

SUMMARY POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL STRATEGY

Country and Project Title: Greater Mekong Subregion Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Project

Lending/Financing
Modality:

Sector

Department/
Division:Southeast Asia Department/
Environment and Natural Resources Division**I. POVERTY ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY****A. Link to the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and Country Partnership Strategy**

The expansion of the subregional economy has been correlated with a significant reduction of poverty in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) as a whole. However, poverty remains widespread with a substantial portion of the combined 320 million GMS population living below the poverty line and many more surviving at subsistence level. Socioeconomic disparities are widening, as benefits and costs of development have not been shared evenly across countries and groups.¹

In 1992, the countries collaborated to form the GMS Economic Cooperation Program with assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to facilitate "sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty by strengthening economic linkages among member countries." The Biodiversity Conservation Corridor Initiative (BCI) is the flagship program of the Core Environment Program^b of the GMS endorsed by the GMS leaders at the Second GMS Summit in July 2005. BCI-phase 1 (BCI 1) was implemented from 2006 to 2009 in six pilot GMS sites, including in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Viet Nam.

Key directions for poverty reduction, as linked to natural resource management in the three countries, are to improve forest cover by restoring degraded forests and establishing forest connectivity. BCI 2 attempts to build on the positive experiences with BCI 1. It covers a total population of 171,936 or 34,522 households in the three countries: 50% are poor households and on average 58% are indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, or ethnic groups (Cambodia 31%, the Lao PDR 53%, and Viet Nam 85%).

BCI 2 is in line with the thrusts of the 10-year strategic framework, protecting the environment and promoting sustainable use of shared natural resources as it contributes to pillar 4 of ADB's regional cooperation and integration strategy—cooperation in regional public goods. Coordinated actions will be imperative to address environmental consequences of current and planned GMS and national investments in the economic corridors. BCI is in line with ADB's policy and the strategic objectives and policies of countries in the GMS, which have strongly endorsed the BCI in resolutions of the GMS Working Group on Environment and at the GMS Ministerial Meeting in 2009, and are reflected in ADB's GMS BCI Strategic Framework and Technical Assessment (2005), a 10-year framework.

B. Poverty Analysis**Targeting Classification:** Targeted intervention—geographic (TI-G)

Key issues. Uneven wealth distribution in GMS countries has definite topographic dimensions, with geographic conditions, level of infrastructure development, and characteristics of economic sectors and labor markets shaping poverty patterns². Poverty incidence among ethnic minorities is the highest and the pace of poverty reduction slowest.^{3c} Biodiversity corridors are geographic areas within or cutting across the GMS economic corridors that need to be placed under sustainable management regimes to secure local livelihoods and investments, and maintain ecosystem services for future generations.

Design features. BCI 2 builds on experiences of phase 1 activities that are assessed to be pro-poor and pro-ethnic minorities focused on remote mountain areas. Under BCI 2, biodiversity corridors or multiple use areas will allow for current, existing forest blocks as allocated by the three governments to remain protected as they are under various status of state protection. Connectivity between forest blocks will be restored as a result of broad community support generated through appropriate consultation and participation modalities. Stakeholder guidance will be imperative for establishing (i) linear forest links, or (ii) stepping stone forest blocks to establish connectivity in the corridors.

Intensive capacity building across the project cycle, and ensuring broad community support in subproject prioritization, planning, selection, and implementation will be observed. Zoning will primarily protect the existing forest resources and rights of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples to access nontimber forest products (NTFPs). Fast-paced economic developments, if conducted in an unplanned manner, will heavily impact on the remaining natural forests, ecosystem services, and forest-based livelihoods. The project will facilitate the provision of tenurial security to ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. The BCI aims to provide incentives, funding, and technical assistance (TA) enabling local people to grow trees of their choice in their homestead plantations and community forests for subsistence needs as well as for fuelwood consumption and construction. Microcredit schemes for village and commune enterprises are to be encouraged for local (wood and nonwood) primary processing to emerge or existing ones to become vibrant. By establishing management regimes in the corridors, jobs will be created for local residents.

The expected impact of the project is for the development of climate-resilient transboundary biodiversity conservation corridors sustaining livelihoods and investments in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. By 2018, the project is expected to result in the establishment of GMS biodiversity conservation corridors with supportive policy and regulatory frameworks in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Viet Nam maintaining ecosystem connectivity and services. The project includes measures for (i) institutional and

¹ ADB. 2007. *Midterm Review of the Greater Mekong Subregion Strategic Framework 2002–2012*. Manila.

