

6. PROJECT PLANNING AND DESIGN

An initial environmental examination (IEE) and social impact assessment (SIA) were carried out by the feasibility study consultants for the entire Road 9 section (Maunsell, 1998). The IEE was later extended to encompass a series of seven Rural Community Access Improvement (RCAI) roads between Xeno and the Lao-Vietnamese border.

The IEE concluded that the overall environmental and social impacts of the Project could be mitigated to acceptable levels through implementation of clearly identified mitigation measures and that a detailed environmental impact assessment (EIA) was not warranted (ADB 1999, pg. 23). As the Project involved upgrading and rehabilitating of existing infrastructure it was assessed that any potentially negative social impacts would be manageable without the introduction of major social interventions. The IEE did, however, highlight a requirement for engagement of a qualified consultant to provide adequate supervision of the construction contractor. The consultant would be responsible for:

- assisting in design, commissioning, implementation and conduct of a baseline survey at the commencement of the Project and developing a monitoring framework for poverty indicators;
- development and implementation of education campaigns on STDs and HIV/AIDS for construction workers; and
- identifying potentially adverse environmental and social impacts associated with improved transportation in the East-West Corridor and recommending mitigation measures for implementation.

A review of the Project Consultant's Technical Proposal indicated that they were not intending to conduct a gender analysis for the above (Kampsax 1999).

This Section describes how the Project was designed with particular attention to the interventions incorporating gender specific elements.

6.1 Opportunity

The Project's design identifies the general opportunities available to both men and women as a consequence of the upgrade and rehabilitation of the road corridor, as outlined below. The design does not, however, specifically address their different needs and the potential requirement for gender based interventions.

6.1.1 Access to the Transport System

Current road conditions make travel expensive and uncomfortable. Road improvements will lead to more frequent and reliable public transport, cheaper travel, shorter travel times and more comfortable traveling conditions.

The road network of the project area is limited in length and accessibility, particularly in areas away from Road 9. Only 28% of the villages have all-year road access, 55% have access during the dry season only and 17% have no access. All-year transport services are available in only 17% of all villages, while 3% of villages have transport services in only the dry season and 80% have no transport services (MCTPC, 1996).

Transport services include buses, trucks and boats. The most important private means of transport are bicycles and handcarts, followed by non-motorized boats. The mobility of women is primarily limited to bicycle or walking, with limited opportunity to operate motorized means of transport. The improvement of road infrastructure and transport services increases the mobility of women, particularly during the wet season.

Men are commonly responsible for transportation of construction materials and bulk produce from fields to houses, storage facilities or points of sale. Men access markets for agricultural inputs such

as tools and chemical fertilizer. Improvement of roads and transport services facilitates the transportation of heavy and cumbersome loads.

6.1.2 Travel Conditions

Time savings and more comfortable traveling conditions will contribute positively to the quality of life for women as they go about completing their day-to-day responsibilities which include farm work, marketing, household work, childcare and other reproductive activities. For example, rural women and girls use roads for collecting fuel-wood and water. Improved roads facilitate the use of handcarts and bicycles with potential for reduction in daily workloads. A paved road means reduced dust pollution and hence, less cleaning and washing, thereby further reducing women's workload.

Villages rely predominantly on traditional water sources such as shallow dug wells, springs, streams, rivers, creeks and rainwater harvesting. In about 96% of all villages, mostly women and children must undertake daily trips to collect water, on average five trips per household. The total round trip time is about 15-20 minutes. Improved travel conditions will reduce travel times and labor inputs.

6.1.3 Direct Employment

Where practicable, the civil works contractor is required to recruit non-skilled labor from local villagers. This serves to reduce possible negative social impacts from labor camps near villages and to provide important cash income. It was estimated that the road works under the Project will generate about 2,000 person-years of local employment.

The respective gender requirement for this non-skilled labor force was not identified; however, it is envisaged that opportunities will be available for both men and women.

