



# DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT WOMEN IS NOT DEVELOPMENT

WHY GENDER MATTERS TO THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

MAY 2019



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6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, 1550 Metro Manila, Philippines  
Tel +63 2 632 4444; Fax +63 2 636 2444  
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Publication Stock No. ARM190164-2

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On the cover: **Gender mainstreaming in ADB operations.** The narratives of women in Southeast Asia articulate aspirations toward empowerment and inspire ADB’s commitment on accelerating progress in gender equality as prioritized in the Strategy 2030 (photo by ADB).

# Contents

## FOREWORD

IV

---

WHY NOT A FEMALE MECHANIC, PLUMBER, ELECTRICIAN, OR CARPENTER  
IN THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC?

1

---

WOULD A WOMAN RIDE—AND WORK ON—TRAIN TRANSPORT IN VIET NAM?

4

---

REDUCING POVERTY REQUIRES EMPOWERING WOMEN—BANK ACCOUNTS, SKILLS,  
AND SUPPORT GROUPS IN THE PHILIPPINES

7

---

CASH FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WORK IS GOOD FOR WOMEN—AND FAMILIES—IN CAMBODIA

14

---

WHY RAINS, DRAINS, AND CLEAN LANES ARE WOMEN'S ISSUES IN VIET NAM

17

---

LEVELING RICE FIELDS FOR WOMEN FARMERS IN CAMBODIA

21

---

HOW SMALL ANIMALS AND SMALL BUSINESSES LIFTED WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS  
IN THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

25

---

THE EXTRA MILE TO EDUCATE GIRLS IN REMOTE VIET NAM

29

---

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A WOMAN HELPS BUILD A VILLAGE DRAIN IN INDONESIA

34

---

**GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN MYANMAR**

**39**

---

**HELPING TOURISM BENEFIT PEOPLE WHO STAY AT HOME IN THE GREATER  
MEKONG SUBREGION**

**43**

---

**REFERENCES**

**49**

---

# Foreword



We know women and men, and girls and boys experience poverty differently in many ways. But how well do we, as providers or funders of services, respond to those differences?

Within the Asian Development Bank, we work to hardwire gender analysis into our institutional DNA so whenever we choose and design projects—whether for agriculture, sanitation, construction, transportation, education, livelihoods, or health—we automatically ask two essential questions: How will women benefit? How will men benefit? As much as possible, we push projects forward when equally beneficial for women and men.

Our hardwiring is not yet foolproof. We identify new dimensions and adjust our approaches constantly. But we are growing into our ambition. And we see glimpses of our achievements in the thousands of girls and women who have received scholarships, boarding schools, classrooms, mentorships, job placements, skills training, livestock technology, seeds, fertilizers, credit and policy inclusion, and have become more prominent in the running of their communities.

We are inspired by the stories of women who rose above their circumstances through project assistance in Southeast Asia and made positive changes in their lives. For several years, we have been sharing these stories through the *SEAGEN Waves* newsletter. This booklet highlights some examples from that newsletter.

Of the many things we learned in our gender components in our partnerships with governments, the most critical first step is to ensure both women's and men's needs for services, information, or training are taken into account. This requires a gender analysis before designing a project. Projects need to promote women's economic empowerment through equal access to employment generated during construction components; create and support opportunities for women to engage in enterprises arising out of infrastructure investments; and help women gain greater access to and control over assets, resources, and power, and access to markets. Wherever possible, activities also need to encourage harmony in the home.

One of our primary goals is to increase young women's employability and income-earning potential. While labor force participation rates are high in Southeast Asia, gender-based inequality in economic opportunities remains a challenge. When women

gain training and information to access employment and expand their businesses, credit to invest in business ventures and diversify, and markets to sell their products, they are in a position to better contribute to economic growth, development, and poverty reduction. Research has shown that resources in the hands of women have a range of positive outcomes because women tend to reinvest their income into their families and communities—leading to equity in growth outcomes.

Over time, we have seen how quotas and targets in our gender action plans can change cultural norms and attitudes, impact government decision-makers, increase acknowledgment of the value of women’s participation, and institutionalize women’s roles within community leadership bodies.

The stories in this booklet show how, with appropriate support, women are making positive changes in their own lives and in the lives of others.

**Uzma Hoque**

Senior Social Sector Specialist (2010–2016)  
Southeast Asia Department  
Asian Development Bank

# Acknowledgments



The content of the publication ***Development Without Women Is Not Development: Why Gender Matters to the Asian Development Bank***—drawn from various articles of the bi-annually published *SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News*—was produced by Uzma S. Hoque, former senior social sector specialist (Gender and Development) of the Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB). Assistance provided by Karen Emmons in the preparation of individual feature stories as part of a broader compilation of women’s narratives in Southeast Asia is recognized.

The support of Laurence Levaque, senior social sector specialist (Gender and Development), Rikard Elfving, senior social sector specialist, Zonibel Woods, senior gender specialist and Southeast Asia Department national gender consultants (former and present) Leavides G. Domingo-Cabarrubias, Claire Angeline P. Luczon, and Joanne Carmela Barriga Quintana, in the coordination and completion of the booklet, is greatly appreciated. Gender specialists, Chandy Chea, Theonakhet Saphakdy, Giang T. Nguyen, and colleagues from ADB resident missions in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Viet Nam have assisted in the collection of narratives and photos from their respective countries. Administration support was facilitated by Maria Angelica Magali Vivar and Ruchel Marie Grace Rea Roque-Villaroman.

Thanks is extended to the Department of Communications for their assistance in publishing the booklet. Coordination support has been carried out by Ma. Katrina M. Fernando from ADB Department of Communications. Proofreading services were rendered by Ma. Theresa Arago. Edith Creus prepared the layout design for the booklet.

The women in Southeast Asia, whose stories are presented in the publication, are gratefully acknowledged. Their narratives articulate aspirations toward empowerment and inspire ADB’s commitment on accelerating progress in gender equality as prioritized in the ADB’s Strategy 2030: Achieving a Prosperous, Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Asia and the Pacific.





**Teacher of plumbing and  
woodwork. Phonethip  
Thepboualy, a plumbing and  
woodwork teacher, with her  
students at the main campus  
of the Champasak TVET  
Institution in Pakse.**

**Teacher of cooling and  
refrigeration system.  
Sompong Visetsin (left),  
a cooling systems and  
refrigeration teacher,  
instructs her students at  
the main campus of the  
Champasak TVET Institution.**



**Teacher of auto mechanics.  
Phonesavat Xayasan,  
a teacher and an automotive  
repairs mechanic, with her  
male students at the main  
Champasak TVET campus.**



# Why Not a Female Mechanic, Plumber, Electrician, or Carpenter in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic?



Cultural stereotypes shape the “appropriate” occupations for women and promote the notion women are not eligible for—or cannot succeed in—certain jobs. Women respond by self-selecting themselves into traditionally female occupations which, in turn, influences employers’ recruitment practices. This inefficient use of labor wastes human resources and leaves a dent in national development. It also stifles women’s self-fulfillment and impairs their right to equal opportunities for employment. For the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), as for most developing countries, it has been a significant development constraint.

## A Country with Significant Skill Shortages and Few Role Models

The Government of the Lao PDR aspire to graduate from its least developed country status by 2020. To do that, it recognizes the urgent need to overcome skills shortages in critical areas of the economy, such as furniture making, construction, and the automotive and mechanical trades. But the country’s vocational training institutes, as of 2010, were reporting low and declining enrollments in the very sectors—including the traditional trade sectors such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and automotive—where shortages were most acute, even though those trades offered good employment opportunities and relatively high wages.

While there is a high participation rate of women in the country’s labor force, they are largely in low-end, low-paid jobs. Such a seemingly gravitational route for women is as much a reflection of what girls learn (or do not learn) in school or in training and what their role models engage in as it is a reflection of cultural influences.



**Power tools.** Women students from the Lao-German Technical College in Vientiane are learning technical skills in trades and using power tools and equipment.



**Women building furniture.** Young student in Luang Prabang Vocational College receives hands-on training on woodworking in a furniture shop.

