration for many governments of both developed and developing nations. This is supported by the international community through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as international conventions. The G20 has had a long-standing focus on infrastructure, and social inclusion is considered to be a key component in the definition of Quality Infrastructure, a priority of the Government of Japan which has the Presidency of the G20 in 2019.

Benefits generated by inclusive infrastructure include reduced inequalities and disparities, which provide the stability to not only boost but also sustain economic growth and social equity in the long-term. However, these benefits can only be achieved if the concept of inclusive infrastructure is implemented in an effective manner.

There is a clear need for a concerted effort to advance the understanding of how best to achieve inclusive infrastructure, in both developed and emerging markets. The initiative by the GI Hub to develop a Reference Tool responds to this need to define and raise awareness of inclusive infrastructure, as well as share best practices to ensure faster and improved implementation of the concept.

OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the Inclusive Infrastructure Reference Tool is to provide practical guidance for governments to help them maximise the inclusivity benefits of their large-scale infrastructure projects. It is intended to be used when developing policy, and planning, designing and implementing such projects, so that the projects help to reduce inequality and promote shared prosperity.

The GI Hub set the following objectives for this project:

- increase awareness of inclusive infrastructure with a practical reference tool;
- provide a framework that clearly defines key activities while also offering flexibility to allow for the long-term development and evolution of the concept of inclusive infrastructure;
- share leading practices to successfully implement inclusivity at a policy and project level, across various sectors and geographies;
- offer an insight into the potential impact in the form of social benefits;
- highlight current and emerging practices that have the potential to create substantial benefits, as well as areas that require further attention and development; and
- provide recommendations on the way forward, to ensure that the concept of inclusive infrastructure continues to mature as new practices are developed and tested.

AUDIENCE

The Reference Tool is primarily designed for use by government representatives who have an interest in, or mandate to, maximise inclusivity in large-scale infrastructure projects. It is also available to other entities interested in inclusive infrastructure, such as the multilateral and bilateral development banks, the private sector, civil society organisations, academic institutions and the wider public.

SCOPE

The Reference Tool is meant to serve as a practical tool to help governments and other stakeholders understand and implement the critical success factors that deliver inclusive infrastructure. Accordingly, it provides an actionable framework and practical recommendations based on relevant literature, as well as live project examples and case studies.

The framework and recommendations are deliberately broad, so that the principles and insights can be applied widely in both developed countries and emerging markets, and across different sectors of economic and social infrastructure. Similarly, the Reference Tool has been designed to provide guidance applicable both to projects that are traditionally procured (i.e. 'public works' projects) and those that have a greater degree of private sector participation (such as public-private partnerships). It should also be noted that some practices featured in the tool may not be specific to inclusivity but are mentioned because they form the necessary building blocks to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive infrastructure projects.

The infrastructure sectors covered in this tool are the following:

- transport;
- energy, with a focus on energy supply and access;
- water, with a focus on clean water supply and sanitation;
- information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, with a focus on service accessibility; and
- public buildings and sports facilities.

As a final comment in regard to the scope of the Reference Tool, it is important to emphasise that it deliberately does not focus on the various measures that are used to minimise the negative environmental and social aspects of infrastructure projects, including measures such as the environmental and social 'safeguard' policies established by multilateral development banks. Instead, this tool is concerned with the positive steps that can be taken to enhance the benefits of such projects, by adopting and effectively implementing principles of inclusivity.

STRUCTURE

The Reference Tool is structured in four main sections:

- Section 1 provides a definition of inclusive infrastructure, an overview of the Reference Tool and the methodology used to create it.
- Section 2 sets out the key pillars of inclusive infrastructure, also known as Action Areas. This section also details the practices that could be put in place at policy and/or project levels. Six Action Areas are presented, alongside key practices and guidance. Relevant examples and thematic insights are also shared to promote the understanding of these practices and their application to specific sectors.
- Section 3 contains a brief conclusion and outlines the way forward. Inclusive infrastructure is a concept that will continue to develop, and several recommendations are shared to help inform the next steps.
- Section 4 presents the case studies. They showcase projects that have embedded inclusivity at various stages of development and implementation, covering several Action Areas and practices, across different geographies and sectors.

