

## **GENDER ACTION PLAN**

### **A. Introduction**

1. The Corridor Towns Development Project (Project) is designed to facilitate the transformation of transport corridors into economic corridors to spur economic growth and sustained development through provision of adequate urban and infrastructure and essential services to facilitate growth and increase urbanization. The expected impact of the Project will result in the corridor towns becoming the nucleus of economic activities, thereby contributing to the emergence of economic growth centers along the corridors in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). The participating towns include Kaysone Phomvihane, Phine, and Dansavanh located in Savannakhet province along the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC).

2. The Project will implement a number of environmental improvement subprojects in three Lao PDR towns: (i) urban road improvements, including drainage; flood control; (ii) water supply; wastewater treatment; and (iii) solid waste management. While these subprojects will provide benefits at community and household levels, women will benefit more than men in a range of ways, hence the project's effective gender mainstreaming (EGM) classification. While project outcomes may not be direct equality or empowerment for women, the subprojects are still likely to deliver tangible benefits to women by improving access to social services and economic and financial resources.

### **B. Gender Policy Framework**

3. Lao PDR is a party to several international treaties that promote gender equality. The Government established a National Commission for the Advancement of Women (NCAW), a high-level body mandated to develop and coordinate implementation of a national policy and action plan for women's advancement. The Lao Women's Union (LWU), a mass organization, continues to support Lao women's development as well as political mobilization through a network that extends to the village level. The Gender Resource Information and Development (GRID) Project, a Lao Women's Union initiative, provides gender training, conducts gender-related research, and collects gender resources through centers in Vientiane and four other locations throughout the country.

4. In 2004, the National Assembly adopted a bill to protect women's rights and interests and to ensure equality between women and men. The law on Women's Development and Protection defines principles, rules and measures relating to the development and protection of women so as to promote their knowledge and capabilities; to promote gender equality; to combat trafficking in persons, women and children; to combat domestic violence; to uphold women's status in society; and to encourage women to participate in national defense and development (Article 1). The Law also provides provisions for the management and monitoring of women's development and the protection of their rights and interests.

5. ADB's country gender strategy for Lao PDR is built on Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Under this framework, ADB will promote: (i) equal capabilities in women and men and girls and boys; (ii) equal access to resources and opportunities; and, (iii) equality in decision making and rights. This gender strategy framework is consistent not only with the MDGs but also with the guarantees of equal treatment in the Lao Constitution and laws and with the gender strategies included in both the NGPES and the NRDS. It also can be linked

to ADB's three core operational areas of inclusive social development, pro-poor and sustainable economic growth, and good governance.

6. The Gender Profile prepared by GRID notes a number of factors that have been identified in the consultations with women's groups and key informant interviews (KIIs) undertaken for the Project. These include: (i) informal sector absorbs the great majority of Lao women, who tend to own small businesses mainly in retail and textiles; (ii) the lack of education and limited economic opportunities and access to resources pushes women into the informal sector and small-scale enterprises; (iii) women have limited mobility, and traditional customs do not allow women to work far from the village; (iv) women entrepreneurs face difficulties dealing with cumbersome registration procedures, in part due to their low level of education and limited time; and (v) more women than men work in the formal sector, although women tend to be found in low-skilled jobs, rarely in management positions.

### C. Gender Analysis

#### 1. Gender Characteristics

7. Based on the household survey data, beneficiary households headed by women comprise 11% in Dansavanh, 27% in Phine and a third of households in Kaysone Phomvihane. There is a larger proportion of households headed by widowed women than widowed men; a quarter compared with 1% in Dansavanh, 43% compared with 1% in Phine and 48% compared with 4% in Kaysone Phomvihane.

8. Aggregating the survey data from the three towns indicates that there is a larger proportion of households headed by men falling below the poverty line (32% compared with a quarter of female headed households) but that also a larger proportion of households headed by men are in the highest income group.

9. The main/primary source of income for beneficiary households is employment in the government accounting for 36% of female headed and 34% of male headed households. Trade and small business activities and the private sector each account for the main source of income for another 17% of households headed by women and 12% and 15% respectively of households headed by men. The survey data also indicated that 36% of females compared with 47% of males earn income from various activities. Participation rates of females are significantly higher than those of males in trade and small business (36% compared with 6%) and slightly higher in the garment industry (3% compared with 0.5%), but males have higher rates of participation in all other sectors; government employ (35% compared with 24%), private sector (31% compared with 20%) hospitality and tourism (3% compared with 0.5%) and construction and transport (14% compared with 1.4%). Some 24% of females over the age of 16 compared with 18% of males are also engaged in unpaid activities, averaging 8.0 hours per day compared with 7.7 hours undertaken by males. Despite the difference in participation rates in paid work noted above, the number of hours spent per day on those activities is similar with 8.3 hours for men and 8.2 hours for women.