## Job Fulfillment in Unexpected Places

Although girls make up nearly 40% of total enrollment in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector, they are heavily overrepresented in traditionally “female” occupations such as tailoring and hospitality, and heavily underrepresented in traditionally “male” occupations such as construction and mechanics.<sup>1</sup>

When the Asian Development Bank (ADB) took on the Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project in 2010 to help the government overhaul the TVET system, the goal was a more highly skilled and diverse workforce. One of the government’s main issues was to strengthen the quality of the TVET system in the seven public and four private TVET institutions through teacher training, new curricula, and management training.

Enrollment numbers was another priority issue. In addition to attracting more males into the training system, especially from remote and ethnic minority areas, ADB set out to break through the stereotypes and demonstrate to both the Lao PDR’s society—and females—that job fulfillment and a good income can be found in the most unexpected places.

The project centered on certificate and diploma courses in construction and building, mechanical and machinery maintenance and repair, furniture making, and basic business. But it made a bold move in promoting women’s involvement in those training courses by providing incentives to sign up for the unconventional training options. It enticed new students through free-tuition vouchers, dormitory accommodation and a stipend for living costs, governance, and private sector involvement in vocational education and training.

## Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes through Outreach, Incentives, and Role Models

The project’s gender action plan addressed access and equity issues in the TVET sector.

1. **To break down the cultural roles.** The project targeted 20% females for training in three nontraditional priority skill areas—construction, furniture making, and automotive and

<sup>1</sup> Hifab International AB. 2010. *Final Sector Assessment Report*. Manila: ADB, cited in ADB and the World Bank. 2012. *Country Gender Assessment for Lao PDR: Reducing Vulnerability and Increasing Opportunity*. Manila and Washington, DC. p. 25.

mechanical repair. This target might not appear challenging, but it represented a significant increase over the current near-zero levels of women's participation in these skill areas.

Near the project's completion, it was short of the quota, at 6.2% with 20 young women of the 240 (8.3%) students in furniture making; 78 young women of the 768 (10%) students in construction; and 100 young women of the 2,175 (4%) students in mechanics. Total: 198 (6.22%) out of 3,183.

2. **To address access constraints.** Although TVET institutes operate in all 21 provinces in the Lao PDR, distance and the lack of suitable accommodations remain major constraints for girls and boys in remote areas. The project included the construction of dormitories, with 50% of spaces reserved for girls at least 16 years old.

By 2015, 11 dormitories had been built, of which six (with a total of 2,200 spaces) were reserved for 1,200 female students. By 2016, these dormitories had been furnished.

3. **To encourage the hiring of young women in nontraditional skill areas.** The project provided training vouchers for three nontraditional priority skill areas (furniture making, construction, and mechanics), with 25% of vouchers allocated for girls. The project then provided a 6-month wage subsidy to employers who hired the young women trained through the voucher program. Female students received 1,658 (32%) of the 5,031 vouchers awarded.

4. **To reduce female isolation in male-dominated training classes.** A critical mass of female students in the three nontraditional trade areas was stressed through the social marketing campaign and as part of the career guidance counseling campaign that targeted secondary students. The project included a mentoring program for female students with female faculty and/or with women in related fields. These women meet regularly with the female students to discuss job possibilities and workplace issues.

Before the project's completion, 1,460 (79%) out of 5,031 students enrolled in Basic Business were female, surpassing the 50% target; but the 10% target for women trained in the three priority skill areas fell short, at 198 out of the 3,183 women, or 6.22%.

Although the project could not, on its own, reverse the cultural, social, and economic factors that preclude girls and women from the traditional male skill areas, it was characterized upon its completion as a good first step, with infrastructure, networks, and role models in place.



Dormitories improving girls' access to TVET. By building student dormitories for women in Luang Prabang Vocational College, ADB addresses gender constraints in accessing TVET for young students from remote villages.

# Would a Woman Ride— and Work on—Train Transport in Viet Nam?



A group of women were asked what they thought about the construction of Ha Noi's first metro rail system during a consultation to finalize the gender action plan to complement ADB funding. The women were also asked what they thought the percentage of jobs to be created should employ women (examples: in construction, handling the electrical and mechanical systems, ticketing, and security).

In summary, they were pleased with the new mode of transport. They thought it would benefit them in both moving about and opening up employment opportunities. At least half of the jobs generated should be filled by women, they insisted—women would want them. Among their concerns, they wanted to make sure their businesses or their homes would not be affected by the construction of a nearby station. And they pointed out as issues the price of tickets and women's safety on the trains, and going in and out of stations. They were particularly nervous about their safety in underground stations.

Ultimately, they encouraged a metro system that is affordable, accessible, safe, and provides economic opportunities.

## A Mass Transit Imperative but Few Examples That Respond to Women's Needs

Ha Noi was having an urban crisis with its traffic congestion, road safety, public health issues, loss of productivity, and tremendous greenhouse gas emissions. The municipality planners were building a three-line metro system to provide some sustainable urban relief.

Transport networks and services have many positive impacts on the lives of women and men. Particularly for women, these facilities expand access to social services; reduce women's time poverty; and allow for a reallocation of time savings for economic development, leisure, and improved health and well-being. Attempts were made in recent years to integrate gender concerns into rural road projects and into urban road and highway construction projects, but these mainly involved schemes for private cars and truck owners. Hence, there are few examples of targeting women's needs in urban public transport. As a result, many urban public transport systems in Southeast Asia are not designed to meet the needs of poor women who heavily rely on transportation for a variety of trips throughout a day, yet are reduced to taking crowded buses or motorcycle taxis they find unsafe or inefficient, but are what they can afford.



Through the Strengthening Sustainable Urban Transport for Ha Noi Metro Line 3 Project, ADB wanted to ensure women would both use the new service and benefit from its development. The design of the project considered the different transport needs of men and women, their different travel behaviors, and their ability to access and afford public transport.

## Asking Women About the Proposed Designs

To find out what women thought of the proposed designs, a social impact assessment began with two gender focus groups: one (with 52 women) in Tu Liem District, where the line's first four stations were planned, and one (with 17 women) in Hoan Kiem District, which was to be the line's final stop and an underground station. Each focus group was to discuss the targets in the gender action plan created for the general metro system project.

The social impact team next consulted the Vietnam Women's Union in each district, whose members all agreed the project would be convenient, safer, and help people travel faster. But they, too, emphasized women were keen to work in the transport sector. They asked that the gender action plan include a large proportion of job opportunities for women and part-time job targets for university students. The women's union officials also offered safety suggestions for bus stop shelters, pedestrian crossings, and lighting.

Community focus groups followed the consultations, first with a group of residents in Dong Da District (where three stations would be located) and then with a group of university students. All participants approved the station designs but, like the previous women's groups, wanted employment opportunities for women in both skilled and unskilled work—in the construction of the various bus and metro lines, in selling tickets, and for businesses located in and around stations.

In all consultations, the social assessment team asked participants what the information outreach campaign should contain. First of all, many people had never heard of the metro project. But the issue of greatest interest was ticket pricing, followed by safety precautions.

According to the Ha Noi Metro Rail System Project's gender action plan, the bidding for bus station contractors was to include social and gender considerations. Additionally, the winning contractor was expected to provide a social and gender specialist, who would provide regular reports to the Ha Noi Metropolitan Rail Transport Project Board.



**Road safety and gender equity.** Low-income women in Viet Nam find their transport options unsafe, time-consuming, and inefficient.

**Greater safety risks** constitute a potential adverse social impact for the large numbers of pedestrians expected to walk along roads near the stations. Pedestrian safety risks will be mitigated by providing footbridges and pedestrian subways, and good traffic control around the stations. The detailed design will follow universal accessibility and pedestrian safety guidelines.

Safety risks also include the threat of HIV infection due to the influx of workers. The Ha Noi Metro Rail System Project is implementing an HIV and Anti-Trafficking Plan. Activities include (i) training for contractors; (ii) four training sessions per year for communities, students, and workers with peer education, leaflets, video clips, and group discussions; (iii) awareness campaign; and (iv) distribution of free condoms.

