

**INTEGRATING GENDER INTO WORLD BANK  
FINANCED TRANSPORT PROGRAMS**

**CASE STUDY**

**VIETNAM**

**RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE INLAND WATERWAY  
PROJECT**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This case study is one in the series of case studies conducted in ten countries of the world for the project Integrating Gender in World Bank Financed Transport Programs. The case study seeks to reproduce the process of gender integration in Vietnam-Canada Inland Waterway Restructuring Project and draw lessons on how to successfully mainstream gender in a transport project/program in a transitional economy.

Restructuring of the Vietnam Inland Waterways Administration (VIWA) has been carried on since the mid 1990s in the national context of transition from the centrally planned economy to market. The Inland Waterway Project supported by CIDA (Canada) in the period 1998-2003 aimed to strengthen the capacity of VIWA to efficiently and effectively manage and develop inland waterways as a safe, accessible and economically and environmentally sustainable mode of transport. The Project also supported a number of small rural infrastructure constructions through the Community Level Infrastructure Fund to contribute in poverty reduction in poor communities along river banks.

The case study critically examines implementation, results and impacts of the two gender integration components of the Inland Waterways Project : (1) Gender mainstreaming in the restructuring of the transport authority agency VIWA. This component includes major activities such as preparation of a gender action plan; gender awareness raising and networking with national gender equality organisations; advocacy to address gender inequality in personnel policy, personnel hiring and nominating procedures during restructuring process; promoting women in management positions; ensuring women's participation in professional training activities. (2) Integration of gender in implementation of Community Level Infrastructure Fund. This component addressed issues such as setting and implementation of the gender criteria in small community-based transport and infrastructure development projects; ensuring benefits accruing to women during design and operation of infrastructural projects; promoting local voice, women's in particular and getting community involvement and support to local infrastructure development projects.

Based on analysis of gender differences in project outcomes, particularly in terms of opportunity, capability, security and empowerment of transport operators at different levels, transport users and those affected by transport, the case study reveals a number of factors influencing the success or failure of the gender equality initiatives in the national institutional context and draws useful lessons for integrating gender in transport development projects. The important lessons are as follows:

1. Building national ownership is the most important for the success and sustainability of gender equality intervention.
2. Adequate effort should be made to identify the right national organisation to carry on and support gender initiative after project/program completion.

3. Gender planning needs to be process oriented. It means that gender planning needs to be conducted as a process of communication, participation, and building commitment of different stakeholders rather than preparation of a well structured paper.
4. In a country such as Vietnam where centrally planning influence is still significant, complicated management and monitoring procedures do not support gender integration, because they reduce local voice and ownership, particularly women's voice.
5. Attention needs to be paid on how to make explicit gender criteria in each concrete context so that it works.
6. To promote women's participation at community level, achieving majority representation of women in management is always desirable.
7. It is important for gender strategy in transport to complement functional limitation of transport developers by adequate partnership with other authorised stakeholders in addressing gender issues.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CEA	Canadian Executing Agency
CFAW	Committee for the Advancement of Women
CFC	Community Fund Committee
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLIF	Community Level Infrastructure Fund
CPC	Commune People's Committee
CTL	CPCS Transcom Ltd.
DOT	Department of Transport (at provincial level)
DPC	District People Committee
FSC	Community Fund Steering Committee
GOV	Government of Vietnam
LUC	Land Use Certificate
MOT	Ministry of Transport (of Vietnam)
NCAFW	National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam
PAR	Public Administrative Reform
POA	Plan of Action
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
SOE	State owned enterprise(s)
SOT	Section of Transport (at district level)
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
VIWA	Vietnam Inland Waterway Administration
VWU	Vietnam Women's Union
WB	World Bank

## **1. METHODOLOGY**

This case study is one of ten in nine countries as part of the study ‘Integrating Gender in World Bank Financed Transport Programs’ being carried out by IC Net Limited. It follows the methodology designed at a workshop in March 2003 in London.

This case study analyzes gender integration in the Vietnam-Canada Rural Infrastructure Inland Waterway Project in the period 1998-2003 in the context of the national economy and macro-economic and sectoral policy. The study used two main sources of information:

- Secondary information which includes project documents, reports and other records such as photographs, pictures and maps produced by project stakeholders; legal documents, plans, strategy and studies related to the sector and concerning gender in Vietnam and elsewhere;
- Interviews, discussion and mail exchange with project official and staff, Ministry of Transport officials, consultants, donor representatives, transport operators, local officials, male and female key informants; and group discussion with male and female farmer groups in two beneficiaries communes. Methods used for field survey are detailed in Appendix 1.

## **2. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND MACRO CONTEXT**

### **2.1 THE ECONOMY**

Vietnam's gender development index (GDI) ranks it 101<sup>st</sup> in 1997 and 89<sup>th</sup> in 2001 among 146 countries, regardless of its remaining 120<sup>th</sup> in the world by GDP<sup>1</sup>. Economic reform has contributed significantly in gender equality improvement.

From 1991-2000, the economy grew at 7.5% per year and the poverty fell from 70% to 32%<sup>2</sup>. The national reform policies, particularly allocation of agricultural and forest land to farming households for long-term use, in combination with significant investment of the state and international community assistance, have enabled broad based hunger eradication and poverty reduction in rural areas. Development of infrastructure including electricity network, rural roads, irrigation system, educational and health care facilities has made notable improvement to rural livelihoods and living standards. Rural transport development projects, which are highly prioritized in the public investment program, have been carried out largely with loans from the Government of Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The new millenium brings Vietnam the new challenges of maintaining economic growth and achieving government commitments to poverty eradication, employment promotion and human and social development.

### **2.2 NATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY SYSTEM**

Vietnam's constitution and laws recognise gender equality as an important part of social equality. The 1992 Constitution of Vietnam states that "Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields - political, economic, cultural, social fields, and in the family. All acts of discrimination against women and all acts damaging women's dignity are strictly banned"<sup>3</sup>. To realize its commitment to gender equality, the Government of Vietnam (GOV) in 1993 set up the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) which is mandated to promote the status of women and to provide advice to the Prime Minister's Office on the development and implementation of the five-year National Plans of Action for Women's Advancement (POA). NCFAW has sub-branches (CFAW) in 50 ministries and sectors and all 61 provinces and cities. People's committees have not yet set up CFAWs in all districts.

