

**Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program
Meeting of the Working Group on Human Resource Development
Social Development Subgroup**

**Vientiane, Lao PDR
24-25 November 2009**

Final Summary of Proceedings

1. A Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD), Subgroup on Social Development (SDS) was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 24-25 November 2009, co-organized by the Lao Government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
2. The objectives of the meeting were to: (i) present the key elements of the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan; (ii) present the key elements of the R-PATA 7275 “Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan”; (iii) review and discuss the approved and proposed initiatives for the Social Development Subgroup; and (iv) decide next steps for these initiatives. The Agenda/Program of the meeting is in Appendix 1.
3. Participants included government representatives from Cambodia, People’s Republic of China (PRC), Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Staff of ADB and representatives of multilateral, bilateral, intergovernmental organizations, and regional academic/research institutions also attended. The list of participants is in Appendix 2.

Opening Session

4. Mrs. Keobang A Keola, GMS National Coordinator and Director General of GMS National Secretariat, Chairperson, Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA), Lao PDR, extended on behalf of the Government of Lao PDR, her warm welcome to all participants to the first meeting of the Social Development Subgroup of the Working Group on Human Resource Development. The meeting follows the endorsement of the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP) by the 15th GMS Ministerial Meeting held in June 2009. The meeting will discuss the key elements of the HRD SFAP and the implementing technical assistance, and also discuss the proposed social development initiatives and the next steps for these initiatives. She wished the participants a successful meeting and an enjoyable stay in Vientiane.
5. Mr. Stefan Ekelund, Officer-in-Charge, ADB Lao Resident Mission, welcomed everyone on behalf of ADB to the first separate meeting of the Social Development Subgroup. He stated that the Subgroup covers the 4 cross-cutting areas of gender, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups, HIV/AIDS, and anti-human trafficking. These areas interlink not only with each other but also with the other human resource development subsectors of education, health, and labor and migration, as well as other GMS priority sectors like transport and tourism development. He stressed that the social development subsector has a very important role to play in contributing to HRD in the

GMS and in realizing the potential for economic growth of the subregion. The Subgroup is unique in that it is the only intergovernmental forum to discuss comprehensively the social dimensions of regional economic integration. Moreover, good practice and achievements of the GMS Program on social development issues are being shared with ADB staff involved in other regional cooperation groups in South Asia and Central Asia to ensure cross-subregional exchange and learning. He encouraged participants to use the meeting as an opportunity to interact with experts from other areas and identify opportunities for combined efforts and synergies. A copy of his opening remarks is in Appendix 3.

Introduction and Agenda Setting

6. Ms. Susan Kerr, Principal Human Resource Specialist, Social Sectors Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, briefed the participants on the general program and business arrangements for the meeting.

7. The meeting was held in plenary and small group sessions. Mr. Chantachith Ampaychith, Deputy Director General, GMS National Secretariat, WREA, Prime Minister's Office, Lao PDR, chaired. He was assisted alternately by Ms. Sonomi Tanaka, Principal Gender Specialist, Regional and Sustainable Development Department, and Ms. Anupma Jain, Social Sector Specialist, Social Sectors Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, as Co-chair.

Session 1: Regional Economic Integration and HRD in the GMS

1.1: Presentation on Regional Economic Integration (REI) and HRD in the GMS

8. Ms. Anupma Jain, Social Sector Specialist, Social Sectors Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, stated that infrastructure connectivity in the GMS is a key building block for subregional integration and leads to greater competitiveness and sense of community. The development of transport and economic corridors is the backbone of GMS connectivity that is already yielding benefits by way of reduced travel time, increased bilateral trade, job creation, and better access to social services and technology. She stressed that sustaining rapid economic growth requires increasing the productivity of a large labor force through better access to education and health care. She recalled the findings and recommendations of the Mid-term Review of the GMS Strategic Framework endorsed by the Third GMS Summit in March 2008, which included the need to translate physical connectivity into livelihoods and poverty reduction, putting more emphasis on software aspects and addressing the negative externalities of subregional cooperation, strengthening sector links, and the need for complementary policies. HRD has an important role in increasing competitive edge and sense of community through its contribution to economic integration. A copy of her presentation is in [Appendix 4](#).