6.1.4 Access to Income Earning Opportunities

The Provincial Department of Commerce expects an expansion in markets for goods and services and related growth in wholesale and retail activities. The government expects a considerable increase in border trade, considerable benefits to the hotel, transport and food sub-sectors and a change in the pattern of commerce and trade in the province from import/export oriented to mainly transit (Ghee, 1997). The "knock-on" benefits with respect to the creation of employment are expected to be significant.

Women in the project area have primary responsibility for marketing activities, operating shops, roadside stalls and restaurants. Women dominate local marketing, selling or exchanging village produce at district and provincial markets to bring back consumer items to sell locally in the village. Better roads and lower transport costs will not only provide access to cheaper goods and better access to markets for local produce. Increased traffic trade will provide women with improved opportunities to earn much needed income from roadside stalls selling a multitude of consumer products and agricultural produce (ADB 1999).

6.2 Capability

While the Project is intended to facilitate economic growth, its potential in bringing about a sharper reduction in poverty through the provision of education, health and other basic services to the poorest sector of the population, is significant. Women and children's access to health and education services and other community services will be improved as a direct consequence of road improvements.

The Project's design identifies the general benefits that improve the capabilities of both men and women as a consequence of upgrading and rehabilitating the road corridor as outlined below. The design does not, however, address specifically the gender based component of these capabilities and introduce interventions accordingly.

6.2.1 Access to Education

Access to education and training in Savannakhet shows very low achievement. The majority of children leave school during primary school, with those remaining only finishing elementary school.

The accessibility profile of Phin District shows that only 9.5% of villages offer complete elementary

schooling. More than 50% of villages in Phin District do not have a school. Up to 45% of the village children do not go to school at all. There are 3 secondary schools in the district but, in about 67% of the villages, none of the children receive secondary education (MCTPC, 1996).

Factors generally recognized as limiting accessibility to education include the lack of schools, teachers and classrooms. Lack of physical access for both children and teachers is a major factor leading to low enrolments. In Phin District the average travel time to school outside the home village is about 40 minutes and the average travel time to the village where the secondary school is located is about 1.5 hours.

Women lag behind men in formal education. There are considerable differences in the number of men and women enrolled at all levels. The gender gap in literacy has narrowed, but remains sizeable. Amongst people aged 20-24, literacy rates are 78% and 63% for men and women respectively. This disparity is an important contributing factor to the perpetuation of women's limited opportunities in employment and power and in caring for themselves and their children. The attainment of education of women is important for their status and for their ability to contribute to the national development.

6.2.2 Access to Health Services

National health indicators show a high rate of infant and under-five mortality, a low rate of vaccination against childhood diseases and lack of access to clean water and adequate nutrition. Life expectancy is 50 years (49 for male and 51 for female). The natural population growth rate per annum is 2.6% (1996), but maternal and infant mortality rates are very high (652/100,000 and 113/10,000 respectively in 1996). For children under five years the mortality rate was 142/1,000 in 1996.

About 5% of the villages in Phin District have a permanent health facility. However, 65% of villages have a residential health volunteer who, in principle, should be able to give first aid and simple medical treatment. In 89% of the villages visits of medical staff are received at least twice a year.

For moral and economic reasons the majority of the rural population should have access to health services and should be able to afford to use them. Upgrading the health status of the rural population will require the provision of community-based primary health care and the development of a system of basic maternal and child health care services. The improvement of village access is a key component in realizing this goal.

The average travel times to a pharmacy or district hospital in Phin District are about 2 hours 20 minutes and 5 hours. Travel time to the nearest health center could be reduced by half with an improved road. Better access encourages service providers, including health practitioners, to visit villages.

6.3 Security

The Project could increase the vulnerability of women and men through greater incidence of STDs, involuntary resettlement, more road accidents, alienation of common land, speculative activity in land adjoining roads and loss of subsistence resources resulting from in-migration. However, improved access will reduce the isolation of rural communities from much needed social support such as education and health services.

6.3.1 Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Transport corridor routes can have significant impacts on the transmission of STDs and HIV/AIDS, both within countries and across borders. The influx of large numbers of male construction workers could lead to increased incidence of STDs, as construction campsites encourage sex workers to establish and operate in these areas. Once established, these sites could become centers for sexual services to transit truck drivers using the road. Major risk groups for contracting STDs are not only female sex workers but also male construction workers, truck drivers and male and female migrants.