At the local level, gender focal role is undertaken by the Women Union (WU), which is an NGO and has organizational structure spread widely from the central to provincial, district, commune and village levels. The WUs of different levels are authorized to represent officially women's interest and voice in national and local decision making processes; it receives regular financial support from the state. This is a notable advantage of Vietnam's institutional gender equality system which can be effectively used by development interventionists to mainstream gender.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 2001 and 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy, Government of Vietnam, 2002

<sup>3</sup> Constitution 1992, Article 63

Problems of empowerment of NCFAW and CFAW systems remain. Having no separate budget and no full-time members and staff, the CFAW is independent de jure, but de facto is mixed with WU. Chairmen of provincial CFAWs, who usually are a standing Vice-Chairman of the People's Committee or Vice-Minister of ministries, are often too busy to fulfill the CFAW's functions.

### **2.3 GENDER ISSUES AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

**Social attitudes and behavior.** Patriarchy remains the dominating factor in Vietnamese family functioning and women play deferential roles to men. The social attitudes expect women to play an adequate role in the family. Continued education of "feminist values", which relate mostly to housework skills, result in women spending twice as much time as men on housework. Women are the majority of the groups which worked 51-60 hours and more than 61 hours per week<sup>4</sup>.

**Economic reform empowered rural men much more than rural women.** Economic reform resulted in farming households acquiring the right of long term use of land and the power to make decisions on labor division, production, trade and investment that were previously assigned to agricultural cooperatives. However, reform policies which aim to strengthen household economy including issue of agricultural and forest land use certificates (LUC), regulation of civil transactions related to common property, provision of credit and delivery of agricultural extension services often target male heads of household. Most issued LUCs were in men's names and most commercial agricultural and forestry farms have a male owner. Women have problems when they need collateral for accessing loans and face more difficulties in accessing public agricultural extension services.

**Widespread lack of gender awareness in the state machinery.** Female state cadre retire earlier (55) than men (60), thus reducing promotion opportunities of many women. Personnel policies in state agencies have gender biased criteria which limit women's career development.

**Women are the minority in technical and professional fields and in local leadership.** Although the Party's 1994 Directive No.37 instructed all Party and government organizations to fill at least 20% of positions with women, many state organizations could not comply. Nationwide, 19% of technical and managerial positions were held by women.

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<sup>4</sup> Vietnam Living Standards Survey, GSO, 1993 and 1998

### **3. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 VIWA AND VIETNAM-CANADA RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE INLAND WATERWAY PROJECT**

Inland waterways accounts for about 30% of freight volume in Vietnam and serve 35-40 % of the population in some of the poorest areas<sup>5</sup>. The inland waterway sub-sector grew 8-10% annually over the last decade<sup>6</sup>. Transport on rivers, lakes, canals and inner bays, from shore to islands and between islands is managed by Vietnam Inland Waterway Administration (VIWA) which was established in 1993 under MOT.

VIWA is responsible for the following: preparation of draft laws, regulations and technical criteria and norms for inland waterway transportation; planning for the sub-sector including centrally- and locally- managed facilities; development and management of inland waterway infrastructure in the river system; training and licensing ship operators; and monitoring day-to-day traffic and safety of waterways. VIWA has inspector stations throughout the waterway system, inland port authorities, three navigation schools and a branch in the South. VIWA manages a number of ship-repairing, handling, construction, consulting and waterway signal production enterprises.

Holding too many functions and diversified units (especially the mishmash of state management and business functions) and unclear regulations about its responsibilities and powers complicate VIWA's operation. VIWA is shifting from a centrally planning agency to a state management unit operating in market conditions. The functionality of VIWA and its companies should be re-determined. The legal framework for inland waterways is incomplete and outdated for sub-sector development needs and should be developed. New market concepts (e.g. user fees and cost recovery) should be introduced and promoted for sustainable development of the sub-sector. VIWA has faced these main challenges since the mid 1990s.

Since 1996 VIWA has acted on an MOT decision by restructuring, in which the majority of its enterprises have been separated into self-financed state-owned companies. The public administrative reform (PAR) of VIWA continued in the late 1990s to make VIWA more capable and efficient. The VIWA PAR has received assistance from the Government of Canada since 1998 in the framework of the Project.

Interviews showed that different emphases were put on the Project during its formulation. VIWA leadership's emphasis was to upgrade its waterways management system and facilities, while CIDA's was to assist Vietnam in building its capacity and implementation of PAR. The project incorporated both expectations, after a series of discussions between CIDA and VIWA which lasted three years, from 1999 to 2002. Total project cost was USD 6.7 million of which the GOV contributed about 10%.

The project document gave the goal as *“to support Vietnam's reform process by strengthening the public sector capacity to develop and implement sound, equitable and environmentally sustainable*

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<sup>5</sup> CTL/ARA Inception Report, 7/1999

<sup>6</sup> Unicon Mid-term Assessment Report, 4/2002

*economic and social policies. The purpose of this project specifically is to strengthen the capacity of VIWA to efficiently and effectively manage and develop inland waterways as a safe, accessible and economically and environmentally sustainable mode of transport."*

The project has six main components:

- Formulation of recommendations and assistance to GOV to adapt VIWA to a market-oriented economy by commercialization of its operations;
- Development of management structures and systems/tools to increase VIWA's capacity to meet the challenges of a market-oriented economy;
- Provision of operations support and equipment (e.g., control systems, environmental monitoring, certification and inspection training, navigational aids, communications equipment);
- Pilot implementation of new market-oriented concepts;
- Development of a strategy for the nation-wide replication of pilot results; and
- Implementation of a Community Level Infrastructure Fund which will address poverty reduction in poor communities which depend on the rivers for their livelihood.