Source: ADB. November 2014. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors of Proposed Loan and Administration of Loan Socialist Republic of Viet Nam: Strengthening Sustainable Urban Transport for Ha Noi Metro Line 3 Project. Manila. para. 26, page 7.

The **information awareness campaign** aims to ensure that youth, women, older people, and persons with disabilities use the metro. For some, it is the best transport alternative. A mass media campaign was planned 3 months prior to completion of the metro, with television and radio spots, posters, and pocket guides in braille and different fonts (for people with visual challenges) to emphasize access and ticket pricing, including the various passes available for peak and off-peak hours.

## Responding to What Women Want

Based on women's reactions in the various consultations, the final gender action plan for the project contained six areas to ensure the physical design of the metro and bus services pays attention to affordability, and addresses the various travel patterns and needs of women.

1. **Safety:** accessibility design features for rail, metro, and bus services; safe pedestrian access, adequate lighting, and the installation of closed-circuit TV around and inside stations; traffic signals to manage street congestion; and footbridges for crossing busy roads.
2. **Affordability:** ticketing and fare pricing structured to increase access, such as reduced-price passes for off-peak travel and for women who tend to make many trips for children's needs; fare pricing responded to the various travel patterns and needs of women and was based on trips.
3. **Physical comfort:** priority seating and allocated waiting spaces for women.
4. **Economic empowerment:** 30%–70% of civil work jobs provided to women, with an average of 50% during construction, and 20%–50% during operationalization.
5. **Gender issues:** incorporated into all intermodal public transport policy and regulations, such as an intermodal public transport ticketing system integrated and affordable to poor women; passes that enable travel in multiple segments without paying multiple fares; flexible fares to reduce cost during off-peak hours; or provide flat rates rather than fares by distance to reduce the burden of cost for poor commuters living in peripheral area.

The final design of the bus and metro lines included practical considerations that might have been overlooked without women's inputs, such as separate male and female toilets; for women-only waiting spaces and carriages among the rolling stock; adequate lighting in platforms, stations, and surrounding areas; child-friendly seating and storage space for baby carriages; and shop spaces for women-run businesses.

When completed, the project is expected to improve household economies in the Metro Line 3 localities by creating business opportunities as well as reducing congestion, improving quality of life in areas around stations, and developing a public transport pricing framework to make fares affordable and public spaces safe for female commuters. The six project districts will benefit from temporary construction jobs and local employment in operation and maintenance.

# Reducing Poverty Requires Empowering Women—Bank Accounts, Skills, and Support Groups in the Philippines



A flagship social protection program in the Philippines followed the wisdom of evidence in opening bank accounts in women's names for receiving ADB-funded cash transfers targeting the health and education of impoverished mothers and children. Experiences from many development initiatives clarified that when women directly handle cash, they are more likely to invest in critical household expenses: better and more nutritious food, and education and health care for their children.

But the program wanted to go beyond improving the health and education indicators of some of the country's poorest households—it wanted to reduce their poverty. Again, the likely solution came back to women, although it would take more than a bank account to break intergenerational poverty.

Empowering the women to take greater control over their resources would give them the tools for lifelong change. This would involve building their confidence, linking them to services, informing them of their rights, building mechanisms to support them when their rights are violated, and helping them access decent jobs or livelihood opportunities.

Recognizing the potential of the cash transfer program, known as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, or 4Ps, a technical assistance grant for women's empowerment was developed and linked to the ADB's Social Protection Support Project that covered the 4Ps.

The Government of the Philippines launched the 4Ps in 2008, targeting coverage of 4.3 million poor households by 2016. It was characterized as the largest poverty reduction and social development program the government ever conceived.<sup>2</sup>

## Giving Conditional Cash to Women

The 4Ps cash grants were paid to poor households with children up to age 14 years and/or pregnant women: pesos (₱)500 per month for health care and ₱300 a month per child for a maximum of three children for a 10-month school year. The cash grants

<sup>2</sup> B. Chin 2013. Observations of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in the Field. *Asian Development Blog*. 6 May. <https://blogs.adb.org/blog/observations-pantawid-pamilyang-pilipino-program-field>.



were given for 5 years, as long as the household met the conditions,<sup>3</sup> and were paid directly into bank accounts opened in the name of each woman recipient.

As of April 2017, there were 4,117,218 poor household beneficiaries in 143 cities and 1,484 municipalities in 79 provinces in all 17 regions nationwide. Women comprised 88.2% of grant recipients.

## Going Further to Empower Women

The Technical Assistance for Strengthened Gender Impacts of Social Protection Project was designed in 2010 as a complementary activity to support the 4Ps initiative in 30 villages in 10 municipalities in the Luzon (northern), Visayas (central), and Mindanao (southern) regions.

In focus group discussions (arranged as part of the beneficiary-level gender assessment), village women revealed they wanted livelihood and enterprise development skills training, increased participation in community planning and budgeting, and a way of tackling the domestic violence that weakened their homes and their lives. Other issues women beneficiaries highlighted included paying for transport costs to access cash transfers, a referral mechanism for accessing services, interim care support for women victims of violence, crèches for children to help ease their work burden, and a way to organize women around gender issues.

The technical assistance activities encompassed (i) participatory gender audits of the 4Ps implementation process and impacts, (ii) drafting community-driven gender action plans based on the specific needs of beneficiaries, and (iii) small grants to municipalities to follow through on the gender action plans.

## Gender Action Plan per Village

The results of the gender assessment were validated and finalized through a beneficiary assembly; those findings combined with the findings of a baseline capacity-needs assessment in each barangay (the basic administrative unit in the Philippines) or village became the basis for a gender action plan for each village. The project provided micro-grants to help carry out each gender action plan. In each of the project barangays, about 8–10 grantees or parent-leader beneficiaries in the 4Ps were formed into a gender and development core group to oversee their gender action plan. The members participated in various training sessions, including gender sensitivity and prevention of domestic violence and they, in turn, helped raise awareness within their communities. Some of these members later reported they were active in encouraging fellow grantees to attend the family development sessions and to avail of the training provided. By end of the

<sup>3</sup> The health-care transfers required that households fulfill two primary conditions: all children up to age 15 years received health center services according to their age, including immunizations; and pregnant women attend health centers, including delivery by skilled personnel and postnatal care. Education transfers were provided for each child between 6 and 14 years as long as they are enrolled in primary or secondary school and maintained a class attendance rate of 85% every month. Government of the Philippines. Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program. <http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/programs/conditional-cash-transfer/>.

technical assistance project in 2014, the gender and development core group members in the 10 covered municipalities reached 291, most of whom (284, or 98%) were women.

Activities centered on increasing their knowledge on topics such as building healthy family relations, responsible parenthood, children's rights and child-rearing techniques, financial literacy, and improving agricultural production. The inclusion of core messages on gender equality within the home, promotion of joint parental roles, gender sensitivity, and violence against women helped women understand their rights and what they can do to protect these rights. Male spouses were strongly encouraged to attend the family development sessions.

## Training in Livelihood Skills

Community assemblies were organized from July to August 2013 to conduct a livelihood skills inventory and assess training needs to determine what 4Ps' beneficiaries wanted to learn. These skills were later matched with potential employment or markets available in the municipality. Through the project, more than 5,500 women were trained in a range of skills that covered computer literacy, basic business and entrepreneurial skills, baking, catering, dressmaking, cosmetology, animal raising, seaweed farming, vegetable farming, food processing, welding, rug making, and soapmaking. The project covered participants' tuition fees, and their transportation and meal allowances.

In Coron, Palawan, many women chose training in massage, one of the most in-demand livelihood activities due to an influx of tourists (as well as local residents) who wanted massage services, and the presence of hotels and resorts catering to these tourists. Training was conducted by a community school accredited by the government's Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. A follow-up monitoring activity in September 2014 found that the training sessions included life skills to equip trainees to handle various situations, including inappropriate behavior by clients. Trainees in computer literacy also expressed the hope to be hired in local government offices, post offices, schools, and other jobs once they

Marilou Cinco, 4Ps beneficiary and participant of livelihood skills training program in Coron in Palawan province, Philippines.

