

# Health and Education Needs of Ethnic Minorities in the Greater Mekong Subregion



The photographs on the cover and title page were taken by study team members during field survey work in the highland areas of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

The cover photographs are images of highland, ethnic minority people. Starting from the top and moving clockwise around the diamond collage, the photographs are from: Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia (top, photo by Hean Sokhom); Vientiane Province, Lao PDR (right, photo by Myles Elledge); Chiang Mai Province, Thailand (bottom, photo by Preecha Upayokin); Phongsali Province, Lao PDR (left, photo by Inthasone Phetsiriseng).

The pictures on the title page are views of the landscape of selected areas of the study team's field work and are representative of the topography of the highland regions in the four countries. Starting from the top and moving clockwise around the diamond, the images are from: Son La Province, Viet Nam (top, photo by Vuong Xuan Tinh); Vientiane Province, Lao PDR (right, photo by Myles Elledge); Lampang Province, Thailand (bottom, photo by Myles Elledge); and Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia (left, photo by Hean Sokhom).

The pictures on page xviii are some of the faces of ethnic minority villagers in the provinces where the study team completed field surveys. Starting from the top and moving clockwise around the diamond, the images are: Children playing in Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia (top, photo by Hean Sokhom); young girl caring for infant in Vientiane Province, Lao PDR (right, photo by Myles Elledge); village elementary school teacher and her family in Dak Lak Province, Viet Nam, near the border with Cambodia (bottom center, photo by Myles Elledge); village elder in Lampang Province, Thailand (left, photo by Myles Elledge).

©2001 by Asian Development Bank

All rights reserved. Published 2001

Printed in Manila, Philippines

Maps and photos: ©2000 by Asian Development Bank

All rights reserved.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv	3	CROSCUTTING THEMES	17
FOREWORD	v	3.1	Constraints to Access	17
ABBREVIATIONS	vi	3.2	Country-Based Observations on Constraints	30
MAPS	vii	3.3	Finding Solutions	30
Ethnic Minority Populations by Province: Greater Mekong Subregion	vii	4	RECOMMENDATIONS	33
Percent Ethnic Minority Populations in Cambodia: Selected Provinces	viii	4.1	Replicate Good Practices in the Social Sector	33
Percent Ethnic Minority Populations in Lao PDR	ix	4.2	Strengthen Policies and Programs	35
Percent Ethnic Minority Populations in Thailand: Selected Provinces	x		BIBLIOGRAPHY	39
Percent Ethnic Minority Populations in Viet Nam: Selected Provinces	xi		APPENDICES	
Ethnic Minority Populations and 1998 Literacy Rates: Cambodia Provinces	xii		A Country Summaries	A-1
Ethnic Minority Populations and Infant Mortality Rates: Lao PDR Provinces	xiii		B Potential Health and Education Programming to Assist Ethnic Minorities in the Greater Mekong Subregion	B-1
Ethnic Minority Populations and Literacy Rates: Lao PDR Provinces	xiv		TABLES	
Ethnic Minority Populations and Lower Secondary Education Enrollment in Viet Nam	xv		Table 2.1: Public Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of GNP (1995)	7
Ethnic Minority Populations and Infant Mortality Rates in Viet Nam	xvi		Table 2.2: Literacy Rate for Ethnic Minorities and Total Population (percent)	9
1 INTRODUCTION	1		Table 2.3: Comparison of National and Highland Infant Mortality Rates (IMR)	13
1.1 Study Goal and Objectives	1		Table 2.4: Comparison of National Maternal Mortality Rates (MMRs)	13
1.2 Study Methodology and Key Definitions	3		Table 2.5: Comparison of Highland Immunization Rates	15
1.3 Report Content	4		Table 3.1: Constraints to Access and Use of Social Services by Ethnic Minorities	18
2 THE STATUS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES	5		Table 3.2: Summary of Constraints and Country Observations	31
2.1 Ethnic Minorities in the GMS	5		Table 4.1: Programs of Good Practice	34
2.2 Ethnic Minorities and the Social Sector	6		FIGURES	
2.3 The Education Status of Ethnic Minorities	8		Figure 3.1: Percentage of Births in Modern Health Facilities	27
2.4 The Health Status of Ethnic Minorities	12			
2.5 Environment and Ethnic Minorities	16			



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared as part of the project “Health and Education Needs of Ethnic Minorities in the Greater Mekong Subregion,” through Asian Development Bank (ADB) TA 5794-REG, under contract to Research Triangle Institute (RTI), North Carolina, USA.

The report was produced by study team members Mr. Myles Elledge (team leader), and Dr. Erik Bloom (health and education economist), along with research team members in each of the four focus countries: Mr. Khieu Borin (health) and Dr. Hean Sokhom (education) based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Ms. Khamtanh Chanty (health) and Mr. Inthasone Phetsiriseng (education) based in Vientiane, Lao PDR; Dr. Preecha Upayokin (health) and Dr. Chupinit Kesmanee (education), based in Bangkok, Thailand; and Dr. Bui The Cuong (health) and Dr. Vuong Xuan Tinh (education) based in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

Beyond the study team, a broad constituency of actors contributed to this effort. A series of Steering Committee meetings in 1999 and 2000 brought together key public sector actors from ethnic affairs, health, and education ministries during the course of the project. The project study team is grateful for the support provided by the Steering Committee members in each country throughout the process. By country, the Steering Committee members included:

**Cambodia:** Mr. Seng Narong (Inter-Ministerial Committee for Highland Peoples’ Development – Ministry of Rural Development), Mr. So Chhunn (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports), Dr. Sok Touch (Ministry of Health), Dr. Hong Rathmony (Ministry of Health), Ms. Luon Chanmoly (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports), Ms. Chhay Kim Sotheavy (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports).

