

Socially Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Design Features of the Project

Based on the feasibility study team's extensive consultations and fieldwork (Chapter II), which fed into the poverty and social/gender analyses (Chapter III), as well as past good practices (Chapter I), the team identified and incorporated the social and gender issues that need to be addressed by the Timor-Leste Road Sector Improvement Project (Section A). The project's socially inclusive and gender-responsive design features (Section B) are expected to maximize the project's positive development impacts on the socially disadvantaged groups, such as the poor and women. They emphasize women's participation in grassroots decision-making processes and structures, employment opportunities, and ways to mitigate project-specific social and gender-responsive risks. By increasing the share of benefits accruing to the poor, women and other vulnerable groups, the socially inclusive and gender-responsive design features increase the chances of the project's success.

A. Social and Gender Issues Identified

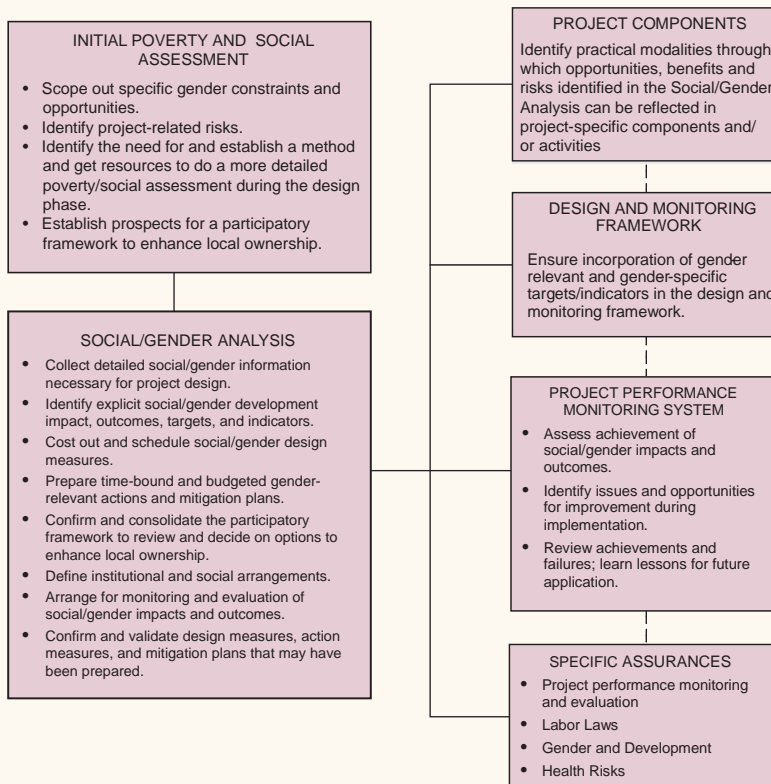
Because of its high poverty incidence (Chapter III, Section A), Timor-Leste is one of the least-developed countries in the world. Officially, more than 40% of the population is reported to live below the poverty line of \$0.55 per day. The difficult terrain, geology, poor transport system, and weather conditions contribute to the isolation of local communities and

severely limit access to water supplies, energy, food, basic social services (health care and education), and local markets.

The poor condition of feeder roads especially affects rural women in an environment where traditional gender roles disadvantage women in many respects (Chapter I, Sections B.1 and B.2; and Chapter III, Section B.5). Although much of the core road network remains in poor condition and have very light traffic, there has been evidence of increasing traffic accidents caused by the small increase in traffic. Therefore, traffic safety will increasingly become a serious concern as the road network is improved and traffic increases.