“I expect to get a job after the training because there is a hot spring in our place, and there is a big possibility they will get massage therapists. Some of our neighbors are working in the hot spring. Once I complete the training, I can ask their help to get a job there or to refer to me some clients, both locals and tourists. As of now there is no massage therapist in our area. I expect I can earn about ₱350 (\$8) per hour.”

— Marilou Cinco



Maricar Boyles, a 39-year-old mother of three children, is one of the trainees in dressmaking in Coron, Palawan. She says she chose the course because she expects to earn a living in dressmaking:

“For a simple pair of pants, one can get P200 (about \$5) for the labor. Also, there are many band groups (school bands and drum and lyre groups) in Coron who need uniforms. Especially in August, the tailors usually rush to finish these uniforms, and they would need more tailors.”



**Benjie Andres Tanes** (in red shirt), a fisher in Iloilo province, is the only male among 10 parent-leaders in his community. He participated in the project’s gender sensitivity training for the core group he joined. His wife, who has a secretarial diploma, works in a nearby city where she earns a decent income. The couple decided the family would be better off if she worked and Benjie stayed home. After training, Benjie says he felt better knowing it is okay for the husband to stay home and take care of the children.

Source: ADB. E-publication: Bridging the Gender Gap: Stories of Change in Women’s Lives in the Pantawid Program. Technical Assistance with the Department of Social Welfare and Development – Strengthened Gender Impacts of Social Protection TA-87587. Pages 43–45.

completed their training. For example, Cristina Rebose was working as a sweeper at the Coron Municipal Hall when she signed up for computer training. “Many employers now look for employees who know how to encode or type in computers,” she said, adding that she would apply for a position as typist after her training.

Other possible jobs cited by trainees included enumerator for surveys conducted by the municipal government for the National Statistics Office and basic computer skills tutoring.

## Training in Business Development

The project established links with other interventions, such as the government’s Sustainable Livelihoods Project, which provided training in financial literacy, basic accounting, business development and management, loan application and processing, and assistance in job search and application.

## Ensuring Communities’ Involvement in Participatory Budgeting

Around 474 women and other community members were drawn into their local processes to support projects through Bottom-up Planning and Budgeting. During these forums, participants from each barangay agreed on priority projects to be submitted for inclusion in the local poverty reduction action plan. These projects complement actions identified by community members in their gender action plans. For instance, in Barangay Tagumpay in Coron, Palawan, a chosen project entailed the purchase of sewing machines and ovens for graduates of livelihood training to help them apply the skills they learned and open their own businesses. The forums included gender-sensitivity training for 387 participants.

## Coping with Domestic Violence

Community support groups were formed in the villages to function as quick response teams and refer cases of violence to relevant government agencies, such as referrals of victims for immediate assistance to the barangay women's desks, municipal social welfare officers, and police women's desks. The community support groups consist of project beneficiaries and showcase the empowerment of women to organize to protect themselves. As of April 2015, 379 people had participated in project-sponsored forums on violence against women and children.

## Involving the Men

Under the complementary project, fathers were encouraged to attend family development sessions established through the 4Ps that focused on gender issues such as violence against women and children; the importance of building nonviolent, healthy intrafamilial relationships; joint home care management; and gender-fair child-rearing practices.

## Carrying on the Project's Achievements

Women beneficiaries, who formed the community support groups against violence, met to discuss how to continue their advocacy work to raise awareness within their communities on such issues as domestic violence and how to ensure more women can benefit from the 4Ps. Many women noted that their family relations are improving. They also said the regular sessions helped them gain confidence to interact with others and speak before a group.

The women interviewed in monitoring visits said the training and family development sessions on domestic violence were a tremendous help because women now know what to do and where to go in the event of violence. The activities contributed to (i) raising community members' consciousness that domestic violence is wrong and they can act to prevent it, and (ii) mobilizing women and community members on what they can do to address cases of domestic violence. Barangay officials' participation in the training helped them understand their obligations to act on these issues. Women pointed out that, after the training, husbands in reported cases of violence were summoned and asked to promise through a written agreement that they would not beat their wives again.

The social protection programs contributed toward improved survival, health, and education of girls and pregnant women. In addition, the cash transfers directly paid to mothers provide recognition of women's unpaid labor and can help increase women's bargaining power within households. There was indication of significant potential within the project to support



**Alma Montebo** slipped a pamphlet from the ADB-funded workshop on the Philippines' domestic violence law into her handbag. At home, she lay it on her bed for her husband to read. At the time, she had no idea how much it would change her life. The pamphlet, the workshop, and, in general, the technical assistance from ADB to the Government of the Philippines went to the heart of the matter: eradicating poverty of households requires empowering women and broadening men's mind-sets. Empowering women encompasses livelihood skills, bank accounts, building confidence, and freedom from violence. Her husband never spoke of the pamphlet, but his actions said it all. "I noticed his attitude toward me changed. His strictness toward me lessened. His jealousy lessened. In fact, whenever there is a [skills] training, he is the one who encourages me to attend," Alma says.

Source: ADB. December 2014. Philippines: Building Women's Knowledge and Skills Contribute to Better Homes and Communities. *SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News*. Volume 9 (2).



After attending the food processing training in September 2014, **May Cuarton Mongcal**, a parent-leader in Aklan province, bought a small steamer and began producing pork dumplings and rice cakes with squash or cheese. She and her husband now sell the dumplings at a school canteen. She sells any leftovers in the public market and the municipal hall. “At first, I was embarrassed to go around hawking food, but I got used to it,” she says with a smile.

Source: ADB. E-publication: Bridging the Gender Gap: Stories of Change in Women’s Lives in the Pantawid Program. Technical Assistance with the Department of Social Welfare and Development – Strengthened Gender Impacts of Social Protection TA-87587. pages 36–38.

social equity and women’s empowerment, including (i) provision of knowledge and skills through family development sessions, (ii) engendering increased confidence and self-esteem among women, (iii) increased social interactions and greater participation of women in communal and public life, (iv) mobilization of mothers’ and women’s groups to address their needs and concerns, and (v) promotion of savings and enabling women to invest in livelihood-enhancing activities.

As a result of this project, thousands of women in various communities are more informed now of their rights and entitlements. Many also gained new livelihood skills to earn better incomes and/or are active in their communities. And for many women, a bank account set up in their name to receive conditional cash transfer payments lessened their feeling of powerlessness.

In Davao Oriental, a woman identified only as Rosalita said the family development sessions and community assemblies helped improve her confidence and “opened up my eyes to the problems of the community and the plight of my fellow mother beneficiaries.” Once timid and indifferent to community issues, Rosalita (and her neighbors) has become a strong, confident, and assertive parent-leader.

Ultimately, the project mobilized women to be leaders and implementers of community activities, and trained women in livelihood skills aligned with potential employment and markets within the communities.



**Barangay day care centers.** Among the 520 Pantawid Program grantees in the three pilot barangays Bancal, Guinticgan and Nalumsan in Municipality of Carles, Iloilo Province, 36 were women-headed households. All the three pilot barangays have day care centers.

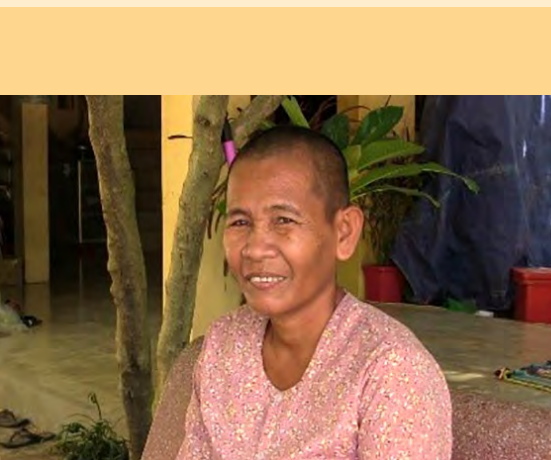
Source: ADB. E-publication: Bridging the Gender Gap: Stories of Change in Women’s Lives in the Pantawid Program. Technical Assistance with the Department of Social Welfare and Development – Strengthened Gender Impacts of Social Protection TA-87587. pages 40.