² Implemented under ADB. 2005. *Technical Assistance for the Core Environment Program and Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. Manila (TA 6289-REG).

³ Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. 2005. *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. Ha Noi.

community strengthening to manage biodiversity corridors; (ii) biodiversity corridors restoration, ecosystem services protection, and sustainable management by local resource managers; (iii) livelihood improvement and small-scale infrastructure support in target villages, clusters, and communes; and (iv) project management and support services.
II. SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY
<p>A. Findings of Social Analysis</p> <p>Key issues. BCI 2 direct beneficiaries are poor upland farmers, ethnic minority and indigenous peoples households, and women and children living in and dependent on the forest ecosystem in nationally acknowledged poor communes and villages of the three countries. The project targets an estimated 34,522 households in 22 communes in Cambodia, 69 villages of the Lao PDR, and 34 communes in Viet Nam. Of the total number of households, 44% are in Cambodia, 42% in Viet Nam, and 14% in the Lao PDR. While the Lao PDR appears to have the most geopolitical units (69 villages), it must be noted that the communes in Cambodia and Viet Nam are clusters of villages with as many as 10 villages per commune. Population density greatly varies across BCI 2 sites. Most densely populated is Viet Nam with 269 persons per square kilometer followed by Cambodia with 83, and the Lao PDR with 27.</p> <p>Subsistence farming persists as a part of BCI 2 farm households. In the Lao PDR, monthly income ranges from \$30.49 to \$426.83 per household. An estimated range for Viet Nam BCI 2 households is \$79.4–\$132.3 across communes. The worst off among the three countries is Cambodia, posting distinct estimated averages for Koh Kong at \$50 and Monduliri \$15. Cambodia has the largest number of poor households (75%), with Viet Nam the least poor (30%) and the Lao PDR with 35%. Even if Viet Nam posts the least values in terms of poverty, 91.2% of total poor are ethnic minorities.</p> <p>An estimated average of 58% of BCI 2 beneficiaries in the three countries are indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, or ethnic groups. In Cambodia BCI 2 sites, indigenous peoples constitute roughly 31%; the Lao PDR affected ethnic groups constitute 53%; and ethnic minorities dominate Viet Nam BCI 2 sites (85%). All ethnic minority groups within BCI 2 sites belong to the Mon Khmer language group who trace their productive activities to swidden agriculture, with the Gie Trieng mostly shifting to wet rice cultivation.</p> <p>Common constraints and issues for BCI 2 sites in these countries are (i) lack of rural infrastructure and social services (i.e., roads, irrigation, water supply, and health and sanitation); (ii) changing weather and rainfall patterns that result in flooding, drought, and other natural disasters; (iii) food security and agricultural productivity; and (iv) lack of land for production and other land issues. Households in all three countries are reported to be without food for several months, especially during the dry season and need to sell family labor to gain additional cash to buy food. Household beneficiaries, ethnic minorities in particular, ask for (i) forest restoration to address NTFP enrichment, (ii) facilitation of land certification, and (iii) soil stabilization to address now frequently occurring natural disasters that affect their lives and modes of production.</p> <p>One of the biggest challenges is the large number of hydropower dams, infrastructure development, and agricultural (rubber and palm oil) and mining concessions that may significantly impact on the high-value biodiversity habitats (forests) in the corridor and possible displacement of human populations, especially indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. In Cambodia, many of these indigenous peoples only recently returned to their traditional lands after being displaced during the years of civil strife. Localized, yet critical challenges to biodiversity and local livelihoods are illegal hunting for wildlife trade, forest clearance for agriculture, logging, and unsustainable NTFP extraction. Governance and government staff capacity for environmental awareness are other concerns.</p>
<p>B. Consultation and Participation</p> <p>1. Consultative and participatory workshops at inception and midterm stages were conducted across the three countries covering central, provincial, district, and separate sample village and commune consultations. Institutional protocols were observed and consultations were conducted in the local language with the assistance of nationals.</p> <p>2. What level of consultation and participation (C&P) is envisaged during the project implementation and monitoring? <input type="checkbox"/> Information sharing <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative decision making <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Empowerment</p> <p>3. Was a C&P plan prepared? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>C&P plans are based on the prepared ADB social safeguards framework documents based on informed decision-making. The safeguards documents outline procedures for the participation and consultation of indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, ethnic groups, and women. International and national social safeguards specialists will be contracted to build capacity in all relevant institutions.</p>
<p>C. Gender and Development</p> <p>Key issues. The gender analysis shows that the ethnic minority populations in BCI sites comprise about 58% of the total population: Cambodia 31%, the Lao PDR 53%, and Viet Nam 85%. Hence, gender issues will largely deal with poor, rural, and ethnic minority women. Identified issues at the regional project preparatory TA stage are (the gender action plan provides details): (i) illiteracy; (ii) lack of or poor rural infrastructure and social services in remote BCI 2 areas; (iii) poor health and sanitation; (iv) low income; (v) poor credit performance; and (vi) indigenous people, ethnic group, ethnic minority-specific concerns.</p> <p>Key actions.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender plan <input type="checkbox"/> Other actions or measures <input type="checkbox"/> No action or measure</p>