**Lao PDR:** Mr. Pheng Lasoukanh (Lao Front for National Construction), Mr. Ouam Sengchandavong (Ministry of Education), Mr. Meckham Silykhoun (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr. Bovonethat

Duangchak (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Ms. Sathaphone Insixiangmai (Ministry of Health), Dr. Somchanh Xaisida (Ministry of Health).

**Thailand:** Dr. Songphan Singkaew (Ministry of Public Health), Mr. Chantharat Kotkam (Ministry of Education).

**Viet Nam:** Mr. Ho Minh Chien (Ministry of Planning and Investment), Mr. Mong Ky Slay (Ministry of Education and Training), Mr. Truong Viet Dung (Ministry of Health Care), Mr. Trinh Cong Khanh and Mrs. Luon Thu Chau (Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas – CEMMA).

Furthermore, representatives from international organizations, local and international nongovernmental organizations, the public sector, and ethnic minority communities assisted in reviewing the research findings and in formulating the report observations. In-country workshops held in July and August 2000 provided an opportunity for candid and insightful dialogue.

Close collaboration with and flexibility from Edward M. Haugh, Jr., Manager, Education, Health, and Population (West) Division ADB and the ADB Project Officer, Dr. Indu Bhushan (Senior Project Economist), have contributed greatly to the success of what is a challenging topic and research study. The thoughts and ideas offered by representatives of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) also have supported the project’s objectives.

Ms. Apiwan Pansook, Project Assistant in the project office in Chiang Mai, Thailand, coordinated all the administrative and logistics details for the reports and meetings, without which the project would not have been possible. The report has also benefited greatly from the contributions of RTI editors Ms. Erin Newton and Ms. Anna Weaver.

Reports, maps, and general information prepared by RTI under this project are available at <http://www.rti.org/mekong>. All photographs used in the reports were taken by members of the project team.





## FOREWORD

The mighty Mekong river flows through six countries—Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Yunnan Province of China—linking them not only geographically but also economically and culturally. This area, called the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), is characterized by ethnic diversity. About 21 million people from ethnic minorities live among the 240 million people in the GMS, many of them in remote mountainous terrain, with relatively poor social and physical infrastructure.

People from the ethnic minority groups in the GMS experience more than their fair share of socioeconomic deprivation. Handicapped by lower-than-average levels of health and education, and lacking access to capital and economic infrastructure, people from these ethnic minority groups have not benefited from expanding economic opportunities or been able to contribute actively to economic development. Meeting the basic education and health needs of ethnic minorities will be an important priority as the GMS countries and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) push ahead with their mandate of reducing poverty and improving people’s quality of life.

This study is a synthesis of four country studies undertaken in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam to analyze the health

and education status and needs of highland ethnic minorities. The study also identifies the constraints that prevent ethnic minority groups from improving their health and education levels. It reviews policies and programs and highlights examples of good practices. We hope the report will provoke in-depth discussion on options available for improving the human capital of ethnic minorities and assist the respective governments and their development partners, including ADB, to fine-tune their policies, programs, and social investments to obtain the greatest possible benefits for these groups.

This study was initiated by ADB in response to a request by the Greater Mekong Subregion Working Group on Human Resource Development, which identified the poor health and education status of ethnic minorities as a key priority. The government of Japan and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom funded the study.

ADB expresses its sincere appreciation to the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam for their commitment to these issues and their active involvement in producing the report. ADB also thanks the government of Japan and DFID for their financial support.



Akira Seki  
Director, Agriculture and Social Sectors Department (West)  
Asian Development Bank  
30 June 2001



# ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim	LFNC	Lao Front for National Reconstruction
ADB	Asian Development Bank	MDM	Médecin du Monde (French NGO)
ARI	acute respiratory infection	MMR	maternal mortality rate
AusAID	Australian Aid Agency	MOE	Ministry of Education
CEMMA	Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas (Viet Nam)	MOH	Ministry of Health
CIDSE	Cooperation Internationale pour le Développement et Solidarité (Cambodia)	MOPH	Ministry of Public Health (Thailand)
CWS	Church World Service (international NGO)	NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products (Program, Cambodia)
DETC	Department of Economic and Technical Cooperation (Thailand)	NTUP	Network Teacher Upgrading Program
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)	NGO	nongovernmental organization
DNFE	Department of Nonformal Education (Thailand)	ODA	Overseas Development Assistance (UK)
DPW	Department of Public Welfare (Thailand)	PHC	primary health care; also Primary Health Care (Program, Viet Nam)
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion	RETA	regional technical assistance
HAE	Hill Areas Education (Program, Thailand)	SCA	Save the Children Australia
HHDC	Highland Health Development Center (Thailand)	TA	technical assistance
HRD	human resource development	TB	tuberculosis
HU	Health Unlimited (UK NGO)	UK	United Kingdom
IEC	information, education, and communication	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ILO	International Labour Organisation	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee for Highland Peoples' Development (Cambodia)	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IMPECT	(Association of) Inter-Mountain Peoples for Education and Culture in Thailand	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
IMR	infant mortality rate	VLSS	Viet Nam Living Standards Survey
JSRC	Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee (Japanese NGO)	WB	World Bank
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic	WHO	World Health Organization