The Project's design requires the construction contractor, under the supervision of the Project Consultant, to engage a suitably experienced government or non-government organization to develop and implement an information, education and communication (IEC) campaign for its workers ^(ADB, 1999). The contractor is also required to extend the IEC program to communities surrounding the road corridor. With advice and assistance from this organization, the contractor is required to provide its workforce with appropriate means of protection against STDs.

The Project Consultant will monitor and control the contractor's performance of these activities. The consultant team will include an appropriately qualified specialist, who will ensure the activities of the Project are coordinated and consistent with the government's broader strategies for addressing the problem of STDs and HIV/AIDS.

GoL has further agreed to continue a coordinated program of IEC activities after completion of the project, along the highway corridor and at major truck stops. This would be done in coordination with the Provincial Health Department, donors such as UNAIDs and NGOs working on the issue of STD and HIV/AIDS transmission.

6.3.2 Trafficking of Women and Children

Improved roads and easier cross-border movement of goods and people can facilitate increased trafficking of women and children. Women and children are trafficked for a wide range of reasons although primarily for the sex and entertainment industry and sometimes as cheap labor.

A number of measures were included in the Project's design to mitigate the likely negative impacts on women and children. The involved governments have agreed to institutionalize and strengthen coordination mechanisms at sub-regional, international, national and local levels. Cross-border agreements which have been drafted address the need for increased vigilance, detection and controls on illegal activities (ADB, 1999).

Governments have also agreed to familiarize their border control officials with this problem and to provide them with training and information on trafficking. An information pamphlet will be prepared and distributed to immigration and border control officials. NGOs will be contracted to provide this sensitization program for border control officials. The need for close monitoring at the borders was also noted.

6.3.3 Compensation and Resettlement

The Project will entail some dwelling relocation, land acquisition and compensation for crop damage and other social impacts. Much of the land required will be small strips for road widening or construction purposes. Project-affected people can be resettled on their existing land by having their residences moved back from the widened Project road, or to another site within the village.

To address these impacts, Resettlement Plans (RP) in line with government procedures and ADB's Policy on Involuntary Resettlement have been prepared for both Road 9 and the Rural Community Access Improvement component. The RP for Road 9 indicates that about 430 households consisting of 2,665 persons would be affected by resettlement activity caused by the rehabilitation of the entire 220 km within Lao PDR (ADB 1999, pg. 24). The RPs are designed to provide special assistance to vulnerable groups including households headed by women, but give no detail on how this will be done.

MCTPC will engage independent domestic agencies to monitor implementation of the RPs and report on their status. Copies of these reports will be provided to ADB, which will also monitor implementation of the RPs through regular project review missions.

6.4 Empowerment

In general terms, the Project serves to empower communities by improved access to social, economic and political services. The rural community access improvement roads, for example, will reduce average travel times to the district center by more than one half. This will improve access to

the local seat of government (including courts and government support programs) and to information and news.

The Study Consultant observed that little opportunity has been provided to the potential beneficiaries to participate in project design. Planning meetings were held at district level and village chiefs (primarily men) were invited. However, the LWU representatives from the village were not provided the opportunity to attend these meetings and thus have equal influence in decision-making, policy development and planning, administration and budget design. This would serve to increase the potential benefits of the road corridor to both men and women.

The primary interface between the Project and the broader community was through the development and implementation of the RP. This has required GoL to develop a process of consultation and disclosure that aims to empower project-affected persons with special provisions for minority groups. Key features of the resettlement process include:

- RPs will be translated into Lao language and copies provided to the relevant provincial authorities, village leaders and project-affected persons.
- Compensation entitlement matrixes, procedures and grievance mechanisms will be posted in all the affected villages.
- The resettlement committees will receive training on ADB's policy and guidelines, the basic features of the RP, compensation standards, procedures, entitlements, implementation and grievance and monitoring procedures.
- Special effort will be made to include women members on the Resettlement Committees to ensure that their special needs and concerns are fully addressed.