The project area for piloting the new inland waterway management system is 156 km Quang Ninh - Pha Lai corridor, which spreads in four Northern provinces - Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, Hai Duong and Bac Giang.

Execution and implementation of the Project was undertaken by CPCS Transcom Ltd (CTL), a Canadian private company which acted as the secretariat of the Project Steering Committee with representation of GOV and CIDA. CTL's responsibility extensive - from provision of management, technical and professional services for project implementation to control and monitoring disbursement of CIDA inputs and reporting. VIWA was assigned to implement the project with CTL and ensure availability of staff and specialists as well as government inputs.

This institutional arrangement predetermined relatively passive participation of the Vietnamese counterparts and poor ownership of the Project by VIWA (and MOT) and created some constraints to institutional reform, regardless of huge efforts and innovations by the CTL consultants to get VIWA and MOT counterparts involved and to adopt reform initiatives. This institutional factor also influenced implementation of the gender strategy developed for VIWA (as described in more details in Section 4.1).

Overall, the achievements by the Project and its results within available resources and time frame were significant. A management information system (MIS) connected with a geographic information system were set up in VIWA helped improve decision making; the river navigation and signal system was upgraded so that vessel movement at night became possible and travel time in the pilot corridor was reduced from 3 to 2 days and the number of traffic accidents from 10.1 per 1,000 vessels in 1997 to 4.8 in 2001 while the number of inspection stations and staff required for each station fell significantly; a majority of VIWA staff improved their knowledge and understanding of new management and technology after training courses; awareness of environment and gender issues was improved; 38 small rural infrastructure projects (e.g. piers and ramps, road, boats, schools and kindergartens, health stations) were completed for residents of river bank communes; and the Law on Inland Waterway was drafted.

The Project's results and impacts in organizational and institutional areas were poorer. The April 2002 evaluation by Unicon recorded that new management systems and procedures introduced by the Project were not implemented, despite training and other preparation and installation of the MIS. The VIWA organization structure designed by the Project was not approved by higher ranking MOT and organizational change did not happen. The Draft Law on Inland Waterway, to support important institutional changes of VIWA, was yet not on the agenda of the National Assembly.

The evaluators pointed out important factors explaining success and failure of the Project. Those important to exploring gender impacts and lessons learned were:

- The Project was significantly influenced by slowness of PAR at national level.
- At the sector level, the adequate partnership between MOT and other donors could improve coordination of assistance and make it easier to define and monitor MOT's participation and responsibilities in projects. Poor partnership between CIDA and MOT in 2000-01 influenced the Project adversely.
- Failure to develop and maintain a strong and effective partnership network of crucial stakeholders reduced the Project's achievement. The results requiring VIWA organization or legal responsibility changes were troublesome when VIWA was not authorized to make changes or MOT did not commit and participate adequately. The main stakeholders of the Project were VIWA, MOT, CIDA and Canadian Executing Agency (CEA), while others with influence were MOF, MOSTE and the WB-funded Inland Waterway Project.
- Efforts to achieve broad participation of VIWA and MOT staff in workshops, working groups and training courses contributed actively to the Project's success, making MOT and other government agencies more aware of the importance of inland waterways and the need for change in the sub-sector. However, there was unclear definition of responsibility and accountability between CTL and VIWA, with the latter defining the relationship as customers rather than partnership.
- Implementation of CLIF with local participation may have led to increased cost and slowed project progress; however, it helped communities to get experience and improve sustainability and could stimulate further investment of domestic partners.
- Project achievement in cross-cutting issues such as gender and environment was limited by lack of continuous effort and monitoring.

### **3.2 GENDER ISSUES IN VIWA**

VIWA had in 1999 a total of 3,570 employees, of whom only 12% were women. At the Hanoi head office, women accounted for 16% of the 70 staff. Women in the sub-sector usually work in junior and support positions such as administrator, secretary, accountant, junior specialist and worker. They also undertake unskilled jobs which require physical strength such as carrying loads to and from vessels, or expose them to hazards such as scrape rash from ship shells in ship repair. No women worked as river inspectors at VIWA stations. Before the Project started, there was only one woman in the management team of VIWA - a head of section in the South Branch.

A brief survey of VIWA's head office revealed that both male and female officials considered working conditions in the sub-sector not suitable for women. A particular problem for women was low security caused by poor enforcement of traffic rules and laws. Women were considered unsuitable for the inspector jobs because the work involved settlement of conflict in which men were

often rude and violent. Inability to make long travel and leave home overnight was said to be another constraint to women. Social attitudes expecting women to be responsible for children's care and family chores were very popular among VIWA staff, though work requirements facing women were considered similar to those facing men.

Gender was traditionally ignored in VIWA recruitment and personnel policy. Sex-desegregated statistics were not collected and updated. Hidden gender biases against women in its promotion policy contributed to very low proportions of women in management positions. VIWA's headquarters had no women in the management team when the Project started. There was no doubt that gender issues were not on the agenda of the day of VIWA leadership when formulating the Project.

Formally, VIWA had three organizations with gender equality and women's advancement functions - CFAW, WU and the Female Labour Affairs Section (FLAS) of the Trade Union. The president of WU was also head of FLAS and a CFAW member and was responsible for all activities "for women" in VIWA. Responsibilities and functions of CFAW, WU and FLAS were unclear and contained overlaps and individual relations were more workable than institutional linkages. By the rules, VIWA's CFAW reported on the situation of female labor to MOT's CFAW annually.

The staff of the gender equality system considered gender as women affairs and gender activities limited mainly within women themselves, such as monitoring implementation of the labor code for females, dissemination of information among women, provision of WU small loans to poor female employees for development of household supplementary income generating activities and visits to sick employees.

The Project was the first attempt to mainstream gender in VIWA with an initiative from a donor and consultants. Though it was not explicitly included as an objective of the Project, CIDA's policy on gender equality ensured the issues were addressed at VIWA throughout project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. An input of several days' international gender specialist and two month national gender trainer was included in the Project to achieve better gender equality in VIWA's restructuring. The full-time Project Manager was assigned a function to contribute in gender equality activities and monitoring implementation of these activities.