DEFINING INCLUSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

As a first step towards greater acceptance of the concept and the benefits of inclusive infrastructure, there is a need to establish a clear definition to be used by practitioners. In this tool, inclusive infrastructure is defined as follows:

INCLUSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Any infrastructure development that enhances positive outcomes in social inclusivity and ensures no individual, community, or social group is left behind or prevented from benefiting from improved infrastructure.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Framework for Inclusive Infrastructure summarises the following six Actions Areas and related practices that ought to be considered for the systematic implementation of inclusivity in infrastructure at the policy and project levels:

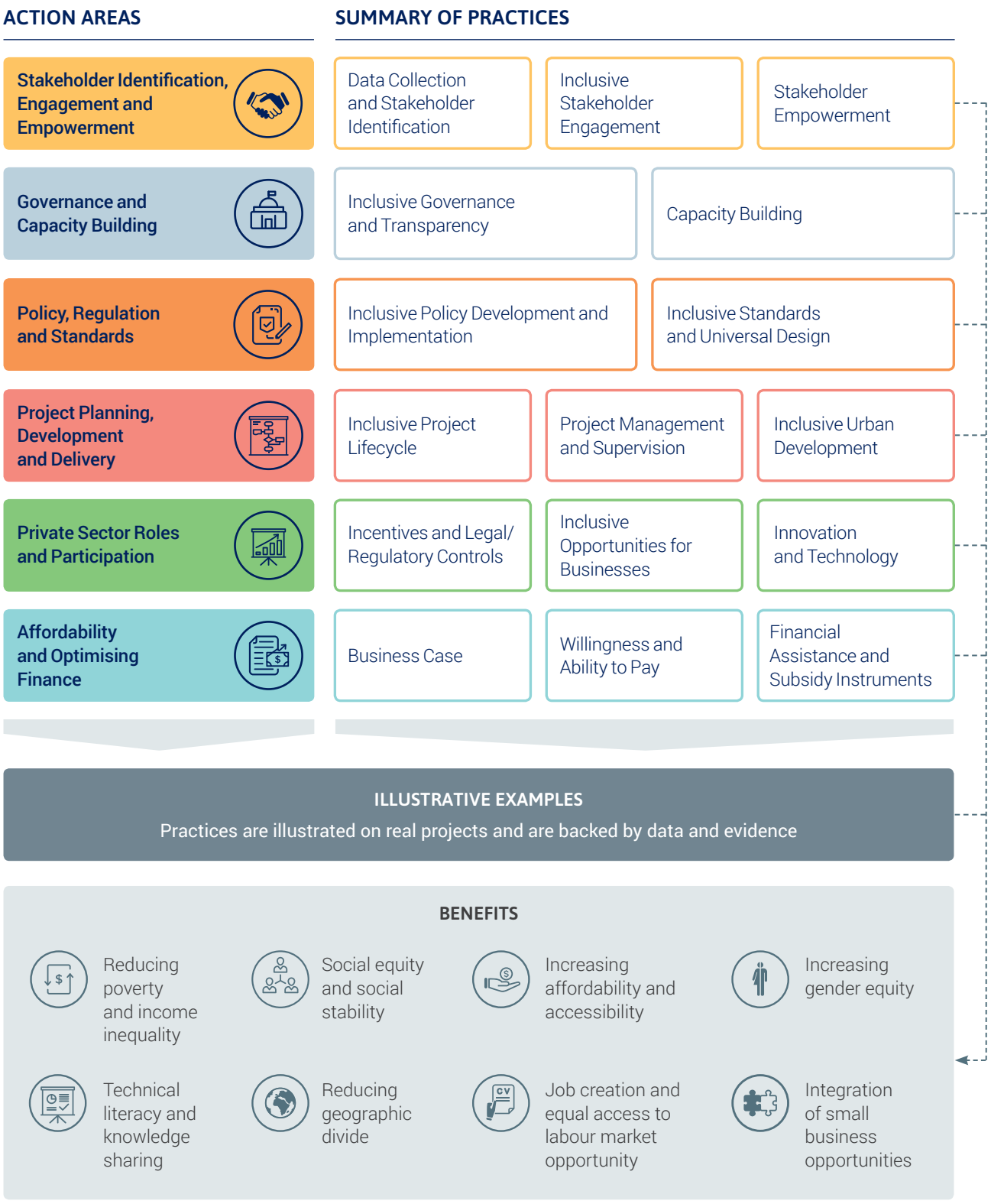

Figure 1: Framework for Inclusive Infrastructure

SUMMARY OF ACTION AREAS

The following descriptions summarise each Action Area.

All Action Areas need to be carefully considered and implemented to maximise the benefits of the project, on the basis that some of them will be more relevant to particular sectors and economies. Their application will vary depending on geographical context, project circumstances, profile of the stakeholders, level of capacity, governance arrangements, available standards, participation of the private sector and the stage in the project lifecycle.

Action Area 1: Stakeholder Identification, Engagement and Empowerment

This Action Area details practices that can increase engagement with various stakeholders to achieve greater inclusivity benefits. Key practices include data collection and other methods of identifying stakeholders, and engagement mechanisms that specifically target and integrate the opinions and viewpoints of individuals and societal groups at risk of being overlooked. In addition, activities that lead to increased empowerment and transparency are considered in more detail.

