

SUMMARY POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL STRATEGY

Country and Project Title:	Viet Nam: Sustainable Rural Infrastructure Development Project in Northern Mountain Provinces
----------------------------	---

Lending/Financing Modality:

Project

Department/ Division:

Southeast Asia Department
Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources Division

I. POVERTY ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

A. Link to the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and Country Partnership Strategy

The Government of Viet Nam's poverty reduction strategy is found in two independently prepared documents: the 10-year Socio-Economic Development Strategy (2001–2010) and the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy of 2001. The government also prepares 5-year socioeconomic development plans (SEDPs), which focus on reducing the national poverty rate to 10%–11% by 2010. The government recognizes the particular challenges of promoting balanced growth and achieving comprehensive poverty reduction in communes located in challenging physical environments that lack adequate infrastructure, economic opportunities, and social services. The SEDP attaches importance to the development of infrastructure such as roads, irrigation, water supply, markets, and sanitation services in these remote areas, to achieve sustainable poverty reduction.

The overall objective of ADB's country strategy and program (CSP), 2007–2010 is to support the government in implementing its SEDP and achieving the poverty reduction goals. It recognizes that targeted programs are still not reaching all of the poorest people and need to be better defined. Thus, in view of the priorities of both the government and ADB to address persistent poverty and food insecurity among ethnic minorities and the poor in the northern mountain provinces, the government requested ADB to provide technical assistance to develop the proposed project.

The project has been conceived as a rural infrastructure development project that explicitly targets poor ethnic minorities living in remote upland communities. It will focus on medium-scale infrastructure including irrigation systems and rural roads, as well as rural markets. For pre-selected subprojects, the loan allocation will be 23% to improve irrigation schemes, 72% to rural road rehabilitation (including markets), and 5% to other productive rural infrastructure. Irrigation has the potential to increase production and productivity, and so increase marketable surpluses and incomes. Improved market facilities can promote trade, increase incomes and the availability of consumer goods, and generally enhance the economic and social integration of remote communities. An improved road transport network will reduce peoples' isolation and improve access to markets, services and neighboring communities, all vital for increasing economic opportunity, social capital and improving livelihoods.

B. Poverty Analysis

Targeting Classification: Targeted intervention—geographic (TI-G)

Key issues. The northern mountains of Viet Nam have been identified in both the national SEDP and ADB's CSP as having the highest incidences of poverty in Viet Nam (45% in the northwest mountains), and also high proportions of ethnic minorities (49%) thus being priority areas for poverty alleviation. The project will be located in a region that includes ethnic minorities who have an average poverty rate of 52.2%, five times higher than the majority Kinh (10.3%). Subprojects were selected based upon a minimum poverty level of 25% and most have a poverty level of over 40%. The project will complement other poverty reduction initiatives in the area.

Design features. Within the 15 targeted project provinces, investments focus on poor, remote, and ethnic minority communities lacking basic infrastructure. The subprojects are designed to reduce poverty by increasing access to economic and social assets, opportunities, and services. These interventions are proven to be effective in poverty reduction in this region of Viet Nam. This is borne out by the results of earlier similar projects and the representative project feasibility studies. The project also includes a dedicated allocation for poverty reduction measures to be integrated into each subproject.

II. SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

A. Findings of Social Analysis

Key issues

(i) Poverty. The northern mountain region has among the highest levels of poverty in Viet Nam. The lack of productive and social rural infrastructure is a key contributing factor to these high levels of poverty.

(ii) Diversity and distribution of ethnic minorities. The northern mountain region has the highest proportion of ethnic minorities in the whole country: of the 10 provinces with the largest minority populations, 9 are in the northern mountains. About 20 ethnic minority groups are found in the northern mountains but 6 minorities constitute over 90% of the rural ethnic minority population. Although there is a tendency to lump all the ethnic minorities together, to contrast with the majority Kinh, this obscures a great deal of cultural diversity and economic disparity. The ethnic minorities have relatively higher poverty rates than the national average but merely targeting ethnic minorities will not necessarily effectively target poverty.

(iii) Pockets of poverty. Official statistics for provinces and districts may indicate relatively moderate levels of poverty, but higher levels of poverty may be found in communes and villages. For example, in the Thai Nguyen road subproject, the Kinh dominate settlements along the road and have relatively low poverty levels, of about 20%. However, a few kilometers away, there is a Nung village with 81% poverty. This highlights the importance of properly targeting and selecting subprojects to ensure a high poverty impact.

B. Consultation and Participation

1. **Community-driven development.** During representative subproject preparation, extensive consultations took place with potential beneficiaries and all reconfirmed the relevance of the investment to effect poverty reduction, and local demand for the subproject. This was also confirmed in the socioeconomic baseline surveys conducted for each subproject. For the non-representative subprojects, the design and feasibility studies will include appropriate consultative measures with the beneficiaries.

2. What level of consultation and participation (C&P) is envisaged during the project implementation and monitoring?

Information sharing Consultation Collaborative decision making Empowerment

Participation will be promoted, particularly during the critical detailed design phase. To encourage this, all communes will establish commune supervisory boards to oversee contractors building the infrastructure and to provide participatory monitoring. Additional C&P activities will include awareness campaigns on HIV and road safety, establishment of water associations, and the preparation and implementation of safeguard plans.