Awareness of HIV/AIDS and other STIs remains extremely low. The feasibility study team’s surveys demonstrate that 70–85% of the respondents were ignorant of what HIV/AIDS was. When questioned whether they knew

Figure 3: Incorporating Socially Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Features in Project Design



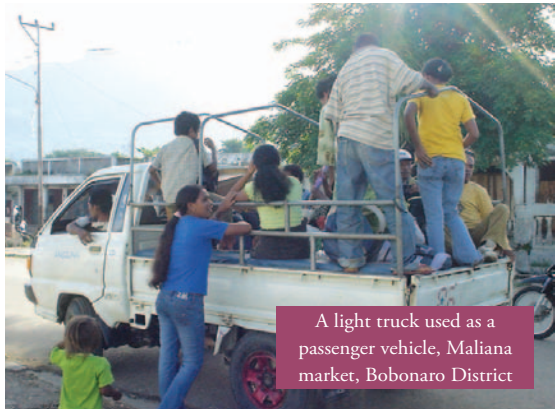
how to prevent the disease, approximately 90–100% responded that they did not know. Furthermore, only about 5% indicated that they used any kind of contraceptives. The survey also revealed that long-distance drivers engage in high-risk behavior of potential STI transmission. Although the latest joint surveys of the Ministry of Health of Timor-Leste and World Health Organization estimated a 0.64% HIV prevalence,²⁶ the lack of awareness suggests that road network improvements can pose a severe HIV/AIDS risk to currently isolated communities by increasing their exposure to increased road traffic (Box 12).

B. Socially Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Design Features of the Project

1. Vehicle Fleet Transformation Program

The downsizing of the United Nations presence resulted in all surplus vehicles reverting to the Government of Timor-Leste (GOTL). The feasibility study team recommended, as a very important policy action, that the GOTL sell these vehicles to the rich and international buyers at market prices, and use the proceeds to purchase lower-cost passenger and freight vehicles to serve the poor and very poor in rural areas (see Chapter III, Table 6). Along with a recommended credit subsidy program, the GOTL would ensure that the lower-cost vehicles are sold to entrepreneurs in the transport services sector to serve rural areas. As poor farmers

benefit from expanding transport services on the secondary and feeder road network, and an improved agricultural extension service, this policy will have a large impact on poverty alleviation, according to the distribution and poverty analysis (Chapter III, Section C).



²⁶ Ministry of Health. 2002. *HIV/AIDS Summary Report*. Dili.

Box 12: HIV/AIDS and Improved Roads: A High Risk

When the transport sector is improved, the risk of disease spreading across wide areas increases rapidly with the faster and more frequent movement of people and goods. Although the number of East Timorese who are HIV-positive appears to be very small, the risk of HIV/AIDS should be immediately addressed to avoid a full-fledged epidemic.

The National Strategic Plan and the statement in the Health Care Sector Investment Report prepared by the Government of Timor-Leste ministries indicate that understanding of HIV/AIDS in Timor-Leste is good. However, the field survey results suggest that lack of awareness of the disease in the country is serious: 84% of the local population, 71% of passengers, and 77% of vehicle operators interviewed were ignorant about HIV/AIDS. When asked whether they know how to prevent HIV/AIDS, 97% of the local population, 95% of the passengers, and 89% of the vehicle operators had no idea. Only 2% of the local population, 6% of the passengers, and 4% vehicle operators use any kind of contraceptives. The vehicle operator survey also questioned drivers about whether or not their work involves any overnight stays, and if it does, whether they have sexual intercourse. Of the sample 122 drivers, the work of 28 drivers involved overnight stays, and 31% of the drivers reported that they engaged in sexual intercourse at the location where they spent the night.

These findings, the lack of awareness and understanding of the disease, and long-distance drivers' involvement in risky sexual activities suggest a high risk of a rapid spread of HIV/AIDS along improved roads. Therefore, besides the general HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and other efforts currently underway by the government, nongovernment and international development agencies, the study team recommended that the proposed project incorporate a component on HIV/AIDS education for local construction workers hired for the project and possibly for long-distance drivers, who travel on the roads to be improved, as specific target groups.

2. Labor-Intensive Maintenance

Road assets can be prevented from rapidly deteriorating if routine maintenance is done on a timely basis. Routine road maintenance mainly involves clearing vegetation from shoulders, improving and shaping shoulders, clearing drains and culverts, and building stone/masonry-lined

drains. All these can be done without heavy equipment. Labor-intensive routine maintenance helps extend the life of roads and generates business opportunities and income for local communities.