### **3.3 GENDER ISSUES IN COMMUNES ALONG RIVERS**

About 350,000 people, of whom women are more than 50%, live in the pilot corridor of VIWA project. A preliminary assessment of VIWA concluded that about 70% of those working in inland waterway transport were poor and low income people<sup>7</sup>.

People along river banks made their living mainly from cultivating rice and other crops. In a few communes in coastal areas and island, fishing is the main economic activity. Rivers and canals serve as a cheap mode of transport for agricultural products. Some better-off households have small and medium sized vessels and engage in transport of construction materials, sand and coal and passing passengers through rivers. Another small group of households goes fishing offshore.

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<sup>7</sup> Inland Waterways Policy Workshop organized in Hanoi by VIWA in coordination with CPCS Transcom Ltd./ARA Consulting Group (division of KPMG), 9-13/3/1999

It was unusual for women to work as ship operators and more unusual to be captain who needed a license. Usually, women prepare meals for male operators and fishers in ships. Female farmers carry their paddy and other agricultural products in small boats and for those who residing in alluvial plains surrounded by river, small boat is the only available means to carry their children to schools. Boat women also engaged in selling foodstuffs and small wares to people in big ships. Safety in flood seasons was always a concern for small boats and accidents were not very rare<sup>8</sup>. Rural landing stages normally were a ground ramp or poorly constructed with stones, creating huge difficulties for passengers and farmers with heavy load especially during wet seasons.

Inter-communal roads along river banks are no better than in other Vietnamese rural areas - mainly ground paths and in some remote communes they were in very poor condition, contributing to the villagers' isolation. A few households own small locally-made vans and motorbikes which usually have a male driver. Most households use bicycles as their main means for travel and market of agricultural product outside the village. Male and female farmers often go 15-20 km by basket bicycle to sell products in market centers. Women were the majority of basket-bicycle traders; their work was physically hard and long.

Lack of an interior field road system is an added difficulty for female farmers who have to shoulder paddy from their land to main roads or nearest waterway. As paddy land was highly valuable, farmers narrowed field edges to as little as 30 cm.

Men dominate in communal decision-making, especially about infrastructure. Usually, there are 1-2 women among 20-30 staff of a commune people's committee and they are in junior positions<sup>9</sup>. Female village heads are rare.

Gender issues of the communes along the pilot corridor were recognized by both Vietnamese and Canadian partners and directly addressed by the Project in the framework of the CLIF. The CLIF selection criteria explicitly set that "Priority will be given to projects that improve opportunities for disadvantaged groups to increase their productive capacity, particularly on women, children and disadvantaged groups."

There was different level of gender understanding and support between stakeholders involved in CLIF activities. CIDA's policy was to mainstream gender and women in development programs and change behavioral norms of organizations to more gender- sensitive. Vietnamese counterparts appreciated delivery of physical infrastructure as a poverty reduction measure which automatically leads to improvement of both men's and women's situations, especially women and children and did not pay much attention to participation and empowerment of local women as well as men.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, a woman in Kenh Giang commune during focus group discussion said that she lost a son in a boat accident.

<sup>9</sup> Most recent survey of 6 communes in four provinces throughout country found that women account for 9.8% of total 123 commune people committee staff. ADB-MARD TA3831, Dec 2002.

## **4. PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Project had two almost independent components of gender activity: (i) gender mainstreaming in VIWA; and (ii) integration of gender in implementing CLIF. Each component gave a different example of how gender was integrated in different parts of the transport sector - the first in transport authority agency and the second among transport developers, operators, users and those influenced by transport activities.

### **4.1 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN VIWA**

The Project's Inception Report gave the goal of CIDA's policy on women in development and gender equity as promoting and facilitating participation of women as equal partners in the sustainable development of their societies. Keeping with CIDA's policy, CTL addressed gender issues from the very beginning of project design and planning, using sound methodology. Since the first half 1999, the gender strategy of the Project was developed by the international gender specialist in cooperation with the Field Project Manager. Primary baseline data on female and male employees of VIWA were collected and analyzed; documents were reviewed; interviews were conducted with a number of main decision makers in organization and personnel management and women's advancement to assess the gender situation in VIWA and identify issues to be addressed in the Project. The Inception Report set out an ambitious but concrete gender plan which included two phases:

- The first phase focused on preparation of a detailed action plan. Main activities included: collection and analysis of baseline data; orientation of all technical assistance personnel about CIDA's policy on gender equality; networking with VWU and NCFAW; training of professional skills for women. Analysis of restructuring opportunities and possible negative impacts on women that needed to be mitigated was planned.
- The second phase focused more on mainstreaming gender in VIWA's restructuring process. Detailed activities are:
  - (i) Revise administrative procedures concerning hiring, nominating, etc. to make sure of equality between men and women and follow up on female nominations to positions in VIWA's restructuring process;
  - (ii) Review any systemic discrimination to female employment, wages and/or training opportunities at VIWA;
  - (iii) Contrast employment rates by gender and category vis-à-vis other similar organizations;
  - (iv) Identify focal points outside of VIWA headquarters through VWU in meeting the challenges of ensuring adequate representation of females in the community infrastructure fund.
  - (v) Promote VIWA as a viable employment option for new recruits.
  - (vi) Ensure women participation in all training activities;
  - (vii) Launch a gender awareness training programme for male/female employees.
  - (viii) Identify any notable gender gaps and provide activities to minimise the impact on female employees.

- (ix) Compare the conditions for women before (maternity leave, childcare etc) and after the project and report on progress result.

Second phase activities were more important and more challenging. Many gender activities were linked closely with the intended changes of VIWA's organization, procedures and norms, especially (i), (ii), (v) and (viii). Feasibility of these gender activities depended very much on the VIWA's adoption of difficult restructuring measures. Perhaps, foreseeing the possible resistance to change at the end of Phase 1, the people responsible for gender equality of the Project gradually halted activities needing institutional and organizational change, turning to target more on individuals.