Session 2: Report Back from WGHRD-9 Meeting

2.1: GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan, and R-PATA 7275 “Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan”

9. Ms. Susan Kerr, ADB, presented the key points of the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP) for 2009-2012 - its goals, objectives, strategic thrusts, institutional and implementation arrangements – including partnerships with development partners, and the action plan that will operationalize the strategic framework through priority initiatives. She stressed the role of the subsector focal points in ensuring the effective coordination and trickle-down effect of subregional initiatives with country programs, and the role of development partners in ensuring close coordination of programs and mobilizing support and co-financing of GMS HRD initiatives. The results framework of the SFAP will be closely monitored to ensure the successful achievements of expected outputs/outcomes. She noted that the action plan is a rolling plan that will change over time as projects are completed, pipeline projects obtain funding and are implemented, and new high priority projects are identified. She also outlined the expected outputs and outcomes of ADB-funded Regional Policy and Advisory Technical Assistance (R-PATA) 7275 on Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan. The R-PATA will support, among others, meetings and related activities of the WGHRD and its subgroups (including the Social Development Subgroup) to implement the SFAP – as elaborated in greater detail in the institutional framework of the Working Group. Published copies of the SFAP were made available to the participants.

Discussion

10. Mrs. Keobang stressed that the Subgroup should consider the next elements and broad directions for cooperation in social development as input to the new 10-year GMS Strategy to be discussed at the 16th GMS Ministerial Meeting in March 2010.

2.2: Social Development Aspects of GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan, and R-PATA 7275 “Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan”: Report from the Social Development Subsector Working Group Meeting

11. Ms. Anupma Jain, ADB, presented the social development initiatives under the action plan and R-PATA arising from the discussions of the SDS during the breakout group session of WGHRD-9 held in Guilin, PRC, in May 2009. The mandate of the SDS is to better manage social change and mitigate negative impact of regional integration. Suggested terms of reference for the Subgroup were outlined for detailed discussion at the small group session the following day. Broad areas/programs of cooperation include: (i) Strengthening research on social impacts of increased subregional connectivity; (ii) Strengthening subregional cooperation in anti-human trafficking activities; (iii) HIV/AIDS and infrastructure; (iv) Strengthening capacity of vulnerable groups (e.g., ethnic minority groups); (v) Strengthening capacity of women; and (vi) Enhancing the sense of community in GMS Youth. Broad indications of actions/projects, key players (GMS Co-Chairs, development partners, other GMS sector working groups), time frame (short and medium-term), and estimated costs and financing sources have

been provided. These specific actions would be discussed in greater detail at the small group session the following day.

Discussion:

12. It was noted that the anti-trafficking activities outlined for the Subgroup complement those under the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) framework. It was suggested that those anti-trafficking activities be closely coordinated also with the Subgroup on Labor and Migration, NGOs, and other relevant entities such as UNIAP and UNICEF.

13. It was clarified that the identified Co-Chairs for the priority programs would take the lead in coordinating the implementation of actions, with the assistance of ADB and other development partners to facilitate that process if needed. Mechanisms for ensuring effective coordination would be discussed at the small group session.

14. Copies of the presentation under this Session are in [Appendix 5](#).

Session 3: Social Development Concerns and Initiatives in the GMS

3.1: Country Presentations on Social Development Concerns

15. Representatives of the 6 countries presented their respective perspective on key issues and opportunities for subregional collaboration on social development concerns.

Cambodia

16. Representative of Cambodia described the country's national machinery for mainstreaming gender in national programs, the various gender-related issues, key achievements in gender mainstreaming through strategic policy interventions, legislation and inter-ministerial action plans, and forward-looking approaches including the new 5-year strategic plan called Neary Rattanak 3. Cambodia is a transit, sending, and receiving country in human trafficking, hence there are several anti-trafficking initiatives through the COMMIT process and bilateral agreements with other countries. A national taskforce and a high level working group to implement these agreements/MOUs have been established. The following challenges were cited: too many actors, little coordination, need for strong government leadership, lack of information/data about trafficking problem, and need for national plan of action and provincial strategy against trafficking. Government and NGO responses to these challenges relate to coordination, protection, prosecution, and prevention. The HIV/AIDS situation is improving with decreasing prevalence among adult population, pregnant women, and sex workers. Cambodia no longer has the highest rate of HIV infection in Asia and may rank third after Thailand and Myanmar. Protection of migrant workers from HIV/AIDS involves programs to raise awareness on consequences of migration, on measures to provide legal protection to migrant workers, on HIV/AIDS, and on basic rights at the workplace.