The RPs have yet to be translated into Lao language, although a public information booklet was prepared in a "question and answer" format for distribution in the villages.

7. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN OUTCOMES

Numerous provisions were made in the Project's design to mitigate potentially adverse impacts on marginalized groups – these primarily being the rural communities. The provisions have to varying degrees addressed gender issues either directly (i.e. border controls for trafficking of women) or indirectly (i.e. improved access to social services).

The purpose of this section is to identify the actual impacts on male and female beneficiaries and evaluate how and why this varied from the intended impact. The ability of the Study Consultant to conduct this evaluation has, however, been constrained by the Project being in early phases of implementation. About 65% of the Road 9 improvement is complete and the rural community access roads have not commenced (Section 2.5). To date, nominal attention has been paid to the social management program and this is reflected in the lack of monitoring and reporting for these elements.

A decisive evaluation of the Project has been further constrained by the cumulative impacts of various other development initiatives in the study area. Other initiatives have included the recent commissioning of a major gold and copper mine, the introduction of electricity and recent amendments to regulations on the trans-border importing of goods. It is also important to bear in mind that the Project involves rehabilitation of an existing road rather than the development of new “green-fields” infrastructure. The opinions of stakeholders on how the Project and its interventions actually operate are potentially heavily influenced by the background being in a state of significant flux.

7.1 Opportunity

The Project's design does not specifically address the different opportunities available to men and women. The consequent lack of monitoring and reporting on gender-based indicators limited the ability for the Study Consultant to make observations on the outcomes. Only some general observations can be provided.

7.1.1 Access to the Transport System

Discussions with public transport providers confirmed that the frequency of bus services along Route 9 has increased. The travel time from Xeno to Dene Savanh has dropped markedly - from 14 to 4 hours - resulting in greater demand for services to province and district centers. Apparently, however, the reduction in transport costs due to shorter journey times has not been passed onto transport users through reduced fares.

It was also noted that there has been an increase in the provision of private sector transport services such as pick-ups. Evidently the lower transportation costs have enabled the private sector to offer more competitive services.

Informal interviews with merchants in the Sepon and Phin markets indicated that the variety of merchandise coming from Thailand and Vietnam has increased in the term of the Project. This has been due to improved transport services for both men and women.

7.1.2 Direct Employment

The Construction Contractor is required to recruit non-skilled labor from local villagers. Although some labor has been sourced from local villagers for clearing land and unexploded ordinance, road construction labor has been obtained predominantly from Viet Nam. Informal discussions in roadside villages indicate that this Vietnamese workforce has included non-skilled labor, resulting in some social tension. There are also gender-specific implications. For example, disappointment, anger or frustration caused by employment barriers may be taken out on women of the community. The villagers emphasized that they would like the opportunity to work for the Project, but that they did not know how to apply for a job. The Construction Contractor was unable to provide data regarding local employment for the Project, i.e. the number of people, duration of employment and

gender.

7.1.3 Access to Income Earning Opportunities

It is evident that the Project is resulting in growth of wholesale and retail activities and the knock-on benefits include the creation of employment. While these observations can not be quantified, there was confirmation from various sources that the number of women traders at district markets had increased. To counter this trend, there is potential for local purchasing companies to be displaced by more aggressive and better capitalized companies from other parts of Lao, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Access to the transport system may also result in large numbers of men commuting to the nearest urban center for employment. Although there is no data to confirm this is happening, such behavior could increase the women's responsibility to manage the bulk of the farm work and other work previously done by men.

7.2 Capability

In-depth interviews were held with practitioners and government officials in health and education to assess the impacts of the Project on the provision and use of services. The interviewees made various observations, although there are quantitative data.

It was acknowledged that there had been an increase in the use of health and education facilities along Road 9 compared to the previous year. The health and education sub sectors have also received an injection of funding which has included upgrading of the Sepon hospital and a new secondary school in Phin.