The Project Gender Equity Action Plan 2000-03, developed in November 1999, concentrated on gender training and survey of the labor force. Institutional and organizational changes included: (for Activity i) a review of recruitment plans and VIWA's targets for new positions and finding possibility for assignment of women; and (for Activity v) a report on VIWA's recruitment of 5% additional women and an additional activity to include women in 4-6 project working groups.

Gender activities were busy in the first half of the project implementation and the reports suggest the gender action plan physically was fulfilled. With the training and study tour criteria explicitly encouraging women's participation, female participants in training courses reached 21%<sup>10</sup>, higher than female proportion in the labor force. VIWA appointed two more women to lead MIS and financial sections, increasing the number of women in the management team to three. A majority of management staff of VIWA received gender awareness training and knew that CIDA had a policy on gender equality. Gender criteria were included and practically promoted in implementation of CLIF. These results, however, were far below the initial expectation in the gender strategy of the Project.

In the second half of the Project, gender activities calmed down. The section on gender was taken out from the semi-annual reports since the fourth (of a total of 7). The gender section of the Project Final Report Draft was empty until May 2003.

The gender strategy for VIWA was implemented differently to that in other ODA projects in Vietnam. What the gender strategy for VIWA achieved was relatively encouraging. The first step of raising gender awareness through training and promotional activities is easier as it involves individuals and depends on only the project resources and efforts. Nationally, social gender awareness and attitude are supportive in general. However, resistance increases when interventionists are to tackle gender biases in organization procedures, norms and policy. Much more time and effort are required and that not always can be overseen by interventionists.

What is noteworthy is that the VIWA counterparts and staff were reluctant to confirm whether they had any substantial contribution or participation in gender equality activities. In their description, the project gender strategy was developed by the international consultants and VIWA counterparts played a passive role of informants and workshop participants. Nobody even had seen the gender equity action plan in Vietnamese. Poor communication limited opportunity for many women and men to contribute. Lack of VIWA's ownership of the gender strategy limited the impacts and sustainability of the gender activities as Section 5 describes in more detail.

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<sup>10</sup> My own calculation based on reports on training activities.

## 4.2 INTEGRATION OF GENDER IN IMPLEMENTATION OF CLIF

The Community Level Infrastructure Fund (CLIF), of CAD 800,000 Canadian, was designed to increase the productive capacity of the community along river banks and to improve their access to social services by funding small-scale waterways infrastructure and other social facility development projects proposed by communities. The expected impacts at the end of the project are: (i) improved community level waterway; and (ii) improved communications between the inland waterways inspectors and users and people living along waterways.

Women and children were the main beneficiaries of CLIF-funded projects. Selection criteria of CLIF gave proposed weightings (of 100) to proposed projects of:

- 25 if beneficiary community is located close to the pilot corridor of the Project (within 5 km of the river);
- 25 for improving opportunity for disadvantaged groups (poor women and children);
- 20 for improving communication between VIWA and users;
- 20% for capacity of community group to manage the proposed project; and
- 10 for having local contribution by cash or kind in proposed project.

All successful projects must have a Community Project Management Committee of five members, of whom at least two or three are women.

CLIF has several levels of management. The highest decision maker, at the centre, was the Community Fund Steering Committee (FSC) chaired by VIWA. Under FSC, the CLIF Management Committee was established for day-to-day management of the fund. As CTL was not professional in managing small-scale participatory projects at commune level, an NGO (Oxfam Quebec) was contracted to act as CTL's representative to monitor quality of construction.

Since VIWA does not have a community development function, it relied on provincial people committees (PPC) hosting CLIF projects. Each PPC, having its own investment and ODA management procedures, assigned a different sectoral stakeholder to CLIF. They were the Department of Transport (DOT) in Hai Duong Province, Department of Investment and Planning (DPI) in Quang Ninh province, District Section of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs (SOLISA) in Thuy Nguyen District, Hai Phong Province. Only Bac Ninh Province, which has just 7 km pilot corridor, was represented by a commune people's committee (CPC). Management at local level was more sophisticated, when some provincial management delegated part of monitoring responsibility to district people's committee (DPC) and sectoral management (e.g., District Section of Transport). A contractor in Hai Duong province, for example, had several levels of monitoring: Fund Management Committee, DOT, DPC and SOT, CPC and may be Community Group. CLIF's organization chart is in the next page, with no distinction between provincial and district levels.