PRC

17. Representatives of PRC made a 4-part presentation on the country's achievements and challenges in (i) addressing gender equality, (ii) protecting the rights

of vulnerable groups, (iii) promoting the welfare of ethnic minorities, and (iv) combating trafficking in women and children. PRC has put in place a legal system to promote gender equality, programs to strengthen women's participation in public affairs, increased access to literacy and education of women and girls, expanded fields of employment, and improved health care for women and girls. A number of challenges still remain including a low proportion of women holding key leadership positions, discrimination based on gender and age, lack of access to schools for girls in remote areas, and disparities in health outcomes. For vulnerable groups, there are programs that provide relief assistance to groups in difficulties e.g., vagrant minors, trafficking victims, and victims of domestic violence. There are about 34 ethnic minority groups in Yunnan and Guangxi comprising over 34.56 million people (2007), among which there are 17 cross-border ethnic minorities in these areas comprising over 5.77 million (2007). Government programs have been put in place to address the problems confronted by these ethnic minority groups e.g., poverty, drugs and AIDS, and other social welfare issues. To combat trafficking in women and children, a working mechanism (Inter-ministerial Meeting Office Against Human Trafficking of the State Council) has been set up and a national plan of action (China's Action Plan for Combating Abduction and Trafficking of Women and Children, 2008-2012) has been developed, an anti-trafficking campaign was launched from 9 April 2009 to the end of 2010, and efforts are on-going to strengthen international joint programs and promote international justice and police cooperation.

Discussion

18. UNIAP representative congratulated PRC for its proactive programs against human trafficking.

19. The Co-Chair encouraged country presenters to emphasize the cross-border dimension, problems and issues that have impact on regional economic integration.

Lao PDR

20. Representative of Lao PDR presented the country's achievements in addressing the 4 cross-cutting topics under social development. Gender concerns are under the responsibility of the Lao Women's Union. A Women and Children Protection Law was endorsed by the National Assembly, and a Gender Strategy, Policy and Plan was approved in 2003. While the development of transport corridors in Lao territory has made positive impacts directly on vulnerable groups in terms of increased income and job opportunities, more research is needed on impact on ethnic groups particularly in cross-border areas. HIV/AIDS concerns are mainstreamed with gender and ethnic groups as well as anti-trafficking concerns as affected by transport corridors. On anti-human trafficking, Lao PDR has established a women and children help center in both Vientiane and Savannakhet Province, and Lao PDR and Thailand have signed an MOU on anti-trafficking in 2005. Lao women play important roles in all sectors of society and are also primarily responsible for maintaining their family's food security and health. Most women in rural areas have low education and little access to information technology, tourism and business services, yet work long hours than men. Women and children continue to be involved in commercial sex work and sexual violence. Ethnic minority women and girls are generally more disadvantaged because of their low literacy levels, limited access to health care and other basic services, long working hours and limited roles in community decision making. HIV/AIDS programs are constrained by limited

government budget and lack of participation from the private sector. A law on HIV/AIDS has not yet been developed, prevalence of condom use is still low, and there is low level of information in high-risk groups. Anti-trafficking programs are constrained by weak institutional cooperation/collaboration, budget limitation, and lack of qualified staff.

Myanmar

21. Representative of Myanmar presented the country's policy and program initiatives in addressing gender, vulnerable groups, HIV/AIDS, and anti-human trafficking concerns. On gender, Myanmar has acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), set up the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs and Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, and initiated gender-based humanitarian interventions in cyclone-affected areas. On vulnerable groups, the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities is enshrined in the 2008 Constitution, special administrative regions have been established, progress of national races and border areas is monitored, and the rights of children, women, elderly and people with disabilities are protected. On HIV/AIDS, national level HIV/AIDS exhibitions were held in 2003-2004, ART treatment was made available beginning 2005, and a National Strategic Plan (2006-2010) and Operational Plan (2006-2008) adopted in 2006. To address human trafficking, an Anti-trafficking in Persons Law was passed, a National Plan of Action was formulated, and subregional MOU (COMMIT) and bilateral MOUs with Thailand and PRC were signed. It was emphasized that social development concerns/challenges are best addressed through subregional cooperation, alignment of national policies, and sharing of lessons learned and good practices. Suggested medium-term strategic priorities for subregional cooperation in social development include achievement of MDGs, strengthening of subregional networks, sharing of lessons learned, and establishment of subregional mechanisms to monitor achievements.

