Greater Mekong Subregion: Rehabilitation of the Railway in Cambodia Project

Expanded Income Restoration Program
THE EXPANDED INCOME RESTORATION PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are affected people required to save and contribute in order to be accepted as a member of a Self-Help Group?

Yes. The formation of the self-help group (SG) is anchored on the spirit of self-reliance and cooperation, where people pool together their resources to provide a source of funds to borrow money at low interest rates. This is centered on a ‘micro-savings’ approach, widely recognized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Cambodia as allowing the poor to improve their livelihoods by encouraging a culture of savings.

Recognizing that some relocated households may not have enough funds to make an initial savings contribution and thus qualify for membership, the SG allows affected persons (APs) to defer their contribution until after accessing the Social Safety Net Fund (SSNF), or once they have started generating income as a result of borrowing from the Community Development Fund (CDF). In this way, members who do not have enough funds to save can still join SGs and begin to contribute once they do have funds.

2. Is there training available for members of Self-Help Groups?

Yes. Training to SG members is ongoing and includes how to set up SGs, community organizing, financial management, and off-farm and on-farm training, among others. Specialists provide the necessary training. Simple information, education and communication materials have been prepared and will continue to be developed. As training needs are determined by the SG members, new trainings will be offered to meet their expressed needs and interests.

3. Do elected members of the SGs receive a regular salary from the EIRP funds?

No. Elected SG members holding positions of responsibility agreed to do the job in an informed and voluntary manner and do not receive a regular salary. However, they are given incentives, such as per diems, to cover transportation and food during mandatory meetings and trainings. Stipends are charged against the EIRP fund. As each SG expects to receive interest from loans, incentives and other administrative costs will eventually be funded using the SG’s funds and subject to rules and procedures to be decided by the members during their general assembly.

4. How are EIRP activities funded?

The total EIRP AusAID grant is AUD$1,000,000 or US$960,000 equivalent. ADB receives 5% to administer the fund, bringing the total EIRP funds available to US$912,000.

Up to $450 per SG member is available under the CDF, while up to $250 per SG member is available through the SSNF. For budget purposes, the number of households at all relocation sites is estimated at 1,105 households. The CDF and SSNF budget is $773,500. It is important to note that the CDF involves loans that, once paid back, can be offered to other group members. The balance is for SG administration costs, consulting services (EIRP coordinator, community mobilizers), and contingencies.
The EIRP is purposely designed to be flexible. While some funds are earmarked for specific items, it is important to have flexibility to reallocate funds if needed. That way the EIRP can be more responsive to needs of affected households (AHs) rather than being pre-determined.

5. **How long will ADB and the Cambodian government provide support to Self-Help Groups?**

Direct involvement and support to SGs is planned to end by the end of February 2014. By then, the affected households, through their SGs, should be ready to self-manage their income restoration activities.

**Outreach and Monitoring**

6. **Has a baseline study been conducted to assess the success of the program in restoring people's living conditions and income to at least pre-resettlement levels?**

Implementation of the EIRP began in February 2012, but baseline information on the socioeconomic conditions of APs was collected during the project's planning stage in 2008, and reviewed again and documented during the Detailed Measurement Survey (DMS). This was undertaken in Phnom Penh in 2009, in Poipet during 2008-2009, in Sihanoukville in 2008, and on the Northern line during 2007-2008.

At the start of project implementation, Inter-Ministerial Resettlement Committee (IRC) commissioned SBK and Envisioning, as part of their work on the Income Restoration Project (IRP), to conduct socioeconomic baseline studies once people started moving to the relocation sites. IRC and project consultants have also developed a monitoring and tracking system for all relocation sites, which aims to monitor the physical relocation/movement of affected households, identify changes in their socioeconomic conditions, and initial impacts the EIRP has on their lives.

The External Monitoring Organization is also responsible for tracking the progress of families. An evaluation of project monitoring activities will also be conducted to ensure that the success of the EIRP can be adequately tracked.

7. **What outreach supports affected families who have not moved to the relocation site, or who have had to leave the site to find work?**

IRC and project consultants are working with affected families who have not yet moved to relocation sites by forming SG groups that can be joined prior to moving, allowing members to access EIRP funds when they relocate.

IRC and project consultants are also working with relocated APs to determine how to support them in accessing employment. This includes examining possible livelihoods activities, such as transportation and transport-related activities, which could benefit AHs at the relocation site.

The EIRP is also undertaking surveys of available jobs in the area and assessing job skills gaps to help those who have been relocated find work closer to their new homes.
8. **What happens if after raising awareness, some people still don't join the SGs?**

Affected persons may wish to see positive outcomes from the SGs before joining, or may be reluctant to join based on past experience, or may be unavailable to participate. Community organizers will continue arranging group consultations, house-to-house visits, and social investigation to raise awareness of the SGs. In addition, visual materials are being developed to demonstrate the positive effects, challenges, and lessons learned from participation in the EIRP.