**Economic empowerment through microenterprise.** Women supported by the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program received skills trainings on livelihood and support for microenterprise development from the government's Sustainable Livelihood Project.



# Cash for Infrastructure Work Is Good for Women—and Families—in Cambodia



“We earn an income amounting to about riels (KR)500,000 [about \$125],” Sen Sophea cheerfully reports as she sits in front of her mini grocery store. She opened the small store using money she and her husband earned from repairing roads under the cash-for-work component of the Emergency Food Assistance Project approved in 2008.

The project set out to improve the food security of 500,000 poor and vulnerable Cambodians affected by high food and fuel prices. Activities included free rice distribution, school feeding, food-for-work and cash-for-work programs, and the subsidized sale of seeds and fertilizers to poor households.

## Cash-for-Work Leads to New Livelihoods

Additional financing from ADB in 2012 expanded the scope of the project to include interventions that address low agricultural productivity and ensure improved access to sufficient and nutritious food by households that lack food security. The cash-for-work scheme was expanded as a result of additional civil works to improve tertiary canals and roads for increased production and market access. Outputs included increased education on and availability of nutritious food and hygiene through training in food use and nutrition for women and children; home gardening; basic health, hygiene, and sanitation; increased access to improved agricultural inputs and technologies; and diversified livelihoods. The project targeted 10 provinces around the Tonle Sap River.

As a result of the project, women could access employment and income through the cash-for-work programs. A total of 25,126 women, including heads of household, participated as unskilled workers, comprising more than 50% of the ultimate 50,090 participants. The laborers worked on construction or repair of roads and irrigation systems. Elsewhere, some 47,150 other women participated in the food-for-work, cash-for-work, and civil

**Ngov Nhoy**, 55 years old, has six children and lives with her husband in Thveas village in Siem Reap province. In addition to their farm income, the family makes baskets to sell. Her family joined the ADB-funded cash-for-work project, earning KR300,000 (\$75), which they used to buy bicycles for the children to get to school, school materials, and clothes. “I cannot read and write, but I want my daughters to have a bright future, so I want to try everything I can to help my children,” she says. Nhoy also bought subsidized quality rice seeds and fertilizer supplied through the ADB project. She now makes almost three times the amount she invested by selling the quality rice she produces.

ADB. December 2014. Cambodia: Improving Food Security for Women and Poor Households. *SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News*. Volume 9 (2).



works programs for rehabilitation of rural roads and irrigation infrastructure. Overall, the project had phenomenal reach.

It also had significant impact. Sen Sophea says that aside from the opportunity to open a small business, she used the money she and her husband earned from the cash-for-work program to buy basic needs such as rice, ingredients for cooking, medicines, and clothes for her children.

“I was able to buy bicycles that my children can ride to school and also school materials and some clothes,” says Ngov Nho of Thveas village in Siem Reap province. She participated in the cash-for-work program and earned a total of KR300,000 (about \$75).

## Reducing Food Gaps

The gender action plan and the cash-for-work guidelines covered targets for women’s inclusion in project committees, which helped encourage greater female participation in the cash-for-work program. Women comprised 37% of the project committee members (453 of 1,277), exceeding the 30% target. Comprising 51% of participants (7,001 of 13,650), women also engaged more than ever in the village meetings to discuss projects and opportunities available to villagers.

Food-poor households received high-yielding agricultural inputs, training, and improved production technologies. For example, 39,830 households received quality seeds and fertilizers. Of these, 12,110 (30%) were households headed by women. In total, 22,308 women (including female heads of households) benefited from the agricultural inputs. A total of 6,244 women (60% of 10,377 women) participated in training in rice and vegetable production, and harvesting and compost making. Additionally, women comprised 52% of the 35,938 trainees on home gardening, and fish, chicken, and swine raising.

Assessment reports for 2013 reported an increase, on average, in rice yields of 27.5% for the wet season and 27.9% for the dry season.

Women comprised the majority of participants in the activities to promote the production and preparation of locally available foods to prevent acute malnutrition. About 2,525 women (57% of 4,394) were trained as skill trainers for home gardening, chicken and fish raising, nutrition, and sanitation. In turn, they trained 26,725 beneficiaries, 56% (14,845) of them women.

Women also benefited heavily from training in nutrition and health. Approximately 48,515 women (77% of 63,185 participants) took part in cooking demonstrations. Training in health education, including information on locally available food, nutritious recipes, and feeding practices, was provided to 5,299 women (70% of 7,514 participants).

The village health support groups established to promote healthy practices and positive health care-seeking behavior involved some 1,974 women (62% of 3,170) participants. The project also conducted community campaign on micronutrients and the promotion of optimal infant and young child feeding practices to prevent acute malnutrition, using available local food for infants. About 34,184 villagers participated, including 28,210 (83%) women.

## Women Gaining Respected Status

Women's participation and leadership roles in the project's committees impacted their status at home and in the community. Sen Sophea was elected as a deputy chief of the road project in her commune. She says she gained much respect from her community. She says other women seek her advice. And her husband has become very supportive. "My husband helps me with the domestic chores when I am busy with my work for the committee. He cooks and takes care of the children."



Married to a farmer and with five children, **Sen Sophea** lives in a rural area in the northern Cambodian province of Preah Vihear. When she attended a community meeting organized by the village chief, Sophea had no clue how much her life would change. Most of the participants were women, and they learned about cash-for-work opportunities under the ADB Emergency Food Assistance Project. If interested, they were told to form a committee for each project with at least one woman as a committee member. Her fellow villagers elected Sophea deputy chief of a road project committee. Unlike the two other committee members, it was the first time she took on a leadership role in her community. Sophea used a portion of her earnings from the cash-for-work road project to start a mini grocery store. As deputy committee chief, Sophea says she gained popularity and more respect from the community. Victims of domestic violence now seek her advice, and she is frequently invited to social events.


ADB. December 2014. Cambodia: Improving Food Security for Women and Poor Households. *SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News*. Volume 9 (2).



**Oum Sokun** is a 46-year-old widow with one daughter who lives with her sister in Lvea commune in Kampong Cham province. She sells eggplants, pumpkins, and string beans; and works for neighbors in their rice fields. Sokun volunteered to be a farmer promoter as part of the ADB Emergency Food Assistance Project. It was her first time to take on a leadership role in her community. When asked why she volunteered, she laughs, "Most participants are women—no one volunteers [to be a leader] because they are busy with household chores. I am a bit shy, but I want to get some experience. At least, I know how to grow crops and do vaccination for chicken, while not so many women know about it." Sokun participated in training through the project on facilitation skills, home garden, nutrition, sanitation, and chicken and fish raising. After the training, she received six chicks and some vegetable seeds. She has since provided three cascade trainings to her community on nutritious recipes using available food, as well as improved sanitation, and chicken and fish raising.

ADB. December 2014. Cambodia: Improving Food Security for Women and Poor Households. *SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News*. Volume 9 (2).

# Why Rains, Drains, and Clean Lanes Are Women's Issues in Viet Nam



A widow with four children, Ha Tinh Mme Van built her first-ever toilet with funds she borrowed and successfully repaid. She is proud of these achievements. In the world where Ha Tinh Mme Van lives, that is empowerment. And it is the kind of self-sufficiency development projects hope to achieve because it typically leads to new vistas for such women, their households, or their communities.

Ha Tinh Mme Van received funds after she participated in the Vietnam Women's Union training sessions on sanitation and managing her loan. She says the training improved her understanding of sanitation and how this contributes to good health. Through the Central Region Urban Environmental Improvement Project that collaborated with the Vietnam Women's Union, a drain was constructed alongside her home.

Women's high level of participation in the project's sanitation and urban environmental infrastructure activities in Viet Nam—exceeding all expectations—reinforces the significance of including women in infrastructure projects.

## Women, Sanitation, and Infrastructure

The Central Region Urban Environmental Improvement Project set out in 2003 to impact the quality of life and health status of urban residents, as well as the foothold of poverty in six towns. The activities centered around urban environmental conditions, with components in drainage and flood protection, solid waste management, wastewater, and household and public sanitation.