10. Access to infrastructure and services shows that for some key services households headed by women are not as well covered as households headed by men; two-thirds of male headed households compared with 51% of female headed households have access to the town water supply and half of households headed by men compared with 46% of households headed by women have access to sanitation. Overall willingness to pay (WTP) is higher in households headed by men (50%) compared with households headed by women (34%), with a range from

2% to 52% for female headed households and from 3% to 68% for male headed households depending on the infrastructure or service. Households are not WTP more than 25% than they currently pay, and most are either not WTP or only WTP the same as they currently pay regardless of whether the service is improved. Few households (less than 3%) were WTP for improved water supply, markets or health centers.

11. In respect of making contributions to community infrastructure women's involvement in participation in planning and implementation varies; the largest proportion of respondents (between 52% and 60%) stated they were unsure whether women were involved or not while less than 7% of respondents noted that women were actually involved in different activities; there is higher participation of women in organizing people for operations and maintenance work (7%) and providing food for construction workers (5%) with 4% of respondents stating women are involved in the planning of infrastructure and facilities. Participation in actual construction ranked the lowest with only 1% of respondents noting women's involvement.

12. The survey also indicated that women are not well represented on either local authority/council or village level development committees; with 17% and 23% of respondents respectively confirming that women are represented on these bodies.

## 2. Gender Impacts and Risks

13. Women are 50% of beneficiaries in the planned subprojects. The poverty and social analysis indicated that in addition to trading/marketing or engagement in waged work, women are primarily responsible for water collection, wastewater disposal, household garbage disposal and management, and care for the sick and elders. Time and efforts spent on these activities will be significantly reduced for women so that they can engage in income generating activities, family or leisure time. Lack of safe water supply, wastewater treatment, effective sewerage, and solid waste disposal contribute to gender inequities in the burden of household work.

14. In the context of corridor development and improving connectivity and mobility across country borders, the risk of both spread of communicable diseases and potential for human trafficking is increased, especially at Savannakhet, which attracts Thai and Vietnamese customers to its popular casino. However, the subprojects themselves are relatively small-scale and will involve small labor-force (a total of 725 people for all of the subprojects) for up to 24 months and therefore the risk of spread of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) associated with each of the subprojects is low, and the impacts usually associated with large construction workforces being resident in often remote areas for long periods will not occur. Therefore, risk of spread of communicable diseases, especially HIV and STIs, with the subprojects is low and will be mitigated through contractor civil contract clauses requiring them to provide HIV/AIDS/STIs awareness and prevention programs to reach construction crews and local communities.

## D. Key Strategies

15. The purpose of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) is to ensure that women will benefit in a number of direct and indirect ways from the proposed urban improvements, to ensure there are suitable avenues available for their participation, and to propose measures for maximizing their participation in local-level decision-making. Further, the GAP will put in place measures to mitigate negative impacts and reduce risks associated with the subprojects. Accordingly, the gender strategy for the project includes. The specific key strategies for promoting gender equality will be in the areas of Staffing (S), Training and Capacity Building (TCB), and Decision

Making (DM), and Employment Enhancement (E). Accordingly, the gender strategy for the project includes:

- (i) Institutional strengthening [TCB, S] to increase the participation of women in the planning, design and implementation of urban infrastructure to ensure that provision of services are responsive to women's needs; greater gender equality in recruitment for the executing agency (EA), implementing agency (IA), and project staff; gender sensitization training to EA, IA, and project staff; and to implement sex-disaggregated monitoring and evaluation within the project performance monitoring system (PPMS);
- (ii) Staffing [S, E, DM] are required, through a loan assurance that 30% of the overall staff positions and 30% of the management positions in the Project Management Units and Project Implementation Teams to be female.
- (iii) Employment target [E, TCB] of 90% women for employing existing informal waste pickers in the materials recovery facilities (MRFs) funded under the project, including skills upgrade training.
- (iv) Empowerment for women in urban community development [TCB, E, DM] through gender awareness raising programs; provision of vocational training and skill building programs that include basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, financial management, assistance in accessing existing micro-credit funds; and access to short-term employment through the project assurance that 30% of the construction workers to be hired under the Project to be female;
- (v) Ensuring that information, education and communication (IEC) programs [TCB] implemented under the project equitably target women as well as men and promoting an increased awareness of women about communicable disease such as HIV/AIDs in subproject areas through civil contract clauses for contractors; and
- (vi) A road safety campaign [TCB] that will target girls as well as boys in school awareness campaigns