Under the Project, the Illiomar–Lospalos road section, which is in relatively good and maintainable condition, was selected for routine maintenance using labor-intensive methods. Under this component, 10 contract packages for the road will target small contractors from local communities. An international road maintenance specialist will be provided to train the local contractors, improve their maintenance skills, and ensure that works are done properly. The goals of this pilot component of the project are to establish labor-intensive road maintenance policies, and institutionalize the bidding and contracting system to engage local small contractors. This will show the GOTL that the labor-intensive system is an effective way to do routine maintenance. The labor-intensive maintenance project component is expected to generate 77 person-years of employment, 70% or 54 person-years, will be for the poor; and benefit 18,000 people in the road's corridor of influence, of whom 16,000 are poor and 8,000 very poor.

3. Involvement of Women

The traditional gender division of labor (Chapter I, Sections B.1 and B.2; and Chapter III, Section B.5) can be challenged by proactively ensuring women's involvement in road rehabilitation and maintenance in a culturally sensitive manner. Areas identified for potential involvement of women include support services to construction camps and bioengineering works. As incorporated in the Grant Agreement (Section B.7), the Ministry of Public Works, through the project management unit, will encourage all contractors involved in project implementation to have 30% of all the wage labor force to be women (including women's involvement in at least 75% of the labor for bioengineering works). Providing targeted programs for labor skills transfer will enable women to have effective access to these employment opportunities.

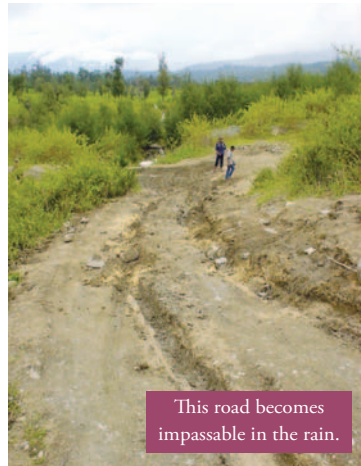
The project's community empowerment initiative for sustainable rehabilitation and maintenance of selected rural feeder roads (Section B.5) has a strong gender focus and supports a broad range of initiatives that include (i) participatory and gender-inclusive identification and selection of

rural feeder roads to be rehabilitated under the project; and (ii) skills transfer to women in bioengineering, agroforestry, and agricultural extension, combined with literacy, nutrition, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS prevention. These initiatives will include the design of sustainable modalities to ensure gender-inclusive maintenance of rehabilitated feeder roads.

4. Connection of Rural Areas with Community-Based Initiatives

Tangible benefits to the poor and isolated communities can more likely be achieved by ensuring the communities' connectivity to markets, towns, and health care and education facilities by rehabilitating selected feeder roads along with national roads (Chapter III, Section B.4). Actively involving local communities throughout the process—from identification and selection of roads to rehabilitation and maintenance, complemented by various training, skills transfer, and education initiatives, should increase their sense of “ownership” of the roads. This may increase the project's positive impacts by strengthening the communities' capacity to maintain the roads and contribute to the long-term sustainability of road improvements.

The project's community empowerment initiative (Section B.5) was designed to empower local communities to ensure community-based, labor-intensive, and sustainable rehabilitation and maintenance of rural feeder roads, with a range of complementary activities such as skills transfer, gender-targeted programs, and promotion of income-generating opportunities.



5. Community Empowerment Initiative

The project has four main components: (i) rehabilitation of three roads that consist of the following road links: Viqueque–Uatucarbau, Aituto–Betulala, Betulala–Same, Oeleu–Lourba, and Lourba–Zumalai; (ii) labor-intensive maintenance of Illiomar–Loपालos Road (Section B.2); (iii)

community empowerment initiative; and (iv) institutional strengthening of the Public Works Department of Timor-Leste. Of these, the community empowerment initiative was specifically designed to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to respond to the risks and opportunities associated with increased connectivity to the national roads. As this is a key design feature of the project to pilot a community-based, gender-inclusive development initiative, Appendix 1 describes the community empowerment initiative project component in detail.