Activities worked to expand or upgrade urban environmental infrastructure (building drains, sewerage systems, and landfills), and improve the managing and technical capacity of the urban environmental companies that manage solid waste collection.

Unconventionally, those activities targeted women.

The project's gender action plan looked to overcome the traditional lack of participation by women in civil works, sanitation, and infrastructure activities by having the Vietnam Women's Union inform communities on many good reasons why women should and would want to engage in such opportunities. According to the plan, women should comprise 50% of all participants in the training in environmental sanitation, 30% of

community and neighborhood group workers, and 75% of the beneficiaries of the household sanitation component.

The project covered the provincial capital towns of Dong Ha, Ha Tinh, Quang Ngai, Tam Ky, and Thanh Hoa provinces; and the district town of Lang Co.

## Why Good Sanitation Matters to Women

Good health. Say no more. Because the more households can avoid illness, the less money they need to spend on health care, and the more money they do not lose from lost workdays. Poor sanitation (be it human waste or household waste) and poor drainage, sewerage, or refuse treatment exacerbate women's burdens by creating more illness. Combine that imperative with related jobs that pay a decent income—and women will rise to the opportunity.

And so began a series of activities to transform six urban environments.

First, to attract women to be part of the decision-making processes on community infrastructure, the project worked with the Vietnam Women's Union, which has a strong community presence, to train staff members on developing relevant plans and then managing credit funds and civil works. In turn, the women's union organized consultations with women on wastewater, public sanitation, and solid waste management to explain where and why dikes, drains, and sewerage systems would be built and how that work would provide communities with jobs, with priority for women laborers. Households would then be connected to these systems.

Longer-term jobs, such as garbage collectors, were then created to maintain the systems. To make these jobs attractive, handcarts and garbage cans were redesigned and special transport mechanisms were introduced for proper handling by female garbage collectors, who also participated in gender, HIV, and safety training.

People living on land needed for the infrastructure were resettled with appropriate compensation. The involvement of the Vietnam Women's Union in the resettlement committees ensured women received their entitlements when households were displaced due to construction of the project's infrastructure. Entitlements included extra compensation and land titles, especially for households headed by women.

The Vietnam Women's Union then organized a cadre of trained female "motivators" in every community and launched an intensive awareness campaign on the links between health, the environment, and sanitation.

The community awareness and participation program provided 20 training sessions for local people in health education and mobilized a network of the community motivators, carried out awareness campaigns, and organized public events. The community-based sanitation component provided small grants, technical advice, and training for small-scale environmental sanitation improvements in urban areas that residents said they needed. Gender training was conducted for ward leaders and community members. Women urban residents were trained to manage project

activities. This increased the visibility of women in community management and led to more opportunities for women to participate in decision-making at the commune and ward levels.

The household sanitation program provided grants to help poor households build septic tanks and toilets, and connect their household wastewater to newly built or existing public drainage and sewerage systems. Community management committees, with the women's union members heavily participating, administered the credit schemes as revolving funds and provided health awareness and technical information to borrowers. Exemptions from the cost-recovery requirement for community-based sanitation operation and maintenance were given to households headed by women.

## Why the Project Is Considered Exemplary

The project was successful in achieving high rates of participation by women in the construction, operations, and management of small infrastructure, and decision-making and management within community management committees. For instance, 75% of women were trained in management skills (24 women and 8 men in total); 67% of women were trained in the importance of safe sanitation and how to achieve it (30 women and 15 men in total); and 74% of women were trained in management and information, education, and communication methods (23 women and 8 men in total).

Almost all (90%) of the community management committee members were women; 100% of community management committee directors and leaders of management board for community-based sanitation were women; and 89% of urban motivators were women. More than 75% of credit recipients for household sanitation improvements (toilets and septic tanks) were women. The average repayment rate was 98%.

Individuals from the 239 households who were resettled said they were satisfied with the market rate compensation and the residential plots they were given. Resettlement sites came with basic infrastructure, including roads, water supply connections, drainage systems, and electricity. According to the Resettlement Impacts Assessment Report, the living standards of affected people in resettlement sites were equal to or exceeded pre-project standards.

## More Prominent Roles for Women

The project provided access to expanded and upgraded urban environmental infrastructure for the populations in the project areas; increased participation by the community, especially women and the poor, in the planning and management of urban services; better public health awareness; and more prominent roles for women in urban management and institutions. In addition, local government agencies are more aware of the need for environmental sanitation interventions, as reflected in their socioeconomic policies.

All implementing agencies reported increased improvements in environmental sanitation and reduced incidence of open defecation. The project reportedly increased willingness among communities to connect to the sewerage systems and pay solid waste collection fees. Improved living and environmental conditions were attributed to the success of the Vietnam Women's Union awareness campaigns (through the project's trained motivators) on the links between health, the environment, and sanitation.

Although it comprised a small financial part of the project, the component on awareness and pro-poor sanitation had a significant impact on the lives of poor households in the project towns by improving awareness about proper sanitation hygiene, as well as the impact of proper drainage and solid waste management.

Ha Tinh Mme Van's new toilet has indeed improved household sanitation practices, and the drain prevents her backyard from flooding, which also improved her living conditions. Women and men worked together in building the drain at her house, and many others sorely needed drains in their town.



# Leveling Rice Fields for Women Farmers in Cambodia



The Government of Cambodia wanted to transform the country's rice production from its subsistence operations to a commercially vibrant subsector as a way of increasing national food security, expanding markets internally and internationally, and ultimately impacting poverty, especially among smallholder farmers. But such transformation also needed to respond to climate change threats and promote the preservation of land and water resources.

As the first initiative of its kind in Southeast Asia and a new subsector for ADB, the Climate-Resilient Rice Commercialization Sector Development Program was expected to become a role model for climate-resilient cropping practices for rice. How it included women would also likely be high profile.

With rice accounting for 90% of the country's crop areas, but with agriculture accounting for only 35% of the country's gross domestic product, dramatic changes were needed to overturn the low productivity, low labor returns, and low economic security for agricultural workers—both women and men.

## The Uneven Rice Field Opportunities

If that was not challenge enough, pre-program gender analysis indicated more Cambodian women (at 66%) than men (at 62%) depended on agriculture for their livelihood. Yet, compared with men, women had limited access to production equipment, extension services, affordable credit, and markets. Women's household responsibilities hampered their participation in training activities and in farmers' water organizations.

The government's rice policy had three ambitions: (i) improve the legal framework for land management; (ii) strengthen the rice value chain infrastructure—irrigation, seed production facilities, and postharvest facilities, particularly drying and storage facilities; and (iii) improve rice production and productivity through efficient irrigation water use and access to quality seeds, technology, credit, and other inputs.



## Initiating Change for Women and Men Farmers

The program targeted women and men farmers in the largest rice-producing provinces of Battambang, Kampong Thom, and Prey Veng. The gender goal was to give women equal opportunity to increase their agricultural production. The program also looked at how it could strengthen agricultural resource management and increase women's participation in community decision-making processes.

How women were targeted strengthened the exemplary nature of the program.

## Why Women Smallholders Were Especially Targeted

Through gender analysis, many women expressed their interest to learn information related to technology for enhancing agricultural productivity, farming techniques appropriate to soil and water conditions, and livestock raising. Women requested training in technology for enhancing productivity and in farming and cropping plans relevant to the soil and water conditions, and information related to livestock raising, particularly disease prevention, the handling of animals, and safety procedures.

Women agreed on the importance of water-user committees, but they were reluctant to take management positions due to their home responsibilities and the potential conflicts related to fee collections. They wanted to be consulted on community planning and infrastructure construction, particularly on canal layouts, alignments, and building of tertiary canals through which water is distributed; on water access; and resolving disputes related to water access.

To hire mechanized services or buy fertilizer, a large number of women often borrowed cash from moneylenders or some managed to access credit from a bank, but they were paying interest rates ranging from 24% to 50%.