3. Was a C&P plan prepared? Yes No

A C&P framework has been prepared to orientate the consultants who carry the detailed design and implementation work forward, and prepare the feasibility studies for any subsequent subprojects.

C. Gender and Development

Key issues. Women, particularly ethnic minority women, are disadvantaged by poverty and ethnic and gender discrimination. Ethnic minority women and girls lag behind ethnic minority men and Kinh and Chinese women in accessing health and education services and economic opportunities. Many ethnic minority women cannot read, write, and speak Vietnamese, which limits their access to and sharing of information. They have different access to assets, capabilities, and voice than do men, and cultural and economic barriers often restrict women's capacity and decision-making ability in minority communities. Ethnic minority women, especially those who live in remote villages, have few opportunities to participate in meetings for any purpose. Women have significantly less access to productive resources and extension services and are disenfranchised when it comes to accessing credit. Women carry out much of the farm work but are burdened with heavy workloads. They have limited decision-making power within their households, and they lack rights to land. In addition to their economic activity, women undertake about 80% of domestic chores.

Key gender issues in rural transport development include (i) the need to ensure that employment and income-raising activities, both during subproject construction and in the post-construction period are equally available to women and to men, (ii) that measures are taken to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and human trafficking, and (iii) that measures are taken to allow women to maximize the new opportunities brought about by enhanced transport connections. Key issues in irrigation provision include (i) involving women in decision-making processes for the use of increased irrigation water availability, (ii) ensuring that women are included in a reasonable number as representatives of water user associations, and (iii) ensuring that increased crop production as a result of irrigation does not add to the existing labor burdens for women during land preparation and harvesting. Key issues in domestic water supply include (i) ensuring that households headed by women can afford access to enhanced water supplies, and (ii) the need to provide information and training on wastewater disposal and disease prevention.

Key Actions. Measures included in the design to promote gender equality and women's empowerment—access to and use of relevant services, resources, assets, or opportunities and participation in decision-making process:

Gender action plans Other actions or measures No action or measure

The project will benefit ethnic minority women in particular, and all women in the target communities, with improved infrastructure that will increase productivity and incomes, lessen women's work burdens and save time, improve health, provide greater environmental and personal security, and empower women by creating opportunities to participate in project decision-making. The key measures included in the design to promote gender equality and women's empowerment are gender action plans (GAPs) for each subproject and a framework for preparing future GAPs. The GAP activities aim to

- (i) encourage local contractors to employ women as 30% of the workforce in construction and labor-intensive maintenance,
- (ii) provide equal pay to men and women for work of equal type, and safe working conditions for both men and women workers,
- (iii) ensure gender and development mainstreaming training for all stakeholders,

(iv) ensure 50% participation of women in community project management committees, (v) ensure that subproject meetings are held at appropriate times that allow women to participate, (vi) provide training to women on trade, negotiation and participation skills, (vii) deliver an HIV awareness-raising campaign, which will be implemented through local agencies working in the area of HIV prevention (women's unions and departments of health) and support ongoing local programs, (viii) ensure that a gender and development specialist is included in the subproject implementation team, and (ix) be responsible for monitoring all components of the GAP, including employment and participation targets for women, and reporting on the delivery of the HIV awareness-raising campaign.			
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	Most subprojects upgrade existing infrastructure, and so few risks related to land or asset acquisition or actual resettlement will be entailed. Subprojects have been prescreened to remove the risk of resettlement.	The project is committed to paying compensation at market rates for any land acquisition and assets removed or acquired.	<input type="checkbox"/> Resettlement Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resettlement Framework <input type="checkbox"/> No Action
Indigenous peoples	The project explicitly targets ethnic minority groups as the principle beneficiaries of subprojects. Thus, particular social risks, such as social exclusion or inappropriate interventions will be unlikely.	In cases where screening and targeting has failed to bring benefits to the poorest ethnic minority groups within the beneficiary communities, enhancement measures have been designed to capitalize on relevant development opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous Peoples Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Other Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indigenous Peoples Framework <input type="checkbox"/> No Action
Labor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Labor retrenchment <input type="checkbox"/> Core labor standards	Opportunities are limited for participation as paid labor during the construction phase for members of poor households. Contractors should be encouraged to use local labor wherever feasible.	Reservation of manual wage labor opportunities for poor households in the target communities will enhance the poverty impact of the subprojects. Local people can also be employed in routine operation and maintenance, and funds should be earmarked for this.	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Action <input type="checkbox"/> No Action Where appropriate, clauses should be included in the contracts of the consultants and contractors engaged in the construction.
Affordability	Not applicable	Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Action
Other Risks and/or Vulnerabilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HIV <input type="checkbox"/> Human trafficking <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased accident risk	Potential impacts exist in selected contexts. Risks are limited in view of the local nature of the roads (farm to market) and their short length.	HIV awareness campaigns will be conducted. Safety awareness will be undertaken along rehabilitated roads.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plan—part of GAP <input type="checkbox"/> Other Action <input type="checkbox"/> No Action Awareness training in road safety
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? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

Source: PPTA Final Report.