Thailand

22. Representative of Thailand gave an overview of the legal and policy guidelines, and program approaches adopted to address concerns about anti-human trafficking, gender, ethnic minorities, and cross-border HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Gender mainstreaming in Thailand is guided by relevant provisions in the Constitution, CEDAW, a Women's Development Plan (2007-2011), and Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence Act (2007). An Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development has been established. Thailand's efforts in prevention and suppression of human trafficking are governed by the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008) and COMMIT MOU (2004). Country efforts focus on 4 measures: policy, prevention, prosecution and protection. With regard to ethnic minorities, there are more than 2 million in Thailand, comprised of permanent residents, irregular/unlawful immigrant laborers, and refugees. Thailand recommends several subregional approaches including public awareness campaign, citizenship verification by country of origin, resettlement and repatriation program, prevention of cross-border illegal migration, and information exchanges on population registration database. On cross-border HIV/AIDS prevention and control, Thailand recommends the following subregional measures: (i) exploring innovative and effective strategies of implementing a continuum of STI, HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support for cross-border population; (ii) creating enabling environment to improve access to STI and HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support among cross-border population; and (iii) enhancing multi-sectoral collaboration among key

stakeholders nationally and internationally. Thailand pursues bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation programs in addressing these social development issues.

23. Participants requested Thailand to clarify their understanding and approach with regard to ethnic minorities since their presentation referred to migrant workers as included in ethnic minority groups. Other countries, on the other hand, felt that migrant workers are defined separately and distinctly from ethnic groups, the latter including hill tribes and similar groups which have distinct ethnicity. Thailand explained that in their context ethnic minorities include both hill tribes and illegal migrants.

Viet Nam

24. Representative of Viet Nam briefed the meeting on national laws, policies and programs, and good practices from activities conducted by government, private, and civil society sectors concerning gender, ethnic minorities, HIV prevention, and human trafficking. These programs have given women better access to land-use rights and ownership, helped lift about 36 million people from poverty and Viet Nam achieve the set MDGs of reducing poverty by 2015, and strengthening international cooperation on HIV prevention. Challenges to social development include: adverse impact of economic crisis, poverty reduction not sustainable, poor access to information technology and HIV control programs, recurring epidemics and natural disasters. Lessons learned: social development must be a major and consistent policy, and cooperation and support from the international community are critical. Future directions: focus on rural and remote areas, inclusion of gender and vulnerable groups in overall social protection strategy, improve/supplement poverty reduction policies from a gender-sensitive perspective, provide capacity building programs for provincial HIV/AIDS centers, and promote international and regional cooperation (through information sharing, capacity building/training, social service network, sharing of IEC materials).

Discussion:

25. In response to a query, Viet Nam mentioned that they do not have a specific program to help vulnerable groups consequent to the economic crisis, but they have a stimulus program, for example, to help people who have lost jobs to return to their home provinces.

26. Copies of the country presentations are in [Appendix 6](#).

3.2: Overview and Identification of Key Social Development Issues in the GMS

27. Ms. Anupma Jain, ADB, presented an overview of the key issues and opportunities for subregional cooperation in social development. While there have been benefits, there have also been negative externalities (or impacts) from increased connectivity in the GMS and improvements in social indicators seem to have lagged behind. To address related challenges, the SDS needs to look at measures to enhance subregional cooperation on social development issues and concerns, and to lead initiatives on managing/addressing *cross-cutting concerns* pertaining to mitigating negative externalities due to increased connectivity and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits among social groups. She stressed that economic growth increases opportunities for profit-seeking and for social and sexual exploitation. This impacts on

women and vulnerable groups, and often involves increased health threats and risk of human trafficking. She posed several points for the Subgroup to consider during the small group discussions the following day concerning:

- i. What are the key social development issues in the GMS and cross border areas, as transport corridors become more economic corridors?
- ii. What are the future priorities for this subgroup?
- iii. What areas would the subgroup like to see carried forward as part of the HRD sector in the next GMS Strategy (2012-2020)?
- iv. What are the coordination mechanisms (within the subgroup and with other GMS working groups)?