The project observes stipulations of the various gender laws per country. Subprojects for BCI 2 will largely benefit women, specifically (i) equal access of women to employment, training, and capacity-building opportunities; (ii) participation of the Women's Union (the Lao PDR and Viet Nam), Women's Affairs (Cambodia), and Ethnic Minority Office (Viet Nam) and Indigenous Peoples Office (Cambodia) in the project implementation units; (iii) representation and participation in community working groups, consultation, planning, and decision-making; (iv) priority or preference given to livelihood project proposals and feasibility studies prepared and submitted by community womenfolk; where animal production is paramount, full technical support in animal production will be extended; (v) use of gender responsive and sensitive modes of information, education and communication (IEC) in all capacity building activities; (vi) collection of gender-disaggregated data for monitoring of project benefits and impacts; and (vii) equal opportunities for land certification as well as other project benefits flow to female heads of households.

III. SOCIAL SAFEGUARD ISSUES AND OTHER SOCIAL RISKS

Issue	Significant/Limited/ No Impact	Strategy to Address Issue	Plan or Other Measures Included in Design
Involuntary resettlement	Limited. BCI 2 subprojects are community-initiated and will be limited to rehabilitation of existing structures (farm to market roads) and communal irrigation) and construction of communal potable water supply systems, thus no land acquisition will be required. Selection criteria for subprojects categorically stipulate that no physical and economic displacement will transpire.	Resettlement framework documents per country were prepared and submitted, and mitigating measures were incorporated in subproject selection criteria. As well stakeholders were engaged for consultation and participation to provide broad community support.	<input type="checkbox"/> Resettlement plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resettlement framework <input type="checkbox"/> Combined resettlement plan and indigenous peoples plan <input type="checkbox"/> Combined resettlement framework and indigenous peoples planning framework <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and social management system arrangement <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and social impact matrix <input type="checkbox"/> None
Indigenous peoples	Positively significant. An estimated average of 58% of BCI 2 beneficiaries in the three countries are indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, or ethnic groups. BCI 2 protects the rights and interests of these groups over natural resources by strengthening access and tenurial rights as well as providing capacity building to uphold such rights, livelihood, and community development funds.	Ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and ethnic groups development framework documents were prepared and submitted. Mitigating measures have been incorporated in project design and subproject selection criteria, and stakeholders included in consultation and participation to ensure broad community support.	<input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous peoples plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indigenous peoples planning framework <input type="checkbox"/> Combined indigenous peoples plan and resettlement plan <input type="checkbox"/> Combined resettlement framework and indigenous peoples planning framework <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous peoples plan elements integrated in project design with a summary <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and social management system arrangement <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and social impact matrix <input type="checkbox"/> None
Labor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Labor retrenchment <input type="checkbox"/> Core labor standards	Positively significant.	The project will provide employment opportunities to local populations in terms of reforestation, agricultural production, and other livelihood opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other action <input type="checkbox"/> No action
Affordability	Positively significant.	Project benefits will flow primarily to the poor.	<input type="checkbox"/> Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No action
Other risks and/or vulnerabilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Human trafficking <input type="checkbox"/> Others (conflict, political instability, etc.)	Limited impact. Limited risks arise from outsiders as mostly local people will provide the labor for project implementation.	The project is to liaise with ongoing government and development partner programs on HIV education.	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other action <input type="checkbox"/> No action

IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Are social indicators included in the design and monitoring framework to facilitate monitoring of social development activities and/or social impacts during project implementation? ☒ Yes ☐ No