## How Women Were Targeted

That analysis of women's and men's experiences in agriculture led to a gender action plan with the following emphasis on women's increased participation:

1. **To improve land-use zoning practices.** Consultations included female heads of household and women farmers in planning and decision-making on land-use zoning. In particular, 90 groups of farmers, with 40% female representation in each, were to be consulted for development of commune plans. The Law on Management and Use of Agriculture Land included women's access to information on land administration and management, women's representation in all commissions, and equal benefits for women in land-related initiatives.
2. **For all infrastructure construction (canals; paddy drying and storage facilities; seed cleaning, drying, grading, and storage facilities; rehabilitating and climate proofing irrigation systems).** Separate consultation meetings were organized with female heads of household and

women farmers to discuss their needs related to such issues as the location of facilities; and in the case of canals, the layout to increase their access to water, as well as washing and pumping points, and footbridges and oxcart bridges across canals. A construction subcommittee was formed to represent all beneficiaries; this subcommittee and the commune councils are to sign off on all infrastructure investment plans on behalf of the women farmers. The subcommittee approved any other changes to infrastructure.

- 3. To increase representation in other decision-making activities.** All water-user committees and cooperatives accepted membership from husbands and wives, with a 50% target for women. And women were to fill 30% of their management positions. Women were provided training in leadership and management and were remunerated for their role in the water-user committee. To address women's limited time due to household obligations, all meetings and training activities were conducted in locations and during times convenient for them. The 50% target for women was set to ensure women's right to appeal and redress unfavorable decisions related to infrastructure construction.
- 4. To improve the relevance of the extension service.** Information derived from land-use zoning was used to develop extension training materials on appropriate cropping to the soil and water. The needs of all farmers in the irrigation area, including farmers on marginal land who tend to be poorest, were included. For example, knowledge related to crops (other than rice) that require less water to increase crop returns will be provided to farmers. Extension materials also included specific training needs women farmers identified on enhancing productivity, diversification of products, animal husbandry, safety procedures, and new income-generating activities. Extension training schedules were arranged to ensure location and timing of delivery were convenient for women.

Additionally, 50% women's participation was required in all program-supported training in extension and water management, as well as in pilot farm trials and demonstrations, which typically include only men as beneficiaries. Pilot farm trials and demonstrations worked to ensure women farmers were also able to access quality seeds and productivity-enhancing technology for improved rice production.

Mass media extension materials were gender-sensitive and designed to motivate smallholder women farmers to access certified seeds and new production technologies, including land leveling, drying and storage facilities, pilot insurance scheme, and potential new markets.

- 5. To address lack of access to affordable credit or insurance by women and poor farmers.** Briefings on requirements by microfinance institutions on credit applications were provided to farmers, including women. The program also supported collaboration with microfinance institutions on innovative financial products to ease traditional collateral requirements, such as group-based lending, cash flow-based lending, flexible loan packages, loans of varying amounts, varying terms and conditions, and relaxation of collateral requirements. Additionally, half of the program's pilot weather-indexed crop



**The face of farming is female.** More Cambodian women than men depended on agriculture for their livelihood.



**Women in agriculture.** Woman farmers work just as hard as men but are confronted with difficult challenges in accessing markets, services, and resources for production.



**Empowering women farmers.** The program's gender equality objective was to give women equal opportunity in increasing agricultural production.

insurance scheme covered women beneficiaries, 10% of whom were female heads of household.

- 6. Employment targets for women in civil works and in the operation and maintenance of facilities.** In civil works, 40% of unskilled labor jobs were to be given to women, while 30% unskilled labor jobs and 50% of administrative jobs in rice-drying and warehousing facilities were to be filled by women. In seed production facilities, 50% of the unskilled and semiskilled jobs (seed and seedbed preparation, weeding and seed grading and sorting, and packaging) were to be filled by women. Occupational safety measures, including training, were provided to all workers.

Based on the gender analysis, the government issued a Land Policy White Paper that included a Land and Gender Policy. It was followed by the newly adopted Law on the Management and Use of Agricultural Land that covered women's access to information on land administration, management, and distribution; women's equal participation and representation in all land-related commissions and committees; and equal benefits for women in land-related initiatives.

Through the program, which will be completed in 2019, women farmers should more easily find access to rice value chain infrastructure (mills, traders, and markets), support services, and extension training, which ultimately should bring them greater income through the production of high-value commercial crops.

# How Small Animals and Small Businesses Lifted Women's Aspirations in the Lao People's Democratic Republic



**W**atsana Lathachak changed her life with a single sow. She lives with her husband on less than a hectare of land planted with paddy rice during the wet season, and leafy vegetables and cereals during the dry months. As smallholder farmers with little income, they never earned enough money to send their children to school. When the Smallholder Development Project included her village (in Khammouane province) in 2012, Watsana participated in a training course on small agribusinesses, choosing swine production. Through the project, she and four other women formed themselves into a swine production and marketing group. Watsana started with the one sow. The District Agriculture and Forestry Office provided knowledge in growing and fattening piglets, vaccinations, and other assistance. From the proceeds of the piglets from the first sow, she bought two ready-to-breed sows. Though she was reluctant to disclose her earnings after two breeding cycles, she boasted income was sufficient to cover schooling expenses. Swine raising also boosted her morale and gave her the confidence she could equally contribute a modest income to the household, resulting in her feeling dignified about her family's situation.

## Small Businesses Expand Women's Income Horizons

The Smallholder Development Project brought new income opportunities for rural women in Champasak, Khammouane, Savannakhet, and Vientiane provinces. Previously dependent on subsistence cultivation of rice, women farmers are now able to sell quality rice regularly. Many farmers diversified into higher-value crops, such as corn, to export to Thailand, and sell sweet corn to a local canning factory. Women are taking the lead in corn production, organic vegetables production, and food processing.

In the Lao PDR, women in rural areas are primarily responsible for maintaining family food security. This role is often underestimated, and prevailing cultural values tend to disadvantage women in their participation in politics and decision-making processes, as shown by their underrepresentation in village committees and limited opportunities to participate in extension work, health-care work, and instruction or learning activities. Because of their typically remote geographic location, women are isolated from resources and services. Women farmers say because of their location and/or household responsibilities, they lack access to skills and technology to improve agricultural productivity or to diversify into higher-value crops. Thus, they are often left behind and do not benefit from many agricultural and rural development projects.

## ADB Expands the Success of a Smallholder Project

In 2011, additional financing was added to the Smallholder Development Project as it neared completion to continue and expand the activities that were performing well and to strengthen the gains achieved to establish smallholder agribusinesses that particularly benefited women.

Reflecting the success of the original project, the average beneficiary smallholder household income, for example, in Khammouane province, the poorest among the project provinces, increased to \$675 in 2010 from \$280 in 2002. Chief among the original project's activities included providing agricultural extension and training mechanisms to teach women and men farmers on agricultural production techniques and postharvest practices; improving physical infrastructure (roads primarily) and offering insight into the marketing of agricultural goods; and establishing farmer production, marketing groups, and contract farming practices. In the extended project, eight districts were added to the 16 districts in four provinces in the original targets.

## What Women Wanted

Women were encouraged to participate in the pre-project consultations to communicate their needs in training, equipment, and production technologies. All activities were conducted in locations and during times convenient for women.

The project responded to what women said would be important to them. For instance, they reported that post-production processes of corn, such as harvesting, hulling, and drying, were done manually and were time-consuming. Noodle slicing, banana slicing, and drying were also done manually. To address this, the project procured and distributed corn hullers, dryers, and grinding machines; noodle slicing machines; banana slicers; ovens; fruit mixers; chili grinders; and meat-mixing machines to the processing groups. These machines helped make production faster and easier, thus easing women's work burden and allowing them to engage in other productive activities. These adjustments also led to better-quality products that are, thus, easier to market at higher prices.

The project provided the training women farmers requested to improve their agricultural productivity. The livelihood training conducted by the District Agriculture and Forestry Office covered such issues as the demand and supply of rice seeds during each cropping season, how to assist processing groups in accessing markets for their products, and contract farming arrangements.

## Linking Female Producers with Millers and Traders

To strengthen links among farmers, producers, and traders along the value chain, the project initiated the formation of farmer production and marketing groups. The farmers were linked up with traders and processors and were supported to enter into contracts with specific traders. This ensured regular markets for their products. The project provided training in group formation and management, and group revolving funds for all the groups.