3.3: Gender Issues in GMS Regional Economic Integration

28. Ms. Sonomi Tanaka, Principal Gender Specialist, Regional and Sustainable Development Department, ADB, discussed gender issues in GMS Regional Economic Integration (REI). There are both positive and negative implications of greater REI. Positive implications include benefit of accelerated growth for both men and women (by way of job opportunities in export-oriented industries, trade, tourism, and labor migration); better/easier access to basic services; access to information, skills and knowledge; and more mobility for both men and women. On the other hand, there are also negative implications such as exclusion of more women than men from benefits of growth and services, increasing exposure of women to regional “shocks (economic, environmental), and increased vulnerability due to improved connectivity and enhanced mobility of women, especially from ethnic groups, to social risks (communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking). ADB examples of policy and program responses were given, such as those that provide gender-inclusive elements for growth and service provisions, and address women’s vulnerability associated with improved connectivity and mobility. Also, a regional body to discuss gender issues has been created. She also cited examples of other regional mechanisms on gender under the auspices of SAARC, ASEAN, and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

29. Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren, Human Rights Specialist, UNIFEM East and Southeast Asia Regional Office, discussed major gender issues in regional economic integration. CEDAW provides the overarching framework for a human rights-based approach to gender issues, UNIFEM’s programs, and a strategic plan for 2009-2013. She presented important findings from several studies concerning gender and trade, women entrepreneurs, women in the informal sector, women’s unpaid work, among others. Issues concerning migrant women workers and gender-sensitive migration policies were discussed. HIV/AIDS trends indicate the feminization of the disease as shown by the increased proportion of women infected with HIV, and UNIFEM is developing an evidence-informed HIV prevention strategy for married women. She noted that violence against women is widespread and there are clear linkages between domestic violence, violence against women, and unequal status of women. She concluded that persistent gender inequality will affect the achievement of the goals of REI in GMS and that gender sensitive and responsive measures are crucial in HRD and must be guided by CEDAW norms and standards.

30. Copies of the presentations under this Session are in Appendix 7.

3.4: Anti-Human Trafficking Initiatives in the GMS

31. Ms. Sonomi Tanaka, ADB, gave an overview of the overall framework of ADB-funded RETA 6448 – Integrating Human Trafficking and Safe Migration into Regional Cooperation which started in 2008. The project contains a GMS and a South Asia component. Within the GMS component, there are 2 sub-components that support the COMMIT process, particularly initiatives under Phase 2 of the Plan of Action (training, community-based vulnerability assessment). The 2nd sub-component addresses anti-human trafficking in the SDS framework and how SDS can contribute to the bigger picture of human trafficking.

32. Mr. Matt Friedman, Regional Project Manager, UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) in the GMS, presented an update on COMMIT and the role of UNIAP in facilitating the process. He noted that the COMMIT process which includes an MOU, a Plan of Action, national plans, and an institutional mechanism with an established secretariat and an annual senior officials meeting that reviews progress of work, is unique as there is no similar process anywhere else in the world. It involves 250 partners from 6 countries speaking 7 languages (including English) and many partner organizations. He cited several factors that have contributed to the success of the COMMIT process. These are: (i) Focus on one issue – human trafficking, (ii) Emphasis on “process, process, process” - how things are done, (iii) Attention to protocol issues (between governments), (iv) High level commitment across countries, (v) Patience – achievements happen at a natural pace, (vi) Governments control and all countries are considered equals, (vii) Sustainability – activities now part of government mechanisms, and (viii) Brand recognition. He also noted several common policy mistakes, including lack of funding to implement recommendations/plans, unclear indication on who will carry out and how, and lack of accountability. While outcomes happen at a high level, they do not take into consideration local conditions and needs of real people. He mentioned a number of policy achievements in the GMS, including: acceptance by governments of trafficking as an important and relevant issue, acceptance of a multi-lateral approach (involving government, UN, civil society), the COMMIT and the Second Subregional Plan of Action (SPA II) – as blueprints for action with supporting indicators, laws that protect victims (Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia). National plans, bilateral collaboration through MOUs, and reintegration mechanisms are in place. A number of policy gaps were identified relating to operationalization of national plans of action, trafficking laws to protect victims, non-ratification by some countries of the UN Convention, and other concerns.