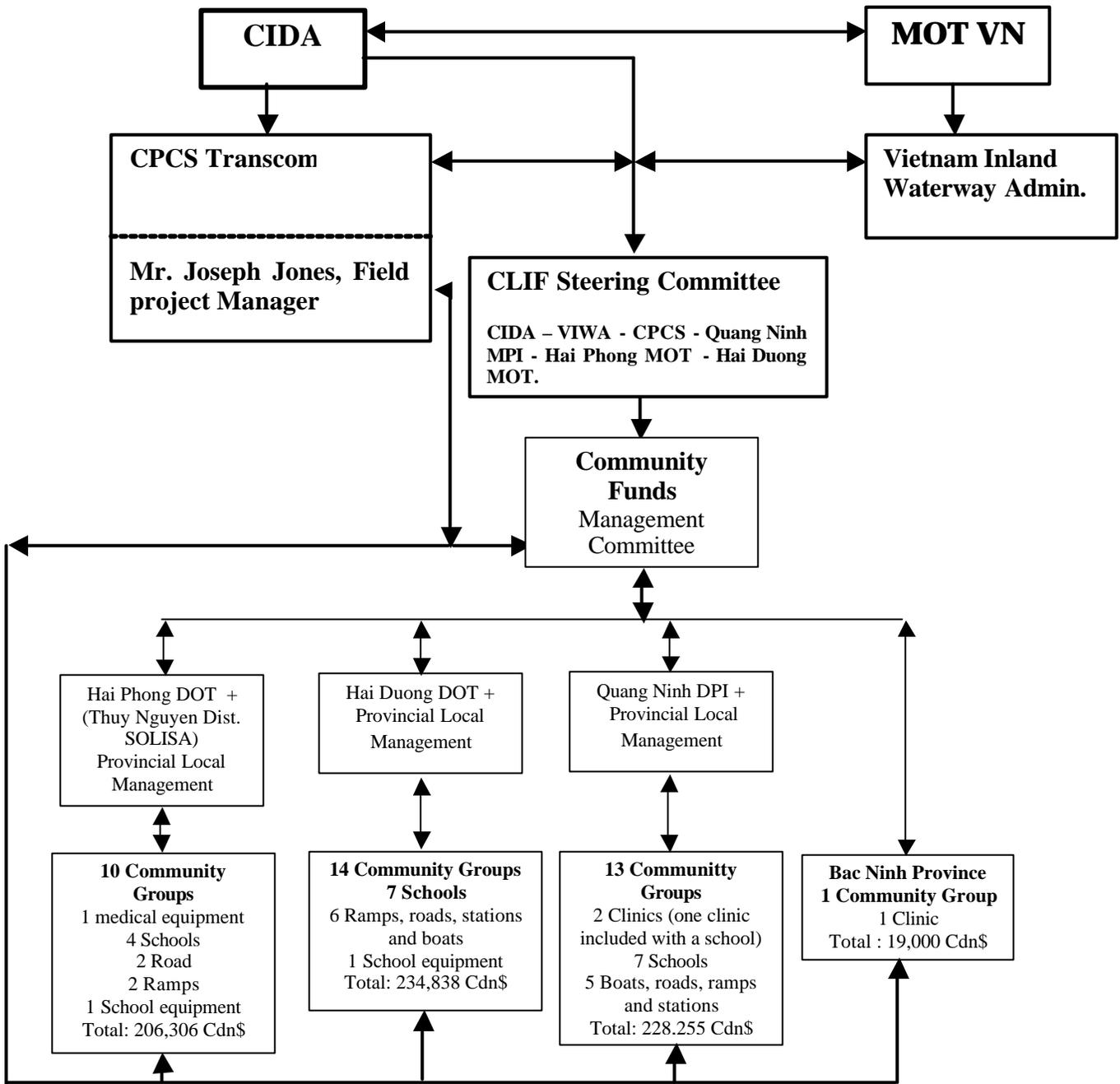
There were several women in FSC (one from VIWA, one from CTL and one from a relevant ministry) and in the Fund Management Committee (one from Oxfam Quebec). However, there was no female member in any provincial local management.

A participatory approach was followed consistently in project selection. Workshops were organized in provinces eligible for funding. Provincial and district officials were invited to attend workshops,

received brochures about CLIF criteria and calls for project proposals. Commune officials were not invited to these workshops. Later, the Fund Manager discussed project proposals directly with commune representatives, visits were made to communes and the best proposals were short-listed and submitted to SFC for approval. This participatory procedure ensured that most of the projects selected had met the prioritized needs of the communities.

With several levels of monitoring and the higher level being more powerful, in terms of both decision-making and finance, local voices were less important and women's participation was almost unnecessary. The Fund Management and provincial officials had much better technical expertise than commune staff. Although there was some variation, CLIF projects achieved very high quality of construction and contract management, much higher than its achievement in building beneficiaries' management capacity and communication between waterway inspectors and people.

### CLIF Organization Chart<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Cited from the Report on CLIF Implementation, Community Fund Management Committee.

During implementation, the Fund Management made 560 monitoring trips, about 15 trip per school or pier construction. A similar amount of monitoring was done by provincial and district management together. Taking into account the size and value of the projects (CAD 21,000 on average including management), some monitoring activities were obviously excessive. This excessive monitoring did not bring waterway inspector and people as close as if they were joint monitor. If the latter happened, local women would acquire an opportunity to get experiences as an equal partner in community development, rather than be passive beneficiaries.

Not many Community Management Committees have 2-3 females among their 5 members, as project selection criteria requested. Both Hiep Cat and Kenh Giang communes which we visited had just one female member - the WU president - in their management committees. This was less important than that these women representatives could attend just a couple of meetings. Women participated as passive beneficiaries, rather than an equal partner in projects.

There was noteworthy difference in gender roles in two communes visited. Although women were minorities in management committees of both communes, the WU in Hiep Cat commune made visible support and participation in implementation, unlike their counterparts in Kenh Giang commune. The WU, together with Youth Union, mobilized its members to contribute 1,400 work days to help school construction. Clearly, there are different ways to get local women to participate and be empowered.

Better ownership of Hiep Cat PPC in CLIF infrastructure projects played an important role in project success and in getting women and WU involved. Evidence of good ownership was that Hiep Cat CPC had great success in solving problems of compensation for land lost in road construction while, in Kenh Giang commune, land compensation created huge difficulties for the commune and provincial management.

CLIF did not have a target to create significant economic benefit for people on river banks. Projects were given to bidding contractors and local workers were not required.

## 5. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN OUTCOMES

### 5.1 OUTCOMES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN VIWA

#### **Empowerment**

The gender strategy had less impact on VIWA's policy making and management behavior than expected. The most significant and sustainable outcome is increased gender awareness of VIWA management and staff who attended gender training. Increased attention is paid to the role and activities of CFAW in VIWA which, in 2003, prepared reports on female labor force quality and an action plan to year 2005. While the quality of reports needs improvement, that monitoring of the female labor situation became a day-to-day activity of CFAW is an important outcome.

VIWA CFAW's action plan targets increases in women in the management team from 3 to 6 by 2005 and in proportions of women in VIWA management (section level and higher) and leadership of mass organizations to 30%. CFAW continues supporting female cadres to improve their professional capacity by attending training.

Training outcomes are attached to individuals who were trained and for organizations may not be sustain when trained individuals leave. Most responsibilities for women's advancement and gender activities in VIWA traditionally were concentrated in one person - WU president who is also head of FLAS and a CFAW member. She was one of the two gender focal points and received intensive gender orientation and training. She retired in early 2003 and VIWA again had a new, untrained gender focal point.

The recent CFAW report and action plan neither promoted any of the project recommendations nor inherited any targets recommended by the Gender Strategy.