Improvement of Road 9 has increased access to transport services, benefiting both the villages and practitioners. Improved facilities are likely to attract higher qualified staff from the Provincial center. With the improvement of rural community access roads, it is expected that number of users from rural villagers of social services will also.

7.3 Security

The case study identified a number of areas where the vulnerability of women and men has recently been adversely affected. The extent to which the Project has contributed to these impacts is difficult to determine, not least of all due to the low levels of social monitoring and reporting.

7.3.1 Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Province and district government health practitioners report that there has been an increase in the incidence of STDs including HIV/AIDS in the project area. This has been noticed primarily among women who are more likely to use hospital facilities, as opposed to men who buy medicine directly from the dispensary. There are four reported cases of HIV/AIDS, all of whom are women, in Sepon District. This is, however, inconclusive as diagnostic and testing capabilities have improved in recent years.

The construction workforce is equipped with medical facilities and any potentially diagnosed cases are not referred to the government facilities. Data on the incidence of STDs among the construction workforce were not made available to the Study Consultant.

Government health practitioners have observed an increase in prostitution that might be associated with the influx of male construction workers. An interview with the Construction Contractor revealed that it had provided to its workforce and some communities an information session on appropriate means of protection against STDs. The education was carried out in cooperation with a district Health Promotion Unit. Target groups for the education included the Lao and Vietnamese construction workers, truck drivers and patients using hospital services. The education has included information sessions and the distribution of brochures and condoms. Women and sex workers were not identified as specific target groups for the education. Participants in the education campaign were asked to complete an evaluation form.

Independent of the Project, the GoL has an HIV/AIDS awareness program that is coordinated by the National and Provincial Committee for the Control of AIDS and supported by bilateral donors such as AusAID and the United Nations and by NGOs. The Provincial Committee has disseminated information by radio, TV and seminars. Free blood tests are available at the provincial hospital.

The Study Consultant observed that there appeared to be a lack of coordination between the Project and the programs being implemented by other organizations, resulting in potential waste of resources.

7.3.2 Trafficking of Women and Children

Cross-border agreements which have been drafted address the need for increased vigilance, detection and controls on illegal activities including trafficking. However, no information was provided to the Study Consultant indicating that an information and sensitization program had been undertaken with border control officials.

Independent of the Project, the International Labour Organisation, the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour, and the Norwegian Church Aid have been implementing various initiatives to monitor and control human trafficking. In addition, the International Organisation for Migration, in association with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, has established a repatriation center for trafficking victims. The LWU is responsible for managing the center; preliminary data suggest that over 50% of the victims originate from Savannakhet Province.

7.3.3 Compensation and Resettlement

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the resettlement and compensation program are a responsibility of the Environment and Social Division of MCTPC. Reporting to MCTPC, the provincial government is responsible for distribution of cash or resources to affected communities and the district's communication officers are responsible for follow-up and grievance management.

Project records were available for the amount of compensation paid and to whom this had been paid; however, no data was provided to the Study Consultant indicating that the compensation process was being formally monitored. Of particular concern is the lack of reporting on grievances, i.e. the reason for the grievance and steps taken to resolve it. This level of reporting would enable potential gender issues to be identified and appropriate mitigation measures enacted to improve the Project design. There were no data indicating that special assistance had been provided to vulnerable groups including households headed by women as specified in the design documents (ADB, 1999).

It was recognized in the RPs that the Environment and Social Division of MCTPC requires support and training for implementation of the RPs and that this had been budgeted during the design phase. Discussions with staff of the Division indicated that this training had not been conducted and it was not known when or if this would be done.

7.4 Empowerment

Although the province as whole would benefit from the Project, it is likely that economic growth will not be evenly distributed, but will favor the urban areas and the locations to which the government is seeking to channel foreign and private sector investment. The very poor generally tend to benefit less from road improvements because they often lack the capital to take advantage of the improved transport system. Statistics indicate that inequality in Lao PDR has increased significantly. While the annual growth of consumption per person averaged 5.8% between 1993 and 1998, that of the bottom 20% of the population was only 2.3%; that of the top 20% was 8.7% (UNDP, 2001). Increased income inequalities can especially affect poor women.