Discussion:

33. In response to a query from PRC, Mr. Friedman explained that each country has to determine its own definition of trafficking, for instance, as differentiated from kidnapping.

34. Community vulnerability assessment uses different factors in determining vulnerability, and helps in sorting out issues that are important in understanding the continuum of vulnerability. It helps to determine at what point vulnerability exists, e.g., to exploitation, discrimination, etc.

35. While some countries have not yet ratified the UN convention, it does not mean that they will not ratify the convention. It may be that the legal framework is not yet in place and the process is still ongoing.

36. It was noted that countries are in the best position to decide what they want for themselves.

37. Mr. Phil Marshall, ADB Consultant, presented the status, findings, and recommendations from RETA 6448 – Integrating Human Trafficking and Safe Migration into Regional Cooperation. To date, country consultations and preliminary review of information on trafficking in persons (TIP) and ADB’s anti-TIP approaches linked to transport projects have been done. He noted that the inclusion of TIP components in road projects has shown limited success so far, as TIP is seen as an add-on, and thus may not be monitored closely. Also, those involved do not have the required expertise and understanding of the context of the problem. Nonetheless, there have been some success stories, notably in including safe migration in HIV training for vulnerable groups e.g., community youth and sex workers. Regional economic integration and development might impact on TIP in the context of poverty alleviation/increased job opportunities, better communication structures, and better access to education and health. On the other hand, REI might result in increasing economic disparity and consumerism, increased demand for cheap labor across borders, disruption to traditional lifestyles, and new migration routes and increased reach of traffickers. New roads might affect TIP in the context of providing alternatives to migration, increased migration, rapid erosion of traditional values and support structures, land alienation and loss of natural resources, growth of sex trade, and labor conditions on the road itself which differ depending on local context. Certain problems have been identified concerning existing anti-TIP approaches including huge resources spent on general awareness raising but with very little impact in most cases, and overly optimistic assessment of the potential of vocational training for providing jobs as a prevention strategy. He suggested some possible priorities for the Social Development Subgroup, including strengthening regional capacity on social work, addressing issue of birth registration, strengthening and implementation of laws on alimony/child support (to address vulnerability of single mothers), strengthening capacity in behavior change communication, campaigns against discrimination, integration of safe migration/anti-TIP activities into other programs e.g., HIV prevention, engaging with other working groups (tourism, transport), and providing social protection in an emergency context.

Discussion:

38. It was noted that most prevention programs work on the premise that people who do not migrate do not get trafficked. These programs work in reinforcing people to do what they want, i.e, to stay in their own communities, by providing them with enough opportunities.

39. There is lack of data on trafficking, and there is a need to systematically consolidate and organize available data in databases.

40. Copies of presentations under this Session are in Appendix 8.

3.5: Operationalizing Social Development Concerns in the GMS

41. Mr. Xayabandith Insisiengmay, Deputy Director, Division of Environment, Lao Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT), presented the national HIV/AIDS situation and the steps MPWT has taken to incorporate HIV prevention into their transport projects. Lao PDR remains a low prevalence country with an estimated 0.1%. The MPWT has its HIV Strategic Plan being implemented in collaboration with the Centre for HIV/AIDS & STI (CHAS) with technical support from ADB and Burnet Institute. The overall objective of the plan is to prevent the transmission of HIV among the MPWT workforce and communities living in the vicinity of large-scale infrastructure construction sites. Strategies include: situational analysis; collaboration and advocacy; capacity building; prevention; treatment, care and support; reduction of stigma and discrimination; and reduction of substance abuse in the workplace. Main challenge faced in implementing the plan is the low level of capacity of MPWT staff as HIV is not high in the agenda of the ministry. Still, there are factors for success including the strong ownership and support of high-level decision makers within the ministry, good understanding of HIV issues by the existing HIV/AIDS Prevention Committee, and support from ADB and Burnet Institute.