## **E. Project Impact**

16. While both women and men will gain from the expanded and upgraded water supply and wastewater treatment plant and sewerage system subprojects, women can benefit in a number of other direct and indirect ways; as they have primary domestic responsibilities improving potable water supply and wastewater disposal will ease burdens and reduce both anxiety over exposure to WBIs, and the time spent caring for sick family members as result of contracting some form of WBI. Formalization of waste sorting/picking when the MRFs becomes operational, will lead, through the project's intervention, to employ them at the MRF, with skill-upgrading training. Other benefits are specified below:

- (i) Women will be empowered in making decisions in planning; design and implementation of urban infrastructure to ensure that provision of services are responsive to women's needs.
- (ii) Women will benefit from both short and long term employment opportunities, in subproject construction, through greater representation in management positions in the PMUs and PITs, and through formalization employment for informal waste pickers at the MRFs.

- (iii) Men and women will benefit from gender sensitization training to EA, IA, and project staff. This could potentially have a wider benefit of changing the public perception of utility companies and encouraging more women to work in these sectors.
- (iv) Time and effort of women spent for water collection, wastewater disposal, household garbage disposal and management, and care for the sick and elders will be significantly reduced so that they can engage in income generating activities, family or leisure time.
- (v) Negative impacts for women are only related to resettlement and these will be mitigated through social support programs, GAPs and Resettlement Plans. Resettlement impacts, especially permanent ones, have been avoided where possible and those remaining minimized

## F. Summary Gender Action Plan

17. The table below is a consolidated Gender Action Plan that guides subproject GAPs to address gender disparities and ensure that sub-projects benefit both men and women.

**Table 1: Gender Action Plan**

<b>Project Outputs</b>	<b>Proposed Actions and targets</b>
<b>Output 1: Strategic Local Economic Development Plan (SLEDP) adopted and implemented</b>	
1.1. GAP Component 1 -Institutional Strengthening for Gender and Development  Funded under capacity development and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender issues reflected and mainstreamed in planning documents including socio-economic development plans and master plans;</li> <li>Project Implementation Support Consultants (PISCs) gender specialists will collect sex-disaggregated data on executing agency (EA)/implementing agencies (IAs) staffing and technical designation as baseline and monitoring of gender targets for overall staff and management positions to refine the gender awareness training inputs;</li> <li>Provide gender awareness and sensitization training for 30 EA/IA staff (each province); gender awareness training for managers and staff to increase sensitivity to different needs of women and men.</li> </ul>
<b>Output 2: Priority urban infrastructure investments implemented</b>	
2.1 GAP Component 2 – Empowerment for Women in Urban Community Development and Skills Training  Funded under capacity development and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market assessment survey undertaken indicating current demand and economic growth areas in towns.</li> <li>Training for women to better position their entry in the growing employment demand areas arising from project interventions, targeting at least 500 women per town, for example, construction skills training targeting women</li> <li>A target of 90% women for employing existing informal waste pickers in the materials recovery facilities (MRFs) funded under the project, including skills upgrade training. This is based on PPTA field data showing up to 95% of informal waste pickers are currently women.</li> <li>Construction phase employment, construction workers will be 30% female; contractor records to be sex disaggregated for monitoring purposes</li> </ul>
2.2 GAP component 3 – HIV awareness and prevention  Funded by construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness training provided by external HIV organizations and/or NGOs subcontracted by contractors during workforce mobilization for laborers and community surrounding construction locales</li> </ul>

companies	
2.3 GAP component 4 – sanitation, health and hygiene program Funded under capacity development and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training 2 health and sanitation promoters in each town through a training of trainers (TOT) program</li> <li>• Establish and train 2 LWU staff as facilitators for IEC completion in each town.</li> </ul>
2.4 GAP component 5 – road safety campaign Funded under capacity development and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target girls as well as boys in school awareness campaigns</li> </ul>
<b>Output 3: Institutional capacities strengthened</b>	
3.1 GAP component 6 – institutional strengthening for gender and development Cost incl. in project output 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that 30% of the overall staff positions and 30% of the management positions in the Project Management Units and Project Implementation Teams to be female</li> </ul>

## **G. Implementation Arrangements**

18. The EA's PMU will support and assist the PITs in implementing and internal monitoring of the GAP. The PIS consultant will include a national (12 person-months) and international (3 person-months, intermittent) gender specialist. Internal monitoring will be undertaken by the IAs and PIS gender specialists, and findings will be consolidated in the project's quarterly progress reports.