6. Budget Allocation

Of the total \$12.5 million project cost, the community empowerment initiative component is estimated to cost \$560,000. For physical infrastructure development projects such as this Timor-Leste case, much attention is often given to the cost of detailed design and construction. Although ADB and other development partners emphasize poverty reduction and reaching out to vulnerable groups, if there is a budget limitation (which is normally the case), the project components whose budgets tend to be cut first are related to social development, including community and gender balance. It is important to note, however, that these specific design features are necessary if the improved physical infrastructure is to maximize its benefit to society in a sustainable manner. Therefore, appropriate and realistic costing for socially inclusive and gender-responsive design features is imperative.

7. Specific Assurances

To ensure that the above specific design features for socially inclusive and gender-responsive development are effectively implemented, a number of specific assurances pertaining to project monitoring and evaluation, use of laborers, employment of women as wage laborers, and mitigation of health risks were incorporated in the project's grant agreement (Box 13).

Box 13: Specific Assurances for Gender-Responsive Project Implementation

Project performance monitoring and evaluation. The Government, through the Project Management Unit (PMU), assisted by the international and domestic consultants engaged under the project, will monitor and evaluate the project's impacts. The Government will discuss and agree with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on the indicators and baseline data prepared by these consultants prior to the commencement of civil works, and ensure that the consultants monitor and compare the data during project implementation and upon project completion. The Government, through PMU, will submit monitoring and evaluation reports to ADB 1 month after the completion of the consultants' fieldwork. To the extent possible, the indicators and baseline data will make full use of sex-disaggregated data and information.

Labor laws. The Government, through PMU, will ensure that civil works contractors comply with all applicable labor laws and related international treaty obligations, and do not employ child labor for rehabilitation and maintenance activities.

Gender and development. PMU will (i) encourage local contractors to employ 30% women in road rehabilitation and labor-intensive maintenance of selected national roads (including at least 75% of those employed in bioengineering activities), (ii) provide equal pay to men and women for work of equal type in accordance with national laws and international treaty obligations, and (iii) provide safe working conditions for both men and women workers. Specific provisions to this effect will be included in the bidding documents. PMU will be responsible for monitoring the employment targets for women by reviewing periodically the payroll statements of the construction contractors through the engagement of CARE Timor-Leste, and will reflect progress in achieving the employment targets for women in the project's progress and completion reports.

Health risks. PMU will ensure that all civil works contractors engaged under the project participate in the HIV/AIDS prevention and road safety program in the construction campsites that will be funded under the project. Additionally, PMU will ensure that similar information on the risk of transmission of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases is disseminated to local communities in the corridors of influence, in coordination with national agencies working on this issue. PMU will include specific provisions to this effect in civil works contracts and will strictly monitor compliance through CARE Timor-Leste.

C. Overall Expected Poverty, Social, and Gender Impacts

With the above socially inclusive and gender-responsive design features, the project is expected to contribute to poverty reduction in the project area and the country by promoting economic growth through investment and road infrastructure improvement. Based on the poverty and social/gender analyses (Chapter III), the project will directly benefit road users (particularly the poor paying high transport costs, and vehicle operators and owners paying high operating costs), and the private sector as a whole. Upon completion, the project will have contributed to improvements in the villagers' welfare by (i) providing mobility to isolated societies; (ii) easing access to market centers for food, education, and health services; (iii) promoting trading, and hence, cash crop cultivation; and (iv) reducing transport costs for the private sector.



The project will reduce poverty by providing villagers in the project area with immediate income-generating opportunities. The field consultations (Chapter II, Section B) confirmed the people's strong desire to participate in the project as wage laborers during road rehabilitation, and their willingness to carry out community-based maintenance activities, including the labor-intensive maintenance and community empowerment initiative components (Sections B.2 and B.5). Overall, the project is estimated to benefit about 62,000 people, including 55,000 poor and 28,000 very poor. The national road rehabilitation project alone is estimated to benefit about 51,000 people, including 46,000 poor and 24,000 very poor.

Lastly, providing employment targets for project-related wage labor in the grant agreement and the necessary labor skills transfer for women (Section B.3) may serve as the first step toward involving more women in employment opportunities from which they have been traditionally excluded, such as the transport sector.