Certain attitudes and behavior of society continue to restrict women's opportunities and perpetuate traditional gender roles. For example, the role and place of women is considered to be within the household. They do not have a significant place in general society and do not participate in the community leadership. The attitude is that a man should not have to work under a woman. These social and cultural attitudes are so ingrained in the society that women tend not to pursue more significant roles.

While women and girls in the study area were found to perform the majority of chores relating to the household, including agricultural production and collection of forest products, the main source of income for families is perceived to be the husband's earnings. However, the increase in the numbers of women engaging in income generating activities may assist in the development of an attitudinal change in the ability of women to achieve independence and improve self-perceptions of ability, giving women the confidence to take a more active role in domestic and community decision making.

The Study Consultant observed a general lack of knowledge among the intended beneficiaries of the scope and impacts of the rural access road component of the Project. Some villagers had never heard about the Project, although construction is currently scheduled for commencement in September 2003. This lack of knowledge brought into question the success of the community consultation process employed by the Project.

8. LESSONS LEARNT

8.1 Institutional Factors

The key institutional factors contributing to the success of the Project include:

- ADB policy was applied in the feasibility and design phases through preparation of the social impact assessment, initial environmental examination, resettlement plan and ethnic minority development plan.
- Gender indicators show there has been improvement in the status and opportunities for women, with these changes profoundly influenced by the rapid increase in contact with foreign organizations and management frameworks.

The key institutional factors limiting the success of the Project include:

- There appears to be a general lack of project monitoring and inter-agency reporting on social issues. This brings to question the capabilities of the Construction Contractor and Project Consultant to manage these issues successfully and the accountability of the executing agency.
- Gender issues are not being systematically supervised during implementation. This may require the engagement of a social scientist or someone with gender expertise in the Project team.
- Further development is required to raise the standards and capabilities of the contracting industry. Attendance at industry training courses may be considered as a pre-qualification requirement. The Study Consultant did not observe any specific gender measures in the project designs and reports prepared by the Project Consultant / Construction Contractor.
- The Project's design assumes institutional capacity within the MCTPC that does not currently exist. There is a general lack of capacity to conduct gender analysis and planning – to assess the impact of the intervention on women and men and to examine the effect that gender roles have on the Project. Substantial efforts are needed to build and improve the technical capacity, managerial and administrative skills of executing and implementing agencies.
- There was no requirement for the Project Consultant, during commissioning, to illustrate capability in design and conduct of gender sensitive programs.
- The primary tool for gender analysis is provision and maintenance of *sex-disaggregated data* without which it is impossible to determine the impact of past and current policies and programs, or to measure the effectiveness of new initiatives. No detailed gender disaggregated baseline specific to the Project objectives has been established.
- No formal institutional structures to integrate the involvement of the LWU in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- A general perception by the MCTPC that the LWU lacks that capacity to be engaged in Project design and implementation.

8.2 Enabling and Limiting factors

The key enabling factors contributing to the success of the Project include:

- At the highest levels, there is political and legislative commitment for gender equality. For example, gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution, GoL has endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and a Commission for the Advancement of Women has been established to mainstream gender concerns into all government ministries.
- The LWU plays a significant role in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality and

has a vital national political network which reaches the grass roots of Lao society.

The key factors limiting the success of the Project include:

- Limited gender capacity in Lao PDR to conceptualize, design and implement projects targeted at women. Local government agencies suffer from lack of staff qualified in planning and budgeting rural development projects efficiently. Capacity building will require substantial resources and technical support.
- The representation of women in government functions and in decision-making positions is very low at all levels. There is insufficient female staff to implement the women's projects or project components directed at women in rural areas. For this to change, ministries will have to examine their internal policies and practices and their external activities. Strategies should address the need for women to be represented equally with men at all levels in government – within ministries and equivalent agencies and in governing structures at policy level.
- Apparent lack of coordination with NGOs, a number of which complementary programs in the project area. These NGOs make a vital contribution to improving the status of women through activities such as training and education in health, nutrition, population planning, employment, income generating skills and leadership development. The nature, scale and implementation timeframes of activities in foreign-supported programs do not always lend themselves easily to supporting especially small initiatives directed at assisting women.
- The differing roles of women and men in Lao PDR have deep roots in many of the differing cultures and local livelihood systems, most to the disadvantage of women. Gender analysis must be carried out to document and understand these differences and to develop plans to address inequalities.