#### **Opportunity**

Project training and study tours improved the professional capacity of a number of cadres who may consequently get better career opportunities. A total of 262 persons (55 females) took part in professional and gender training courses and study tours. Opportunity was not spread equally between men and women and traditional selection criteria of VIWA were the decisive factor. Training on management and planning, for example, was designed for managers and selection criteria therefore first on position held, rather than *ability* or *potential* to work in management positions, or gender. With almost no women in management positions of VIWA, there was only one female participant among 40 at a management training course. Similarly, only one female staff - the interpreter - could attend each study tour.

Career opportunity for similarly trained female and male participants differs, depending on personnel policy/ criteria of the organization. This implies that the Project's training outcome is reduced by its failure to influence recruitment and promotion policy and criteria of VIWA.

Recent updated data on VIWA's labor force show that men enjoy more employment opportunity than women during VIWA's restructuring, although there is some improvement. From 1998 to 2003, total employees in VIWA increased by 12.3%, from 3,570 to 4,016 and females from 428 (12%) to 631 (15.7%). Men filled 243 (about 55%) of 446 newly created places.

## 5.2 GENDER OUTCOME OF CLIF PROJECTS

CLIF's 38 small-scale projects for 44 communes potentially benefit the more than 260,000 people who reside in their project area and include 128,000 women (49.2%) and 73,000 school-age children (28%). Numbers of travelers using CLIF rural roads, piers, ramps, stations and boats are higher. The name VIWA has become familiar to all residents of communes, though some had not previously heard of it.

### Opportunity

One of CLIF's main objectives is to improve people's access to social services through improving commune level waterways. This objective has been achieved by considering the priorities of all stakeholders, especially by village group discussions.

Roads, piers, stations and boats all increased people's access to workplaces in neighboring communes, schools and market centers. This, in turn, brought about new work or education opportunities and economic benefits from better trading and higher prices for products. The outcomes differ for men and women subject according to the division of labor, their traditional modes of transport and power sharing in households. How transport infrastructure is managed and operated also influences how opportunity spreads between males and females.

#### **Box 1. How opportunity may come to men and women**

In Hiep Cat commune, women have traditional supplementary work as metal waste traders. They drive basket bikes to neighboring communes to buy unused metal for sale to wholesale traders. To do this work, they have to cross rivers everyday by boat, with their bikes. Another group of women and men work in brick kilns on the other side of the river. Villagers said that, with the new CLIF boat, their waiting time at river banks was reduced, especially at peak hour and if wish, those working in brick kilns now can come home for lunch. Basket bike women get to river banks from boats easier with constructed piers. Overall, improvement of waterway encouraged more travel by waterway.

Hiep Cat CPC contracted operation of a new boat funded by CLIF to four males. Local women were reportedly can not operate this boat because they have no training and no license. With increased passengers, the CPC recently could increase annual contribution of operators to the commune budget from VND 4 million to 7 million (about USD 500).

Kenh Giang commune a few years ago was isolated because road conditions were very poor. Provincial officials, when having to visit communes, had to inform them some days earlier, by sending a boat. Road improvement benefits especially those farmers who have fruit to sell in the district center (which is 20 km away) because they can get much higher prices. Men obviously have better opportunity than women from road improvement, because they own and operate all existing motorbikes and locally-made vans and will do so for the near future.

Kenh Giang CPC decided that the new boat funded by CLIF will be used only for community purposes such as tour for school children, WU, FU, marriage proposal rituals and funerals because fuel is not affordable to CPC or households if the boat carries just a couple of children every day. Only one male operator was recruited, on part-time basis. Mothers continue carrying their kids in tiny boats from islands to inland schools. They worry about safety of children in flood season.

### **Capability**

CLIF funded 16 transport projects, construction of 18 schools and kindergartens and one commune health center and a school and medical equipment for 3 communes. These projects aim to enhance human capital and quality of life of the beneficiaries.

The ownership of local communes in overall funding was high, subject to their contributing 29% of total value of projects of which 10% were in labor.

Time limits reportedly had significant impacts on achieving an increased local management capability which was highly prioritised by CLIF at the beginning. Shortage of time, partially because the CLIF managers were not local residents and travel took much of their working time, reduced communications between system regulators and users and population which were direct expected outcomes.

### **Security**

CLIF small infrastructure was not expected to help security issues. However, it had observable impacts on increased boat passenger safety, as reduced boat overloading at peak hours and created better movement of passengers from boat to river banks. This was especially observable in where passengers had to step into water before reaching the bank. For women with basket bikes, piers were of great value.

### **Box 2. Building capability with local ownership**

Hiep Cat school construction was the best example of how CLIF assistance could encourage local participation in rural infrastructure development, build local capability and create local ownership. The main lesson in building local women's capability is that interventionists should strongly believe in their capacity.

Unlike some projects which were identified by or with substantial assistance of provincial planners, Hiep Cat school construction was an initiative purely of the villagers and CPC, which was happily met by CLIF. The commune's old school, built in 1972, was seriously degraded. When the first opportunity for CPC leaders to meet CLIF project identification team came, they proposed requested assistance to rebuild the school, regardless of whether the proposal might be a priority for CLIF. Villagers, especially women, expressed warm welcome and support for school construction. The CPC called for money contributions from households and local mass organizations including WUs and Youth Unions took responsibility to mobilize women and children to contribute labor to demolish the old school and refit the schoolyard. In total, the local population contributed 1,400 work-days and 23% of the total (CAD 54,972) construction cost. The teachers' collective contributed labor and the dean took over responsibility for building a brick fence and for and maintenance.

Although time pressures prevented the CLIF management team investing substantially in building local management capability as planned, frequent communication and exchange during implementation had observable impacts of increased confidence and participatory attitudes of both female and male farmers. Farmers were more aware of project management issues and gave higher importance to the role of population groups in making decisions and monitoring the project. The CPC, with enhanced experience, then initiated self-funded projects to upgrade village road network to enable movement for motorcycles and small vehicles.

The provincial DOT, persuaded by the success of Hiep Cat school construction, decided to provide the commune some additional funding for infrastructure development.