These practices will contribute to a greater understanding of the specific needs of stakeholders, as well as inform the way policies or projects are defined, planned, and delivered – reducing disparities, discrimination, and social and gender inequity.

Action Area 2: Governance and Capacity Building

This Action Area covers practices that define the governance arrangements for infrastructure projects, i.e., the systems, structures and decision-making processes amongst institutions, stakeholders and citizens. Governance is the formal means of incorporating inclusivity in government bodies and other relevant entities. Capacity building that strengthens skills and knowledge has the potential to address and change preconceived notions or prejudices against societal groups that are vulnerable and at risk of being neglected.

Practices under this Action Area can change how institutions interact with each other and their citizens. The inclusion and increased influence of vulnerable groups in decision-making and processes will result in better acceptance of decisions and increased social equity and stability.

Action Area 3: Policy, Regulation and Standards

This Action Area covers inclusiveness in legal policies, regulations and standards. Whilst there is some guidance at the international level – such as, for example, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – national and sub-national policies can also promote inclusivity and encourage officials to consider inclusivity across the project lifecycle. A key practice is the development and implementation of infrastructure design codes, which determine uniform engineering criteria and ensure universal access to facilities and the use of services at policy and project level.

Practices under this Action Area promote inclusivity in the international and national legislative environment. In combination with Action Area 2: Governance and Capacity Building, policy interventions aim to drive systemic change in systems, processes, behaviours and culture, and correct existing barriers. These two Action Areas facilitate a broad range of positive outcomes and move towards greater social inclusiveness.

Action Area 4: Project Planning, Development and Delivery

This Action Area refers to the integration of inclusivity practices across the project lifecycle. Specific recommendations are made to promote consistency and alignment among all participants (designers, engineers, constructors, and operators). Program and project management, as well as supervision, provide the needed checks, balances and controls to achieve inclusivity objectives. Attention is also given to practices that better integrate aspects of inclusivity in the planning of the spatial and urban environment.

Stakeholder identification and engagement activities in Action Area 1 are essential to every aspect of Project Planning, Development and Delivery and are viewed as complementary to this Action Area.

Practices under this Action Area ensure that the key strategic questions in relation to greater inclusivity, namely “what”, “why”, “when”, “how” and “by whom”, are considered throughout the planning, delivery and operation phases of projects, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation arrangements. In doing so, potential benefits are identified and positive outcomes for society are achieved, leading to the development of infrastructure assets that create a more equitable environment.

Action Area 5: Private Sector Roles and Participation

This Action Area covers practices that create an enabling environment for the private sector to participate in inclusive infrastructure projects. The focus is on incentives and regulatory mechanisms that define the role of the private sector in infrastructure projects. In addition, this Action Area deals with practices designed to help overcome the market entry barriers faced by inclusive businesses (businesses owned by women, young people, minorities, etc.), enabling access to opportunities, employment and revenue creation on equal terms. The private sector can often be more entrepreneurial and agile than public sector entities, and is therefore well-positioned to integrate inclusivity innovations. Accordingly, the private sector can play an instrumental role in effectively delivering infrastructure projects, while achieving the inclusivity goals set by society.

The practices under this Action Area incentivise the private sector to make infrastructure projects more inclusive. This leads to infrastructure that is better aligned to social needs, and that is more accessible and affordable, resulting in greater public acceptance. Increased job creation and equal access to business and employment opportunities help to reduce income and gender inequality, leading to an overall reduction in social and economic disparity.

Action Area 6: Affordability and Optimising Finance

This Action Area considers practices that make infrastructure more affordable and accessible to all. A key practice under this Action Area is the writing and appraisal of the business case, which should aim to integrate measurable social parameters (e.g. income equality, labour participation, wealth distribution) and non-measurable social parameters (e.g. greater affinity toward community assets, social empathy, eagerness to improve).

To increase the use of infrastructure and enable universal access, there must be a balance between users' willingness and ability to pay, and the financial sustainability of the asset. There are tools available to address gaps between the two in relation to the overall cost of the infrastructure. Another aspect explored is the potential impact of integrating additional and complementary revenue opportunities into infrastructure developments.

Practices under this Action Area will help to ensure infrastructure developments have a positive social and economic impact, such as, for example, transport initiatives that increase people's freedom to move and enable previously under-served groups to benefit. Overall, reducing poverty, increasing employment and income opportunities, and improving access to training through increasing affordability and optimising finance, will all have positive and long-term impacts on society and the economy.

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

A coordinated, proactive and long-term approach that builds on existing practices by government, stakeholders and the international community is required to maximise inclusivity benefits within the Framework for Inclusive Infrastructure.

This section summarises key critical success factors to successfully implement inclusivity in major infrastructure projects. The section also highlights areas where further work could be useful to continue raising awareness and strengthen the inclusive infrastructure economic and business cases.