8.3 Influence of Externalities

The success or otherwise of the Project is influenced by not only the overarching institutional and enabling environment but also by concurrent development initiatives. The potential to coordinate with existing and complementary projects is commonly overlooked during the design phase of new development interventions. However, integration of existing initiatives into project design can avoid the duplication of effort and identify opportunities for synergies and knowledge transfer.

For example, international donors and NGOs, have well-established programs operating in the health sector (IEC for STD and HIV/AIDS), trafficking of women and children and rural accessibility. The Study Consultant observed a general lack of understanding among agencies of their respective activities and poor coordination.

The Project presents a strong platform from which to attract actively new development initiatives that to address gender disparities. Such initiatives may include: campaigns, counseling and advisory services to address female focused violence; campaigns to control the spread of HIV/AIDS among women; improving women's access to land; training of female agricultural extension workers; supporting labor-saving technologies; enhancing women's access to savings and credit services; transport services; scholarships for girls; training female teachers; reducing or subsidizing the direct and indirect costs to families of girls' education to encourage their participation; promoting community based health services; and training female health personnel and female community health providers. There has been little planning the development of such activities and this is not meaningfully addressed in the scope of the Project Consultant's Terms of Reference.

8.4 Potential for Replication in Future Projects

The East-West Corridor Project has in its design various innovative features aimed at maximizing the benefits and minimizing adverse impacts. They include:

- Providing poor and disadvantaged groups in rural communities with access to markets, employment opportunities and social services by constructing and improving rural roads, small bridges, river crossings and other rural infrastructure.
- Strengthening social governance by implementing mitigation measures built into the design. These measures include resettlement of Project-affected persons in accord with ADB's Policy on Involuntary Resettlement and information and education campaigns on STDs and HIV/AIDS for construction workers.

The Study Consultant observed the following shortcomings in implementation which highlighted the requirement for consideration of factors for future projects:

- Establish clearly defined gender and development objectives for which there are corresponding performance indicators. The success of the executing agency can be easily evaluated against these performance criteria throughout the Project. Gender objectives integrated in the objectives are more likely to be implemented.
- Systematic monitoring and reporting of gender and development objectives during implementation. This would enable early identification of adverse impacts and implementation of mitigation measures. A post-evaluation report is required to assess the impact of the project on women and describe how women beneficiaries perceive the benefits of the project.
- Prepare realistic terms of reference for all agencies involved in the Project, recognizing their capacity and willingness to achieve the project objectives. Where appropriate these terms of reference should include gender analysis.
- Engage contractors and consultants with the proven experience and capability to implement social governance objectives.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The East West Corridor Project provides enormous potential to empower communities by improving access to social, economic and political services. The design of the Project encompassed a social governance program including (i) provision of poor and disadvantaged groups in rural communities with access to markets, employment opportunities and social services by constructing and improving rural roads, small bridges, river crossings and other rural infrastructure; and (ii) implementation of mitigation measures for Project-affected persons, such as resettlement plans and information and education campaigns on STDs and HIV/AIDS.

Although the Project has been designed in accordance with ADB policy, the Case Study identified institutional weaknesses including: lack of formal monitoring and reporting on social issues; lack of institutional capacity to implement the project components targeting women; and no formal institutional structures to integrate the involvement of the LWU.

At the highest level there is political and legislative commitment in the Lao PDR for gender equality. However, the case study identified several weaknesses nationally: limited capacity of the executing agency to conceptualize, design and implement a program involving gender mainstreaming; low representation of women in government functions and in decision-making positions; lack of inter-agency coordination; and a deep-rooted gender inequality within Lao culture.

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