Better school and kindergarten conditions in 18 communes reduced women's time for childcare, thus increasing their independence to certain extent.

We observed an example of a new-built school perhaps creating worries for children's safety. The school construction site in Kenh Giang commune was reportedly selected by DOT specialists. The site was in a narrow fringe of mountain, with wonderful views of the river and delta below. However, as the construction area occupied most of the land, children had a very small playground, just on the mountain edge. This would not happen if women were to decide where their children were schooled.

### **Empowerment**

CLIF aimed to build up relationship and communication between waterway regulators and users and people along waterways. A network of supportive stakeholders was developed for management of the fund. This included MOT, VIWA, CIDA, CPCS, Oxfam Quebec, people's committees at all levels and a number of provincial sectoral agencies assigned by PPC to monitor projects, such as DOT of Hai Duong Province, DPI of Quang Ninh Province and the Labor Section of Thuy Nguyen District, Hai Phong Province. In Vietnam, where the influence of central planning, principles and practices is still notable at all levels, this system of multiple monitoring may lead to unexpected outcomes: it reduced the importance and voice of waterway direct regulators (local inspectors), users and women.

### **Box 3. Building partnership with central planning heritage**

Kenh Giang commune is a belt of land spreading along Kinh Thay river. Land in the commune is extremely limited, because the majority of the population migrated from other provinces. The commune is divided by river into two villages: Nam Hai is an inland village and Tan Lap is in an island surrounded by river. Kenh Giang is among the poorest and remotest communes of Hai Duong Province; therefore CLIF supported the commune with four infrastructure projects: a road, two schools and an inland waterway project which consisted of a boat, two piers and waiting stations at the piers.

Hai Duong Province DOT actively supported Kenh Giang CPC in design of project proposals, selection of construction sites and dealing with land compensation and clearance for construction. Kenh Giang CPC leadership, with full regard to DOT, followed the advice although sometimes not agreeing.

Kenh Giang people found that, due to the stone embankments built by the Inland Waterways Project along the river bank in a neighboring commune, the river flow changed and their cultivated land was to be eroded seriously (illustrated in Kenh Giang map). In the last flood season, about 0.5 ha of the island was swept away. People estimated that after 3 years, about 3.5 ha, or 1/3 of Tan Lap Island's cultivated land, will be eroded. Nam Hai villagers will lose some of their cultivated area for improvement of national waterways.

Kenh Giang CPC leaders said that they understand the importance of the national transport system and support the government project. However, they had issued "the Red Book" (land use certificate) on this land.

VIWA officials said that if Kenh Giang people had any claim for land compensation, then the responsibility should be borne by the PPC and DOT, because VIWA was authorized for inland waterway and the province was informed about the project activities.

Kenh Giang farmers passively waited to become an issue on the official agenda.

Most interesting is that one CLIF new-built pier and station is located just in the area to be eroded away within several years.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Project includes both integration of gender at a transport regulating agency and promoting women among transport users and those affected by transport. It concerns public administrative reform in a country in transition from central planning to a market economy. This case, therefore, is rich in lessons, both success and failure, in gender integration in the transport sector.

### **Lesson 1: Building national ownership is most important for the success and sustainability of gender equality intervention**

Failure of the Project to strengthen and promote VIWA's existing gender equality machinery seriously limits the success and sustainability of the gender strategy. The Project's recommendations will be workable and sustainable only if VIWA and its CFAW are convinced to adopt them for implementation and are committed institutionally in a clear Terms of Reference for VIWA's CFAW and its members.

### **Lesson 2 Adequate effort should be made to identify the right national organization to continue gender initiatives after project/program completion**

There are different organizations with gender equality mandate in Vietnam. In VIWA and MOT, these are CFAW, WU and FLAS. In communes, there are WU and other state organizations and NGOs (e.g., CPC, FU, Youth Union), credit revolving groups and other community groups. Depending awareness and commitment, these organizations can be made feasible and sustainable channels for women's voices and gender issues to be heard and included in the policy of the organization.

Interventionists should find ways to advocate gender equality and get support from the national gender equality policy and sectoral women's advancement networks. Networking can be very fruitful when transport developers share gender equality mainstreaming efforts with local committees for socio-economic development.

### **Lesson 3: Gender planning should be process oriented - conducted as a process of communication, participation and building commitment of different stakeholders, rather than preparation of a well structured paper**

Addressing gender issues means, primarily, changing gender awareness, attitudes and behavior of stakeholders, with communication, exchange and participation as crucial elements. Best results and impact in integrating gender are achieved by building and maintaining strong networks of supportive stakeholders. Widely disseminated clear objectives and simple action plans are more useful than comprehensive paperwork.

### **Lesson 4: Where the influence of central planning influence is significant, such as in Vietnam, complex management and monitoring procedures do not support gender integration, because they reduce local voice and ownership, particularly women's voice**

In the Vietnam context, provincial policies and procedures are decisive factors influencing the success of community participatory approaches. A community development activity would provide better opportunity for women to participate if it is decided and run by the local commune or village. It is easier to complement lack of technical or management expertise of the commune staff than overcome resistance of the bureaucratic procedures to women's participation.

**Lesson 5: Explicit gender criteria should be set for all activities**

To ensure that women have opportunity to participate management training or management study tour in an organization where women are mostly in junior positions, such as VIWA, a quota of places for women-only can be set.

**Lesson 6: Majority representation of women in management is desirable to promote women's participation at community level**

Women usually have weaker voices and less confidence than men, leading them to contribute better when in the majority.

**Lesson 7: Gender strategy to complement functional limitation of transport developers should include partnership with other stakeholders**

VIWA/ MOT structures reflect functional/ technical division of tasks in management at different levels. These functional settings may constraint VIWA/ MOT in tackling comprehensive social issues such as gender which require a combination of social, economic and technical authority and intervention. To overcome this institutional constraint, it is important that gender integration in transport programs gives an adequate role to building partnership between transport agencies and other stakeholders (e.g. people's committee, CFAW, WU).

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