Discussion

42. It was noted that all GMS countries have their respective national HIV/AIDS prevention strategy/program, and it is important that these plans are linked with the other concerned ministries and GMS working groups. It was further noted that the emergence of the mining industry, particularly in Lao PDR, which involves many workers from other countries working in shifts and who visit service women, needs serious attention.

43. Mr. Vorasack Pravongviengkham, Deputy Director General, Lao National Radio, presented work done on producing radio drama for ethnic groups on HIV prevention. This was supported through LNR-ADB-UNESCO Projects (e.g., RETA 6247 on Reducing the Risk and Vulnerability against HIV/AIDS among Ethnic Minority Groups through Communication Strategies). Languages covered were Hmong (2003-2005), Khmu (2006-2007), and Lao (2006-2007). He explained the process/methodology involved - from information collection, pre-test production, testing, editing, production of CDs for distribution and advertisement, and final radio broadcast of the drama. The drama received favorable feedback from the audience. Obstacles faced related to the production process (e.g., short pre-test, long editing process, and distance of pre-test locations). For future work, it was recommended that ADB and UNESCO provide more support and on a regular basis, and to produce video dramas as well.

Discussion:

44. Radio is still the most affordable and main source of information for the poor in Lao PDR, especially those in remote locations. The radio drama has helped raise awareness in the general public about the risks of HIV/AIDS. National survey conducted among target population showed that 80% learned information about the risks of HIV/AIDS through the radio. As part of the ADB evaluation on the impact of the radio dramas, the pre-test showed very low knowledge about HIV/AIDS. The evaluation later found quite significant changes and impact in knowledge level during the evaluation phase. Radio dramas can be played on community radio and over loudspeakers. Moving

forward, the methodology and research teams are in place. The skills developed can be used in developing dramas in other areas or sectors like tourism.

45. Ms. Kyoko Kusakabe, Asian Institute of Technology, presented AIT's ongoing research on gender, transportation, and mobility along the GMS economic corridors, i.e., North-South, East-West, and Southern Economic Corridors. She noted that concomitant with increased connectivity since the start of the GMS Program in 1992 in terms of subregional roads, telecommunications links, and power transmission interconnection, there has been a corresponding growth in intra-GMS trade and enhanced regional economic integration. The key question being addressed by the research study is whether local women and men have benefited from this development. The study is part of a project on capacity building for gender, poverty and mobility analysis of road transportation development in the GMS supported by the ASEAN Foundation, and covering Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. It is examining changes in livelihoods and income, access to social services, gender division of labor, access to and control over resources, social network, and gender relations. It is looking at the impact of participation in road construction and of cross border trade on local men and women in selected locations along the economic corridors in the 4 countries. ADB is providing support to include PRC in the project coverage. Emerging key findings show that while road construction/improvement has increased mobility of people and goods, the benefit is distributed unequally between gender, age, and ethnicity. Hence, there is a need to introduce different support mechanisms and to coordinate policies in non-transportation sectors to ensure that marginalized groups of people are able to benefit from road development. The preliminary findings of the study will be presented at an International Workshop on Gender, Economic Integration, and Cross-border Road Infrastructure Development: Poverty and Mobility in the Context of Greater Mekong Sub-region scheduled on 6-7 May 2010 at AIT, Thailand.

Discussion:

46. ADB is also supporting the publication of the research report and it would be useful if those who are doing related work could share their materials for incorporation in the final report. The study will be completed by mid-2010. The draft report will be shared with the SDS.

47. There are growing concerns about how the road connectivity translates into more benefits to border towns, how they could be more relevant to the communities, and how these communities can be prepared to maximize the benefits from the roads/corridors.

