

# Successful Approaches in Designing Socially Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Transport Projects

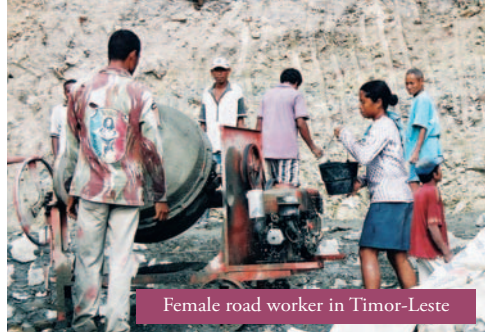
**T**he stakeholder consultations and data collection conducted by the feasibility study team (Chapter II), which formed the basis for the poverty and social/gender analyses (Chapter III), helped ADB successfully identify and incorporate socially inclusive and gender-responsive design features in the Timor-Leste Road Sector Improvement Project (Chapter IV). Based on the Timor-Leste experience, following are recommended approaches in designing socially inclusive and gender-responsive transport projects in Timor-Leste and other developing countries. Some are congruent to past international good practices (Chapter I).

## **A. Commitment to Social Inclusion and Gender Mainstreaming**

There must be a shared understanding between ADB and the feasibility study team that social and gender concerns—rather than an “afterthought” component in project design—must be viewed as key objectives in the initial stages of project design so that the ensuing interventions are credible and effective. This lays the foundation for overall commitment up to project implementation.

## B. Comprehensive Poverty, Social, and Gender Analyses

Rather than applying “new” methods to make the design of infrastructure projects more beneficial to the poor and marginalized groups (including women), this case study demonstrates that a rigorous poverty and social/gender analyses undertaken with the most appropriate and context-specific analytical



Female road worker in Timor-Leste

tools and methods during project design can achieve those benefits. This is true as long as key design features are included in the legally binding project assurances.

During project identification, adequate poverty and social/gender analyses must be carried out to identify women’s needs and constraints in accessing basic social services (health care, education, water supply, and sanitation) and market and employment opportunities. A risk assessment of women’s vulnerabilities to resettlement, human trafficking, and health-related risks (including sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS) must also be undertaken.

## C. Need for Women’s Involvement in Road Infrastructure Governance

The preparation of infrastructure-related projects must ensure (i) integration of women’s needs and constraints, (ii) women’s involvement in the prioritization and design of the projects, and (iii) establishment of adequate modalities for women to participate in infrastructure-related decision-making processes and structures contributing to the operation and maintenance of community infrastructure. The adoption of women’s employment targets and/or quotas must be considered within infrastructure projects. Vocational training and skills transfer to women in the areas of maintenance and management of road-related infrastructure should be included in project design.

## **D. Engaging Men on Gender Issues and Concerns**

Men and women often prioritize their needs differently. Men need to support changes in social conventions to encourage women to become more active and equal members of society. To avoid men viewing projects as a zero-sum game between themselves and women, a forum for discussion needs to be created to sensitize them to gender issues.

## **E. Encouraging Community Buy-in and Maximizing Stakeholder Consultations**

Encouraging community buy-in and maximizing consultations with stakeholders are critical to socially inclusive and gender-responsive project design. Ways to increase consultation and participation include: (i) generating awareness of the project, (ii) involving the communities in selecting the roads to be improved, (iii) employing community members in labor-based road improvements and maintenance, and (iv) training community members on how to benefit from the improved roads. This last item includes agricultural extension services that show community farmers how to switch from subsistence crops to cash crops that can now be more cheaply transported to markets.

Community ownership also plays an important role in maintaining the infrastructure once the project has been completed. If communities see they have a stake in a project, there is a greater likelihood that they will value the infrastructure and continue to maintain it. Generating awareness of the project, including its requirements and benefits, engages communities and—combined with the other actions—can help them develop a sense of ownership of the project.

By engaging in a dialogue on road transportation sector policy and investments in Timor-Leste, ADB has shown its strong commitment to improve the road network and its management to spearhead development in Timor-Leste. This enabled the feasibility study team to expand the dialogue to social, poverty, and gender dimensions and impacts of road infrastructure.

## **F. Providing Innovative Options**

The determination of ADB's team leader to include innovative approaches to boost the social and gender impacts of road infrastructure investments is crucial for effective project design. The Vehicle Fleet Transformation Program of the Road Sector Improvement Project, designed by the feasibility study team, provides a good example of thinking outside the box on issues separate from the project at hand to meet long-term goals of poverty reduction and inclusive development. This program provides creative solutions to a number of issues related to road conditions, transport services, and maintenance in the context of poverty reduction, and inclusive development. More opportunities for buying and selling cash crops and other products that this program would foster leads to greater independence for women in female-headed households, and lessens the risks associated with vulnerable women and children being trafficked into bonded labor or sex work. Economic empowerment of the most vulnerable in society, which primarily consist of women and children, largely affects health and living standards and creates further opportunities for education. In addition, this proposed program draws on important lessons learned from other regional neighbors, such as the Philippines, that faced a similar situation after World War II.

## **G. Partnering with Local and International NGOs**

Local and international NGOs working on the ground possess in-depth knowledge of local communities and have experience working with them. Working with local faith-based organizations also helps define culturally sensitive modalities to mitigate the risks of spreading STIs and HIV/AIDS resulting from increased traffic and connectivity.

Collaborating with the international NGO, CARE Timor-Leste, for the Road Sector Improvement Project's community empowerment initiative offers an excellent opportunity to enhance project effectiveness by building on CARE's expertise and relationship with communities. For the interventions, it has been important to leverage the innovative practices developed by community-based NGOs that have been working in Timor-Leste for many years.

## **H. Developing a Project-Specific Gender Action Plan**

Gender action plans are critical to infrastructure projects to ensure that project benefits are geared toward women; and that gender-equitable advances are planned, implemented, monitored, and funded. While this was not done for the Road Sector Improvement Project, a project-specific gender action plan imposes a discipline on enforcing the gender-relevant policy actions agreed upon with the Government and Project Management Unit.