48. Mr. Thavipeth Oula, Deputy Director General, Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA), presented their experience in mainstreaming gender and ethnic concerns in tourism activities in Lao PDR under the GMS tourism development projects. Tourism is a major player in the country (direct employment: 20,000; indirect employment: 300,000; overall: 47% are women), There are many job opportunities (direct and indirect) for women and ethnic minorities in the tourism sector. Ethnic groups are increasingly involved in providing labor and handicrafts for restaurants and accommodation establishments. Many ethnic groups operate community-based tourism enterprises. To guide gender mainstreaming in the tourism sector, LNTA prepared and approved in 2007 a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in the Lao Tourism Sector. With the support of ADB through the Mekong Tourism Development Project (MTDP) and GMS Sustainable Tourism Development Project (STDP), the LNTA as the executing agency

plays the key role for implementing the Gender Strategy and Action Plan. The two projects include gender and ethnic participation plans that target minimum female participation at 40% and ethnic participation to match that of the population in project target. In the case of the MTDP, women and ethnic minorities have been actively involved in community-based tourism and supply chain activities. STDP, on the other hand, has incorporated gender and ethnic participation strategies and targeted programs at the national and provincial levels. Lessons learned from these projects show that traditions greatly influence the participation of women and ethnic minorities and it is difficult to reach the goal of 40%. The MTDP was only able to reach about 31% female participation. Much of the work available is low level with limited access to management roles due to limited training and skills, and women are largely ill-informed about job opportunities in tourism. It is important to set gender and ethnic participation targets and to appoint gender and ethnic participation focal points.

Discussion

49. Women and ethnic groups can benefit from pro-poor tourism through community-based activities. One criterion applied in the Lao case is the selection of the poorest, they should have attraction for tourists, or they can be part of the supply chain, say, by producing handicrafts. Local ethnic minorities are classified into groups depending on their particular skills/talents, and earnings are put into a village a fund that can be accessed for loans to put up tourism services like homestay facilities.

50. To ensure better coordination of programs, it was suggested that the SDS should collaborate with the GMS Tourism and Transport Working Groups through cross-sector participation in working group meetings.

51. Copies of presentations under this Session are in [Appendix 9](#).

Session 4:

4.1: Discussion on Social Development Concerns – Small Group Work

52. Ms. Anupma Jain, ADB, led in facilitating the small group session. The Meeting broke into small groups to develop an implementation outline for current and future initiatives that address the agreed priority social development concerns, and look at mechanisms for improving coordination. The outputs of the small groups were later reported back to plenary.

4.2 Report to Plenary on Proposed Pipeline Subregional Initiatives

53. Mr. Phil Marshall, ADB Consultant, facilitated the reporting by the small groups to the plenary on the results of their discussions on Questions 1-3: (i) What are the key social development issues in the GMS and cross border areas, as transport corridors become more economic development corridors? (ii) What are the future priorities for this subgroup? (iii) What areas would the subgroup like to see carried forward as part of the HRD sector in the next GMS Strategy? Results from each small group are summarized in the attached matrix ([Appendix 10](#)).

Question 4: Coordination mechanisms

54. The meeting recognized that there are a lot of links between SDS and other GMS working groups like the transport and tourism sectors. The meeting discussed suggestions on how SDS can interact with the work of those other groups both at the national and subregional levels. At the national level, there could be coordination of SDS issues with other national agencies through the country focal point for SDS. At the subregional level, a representative of WGHRD (or SDS) could attend meetings of other relevant working groups and give a presentation on overall HRD (or SDS) issues and action points on those issues. WGHRD (or SDS) could also provide a write-up/information sheet of overall HRD issues (example: HRD and tourism, HRD and transport) to circulate to the other working groups. As countries needed more time to consider these suggestions, it was agreed that countries would study closely the terms of reference of WGHRD and its subgroups as outlined in the HRD SFAP and come back with their reactions to ADB for further discussion at the next SDS meeting.

55. With regard to the designation of country SDS Focal Person, it was agreed that countries which have not designated their focal point would do so as soon as possible. PRC and Myanmar confirmed their designation of SDS country focal point. The other countries will send their confirmation to ADB as soon as possible.

56. The next SDS meeting will be held in Thailand; the exact venue and date will be communicated later.

Session 5: Closing Session

57. Ms. Susan Kerr, ADB, summarized the highlights of the 2-day meeting (Appendix 11).

58. Heads of GMS Delegations expressed their gratitude to the Lao Government and ADB for their kind arrangements for the meeting.

59. Ms. Kerr thanked all the participants for their active participation, Mrs. Keobang A and Mr. Ekelund for attending the opening and closing sessions, the ADB Lao Resident Mission, and the ADB Secretariat for their support.