Women are among the leaders and comprise a large proportion of the groups for corn production, food processing, and organic vegetable farming in Vientiane province, and a rice miller group in Khammouane. In the four agro-processing groups established, women comprised 90% of the 48 members. In the 20 rice miller and trader groups, women comprised 61% of the 210 members. This ensures they are part of group decisions, such as for marketing their products and collaborating with traders.

The project's gender action plan consisted of 16 women-related performance indicators. Among the achievements are as follows:

- 360 (26%) of 1,374 farmer production and marketing groups were women;
- all 360 group committee members participated in management training;
- 172 (67%) of 258 members of trade and processor groups were women (30% were targeted);
- 43 women (90%) of 48 members of agro-processing groups;
- 129 women (61%) out of 210 members of rice miller and trader groups;
- 418 women (31%) of 1,327 farmers attended training in preparing contractual, legal, and financial forms for accessing bank credit (30% were targeted);
- 66 women (20%) of 324 participants were trained in postharvest techniques and new technology (20% were targeted);
- 47 (35%) of 133 rice millers, processors, and traders attended training in agribusiness initiatives and marketing (25% of them were targeted); and
- 94 women (30%) of 318 participants attended agribusiness training (30% were targeted).

Thousands of farmers—a significant proportion of them women—benefited from the training in improving agricultural and livestock productivity, agribusiness, and marketing. Women accounted for 88% of the 512 farmers provided with basic knowledge on vaccination and disease treatment for cattle, swine, and poultry. In addition, 851 (24%) of the 3,603 trainees were women who received training in group management; group revolving funds; rice seed and commercial rice production techniques; organic vegetable production; grading, processing, and packaging of products; agribusiness and marketing; livestock and poultry production; soil improvement techniques; and preharvest and postharvest technologies.



**Pakong Ahingsa** used to buy rice from farmers in her Phonhong District in Champasak province. After milling, she sold it to local consumers. But they often complained the rice's quality was not good. When the Smallholder Development Project targeted her village offering to help traders improve their businesses, Pakong jumped at the opportunity. She joined a study trip to Thailand to learn about rice milling machines. Upon her return to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, she helped form 12 farmers groups, representing 752 households in 12 villages in her district. She organized training for each group leader and introduced a new rice variety to them. She contracted with each farmer to buy their rice. The rice they produced was of better quality, and she found no difficulty or complaints in selling rice at a higher price than what she used to sell. This success boosted her confidence and widened her horizon. She learned how to access financial institutions to expand her business.

ADB. December 2015. Lao PDR: Women Producers and Traders Gain Skills and Sustainable Income. *SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News*. Volume 10, (2).



At project completion, 377 women (46%) out of 811 farmers benefited from agricultural equipment provided. Equipment was provided to the banana processing group, the noodle processing group, the pork processing group, and the sweet and feed corn production groups.

The farmers reported earning more income from their diversified agricultural production; the traders reported a steady supply of quality products to sell. Household income in Vientiane increased to \$537 from the pre-project average of \$410. In Khammouane province, as noted, the average household income increased by 137% (from \$280 to \$675).

## Changes in Gender Relations and Women's Presence in Community Leadership

Establishing farmer production and marketing groups with women members, and providing them with relevant skills training and agricultural extension services served the twin purposes of demonstrating improved production techniques in villages and generating additional income while also helping women become active participants in typically male-dominated commercial smallholder agriculture.

A major change is the representation of women (26% achieved against the targeted 20%) in the organized farmer production and marketing groups. This is also a testament to the change in the groups' internal governance structure by involving women in decision-making. About 1,640 women members have administrative and technical tasks. Whereas women were previously rarely recognized, about 90% of farmer group leaders interviewed said they now work with female group members in planning and monitoring farm activities. What is significant about farm monitoring is the delegated role given to women in the rental collection process, instead of this task being allocated exclusively to men. Men have begun to recognize and respect women's capacity as effective partners in all fields in the agriculture sector.

Women reported that the various training helped them feel more confident in making decisions with their husbands on innovative production methods. This was evident among the women-run, small income-generating projects (organic vegetable garden, agro-based processing) supported by the project. Men and women worked together inside their collective farms (such as the Thoulakhom organic vegetable group) to generate income.

# The Extra Mile to Educate Girls in Remote Viet Nam



Physical distance to a school, language and cultural barriers, financial constraints, a curriculum unsuitable to local needs, and the low value placed on education because of a perceived lack of relevance keep many young people from furthering their education after primary school. It is a confounding challenge in nearly every Southeast Asian country.

Viet Nam has made considerable progress educating girls, with females comprising almost half of all students in both primary and secondary schools. But disparities in the quality and accessibility of schooling have persisted in rural and mountainous areas, especially among ethnic minority girls who, in some areas, are expected to marry at a young age. Rates among minorities and minority girls for enrollment are generally below national averages, and dropout rates are higher.

With many young people in remote areas living in scattered communities, sometimes “going the last mile to reach them” requires helping them make their way to urban areas where opportunities are made available. In Viet Nam, this entailed giving young people the means and incentives to travel the long distance to where the project set up education opportunities.

The Lower Secondary Education for the Most Disadvantaged Regions Project, approved in 2007, aimed at increasing the net enrollment rate in lower secondary education, especially for ethnic minorities and girls in the 103 most disadvantaged districts of the 17 poorest provinces in the three most disadvantaged regions (the northern mountains, central highlands, and the Mekong River Delta) with incentives to families, girls, and teachers.

A poverty and education analysis at the district level led the project to these areas, where rates among minorities and minority girls for enrollment were generally below national averages, with the dropout rates higher. In the northwest, where 82% of students were minorities at the time of the analysis, girls comprised about 44% of students. In the Mekong River Delta region, the dropout rate for girls was 13%, nearly twice the national average of 7%.

## Targeting All the Barriers

During the project's design, technical assistance<sup>4</sup> from ADB enabled extensive consultations at the provincial, district, and school levels, and later, a participation strategy was prepared to develop high levels of project ownership. The technical assistance team conducted an informal referendum to finalize the project output activities. Only those proposed activities supported by more than 90% of the provincial Department of Education and Training directors were included in the project design.

Guided by a gender and ethnic minority action plan (based on the consultations), the centerpiece intervention was the construction of schools, classrooms, semi-boarding facilities, and teacher housing in remote and disadvantaged areas. But that was complemented with in-service and pre-service teacher training to enhance the quality and relevance of lower secondary education, developing bilingual instructional materials, providing scholarships, pilot-testing innovative initiatives such as school feeding programs, and awareness-raising activities to promote secondary education for girls and ethnic minorities.

## New Schools and Boarding Facilities

Prior to the project, only a single full boarding school in each provincial capital existed; these attracted relatively advantaged ethnic minority students and did not lead to an increase in the net enrollment rate among minorities. The project built 978 semi-boarding schools in rural areas that allowed for weekly boarding and greatly increased minority students' access to school.

The project reached the adjusted target of building and equipping 820 lower secondary school classrooms, and constructing 48 community education center classrooms. By the end of the project, 143 kitchens in the semi-boarding schools and 259 separate toilets were built, in line with national school standards. The impact of the new sanitation facilities was critical to increasing female minority student enrollment and reducing dropout rates, as secure, clean, gender-segregated sanitation facilities were available to girls.

As a result of the project, schools now accommodate 37,965 more students in new classrooms (18,061 girls, or 47.6%), 1,525 students in community education center classrooms (532 girls, or 34.9%), and 8,550 in semi-boarding schools (3,950 girls, or 46.2%). The newly constructed facilities also reduced the financial burden on poor provincial governments for school construction and maintenance of the existing old facilities.

*“Parents expressed that boarding facilities were major incentives for them to send their daughters to school, and students remarked that accommodation at school was of a higher quality, ‘better than at home.’”*

—ADB Poverty Reduction, Gender, and Social Development Division  
Implementation Review Mission Report (August 2012)

<sup>4</sup> ADB. 2006. *Socialist Republic of Viet Nam: Preparing the Secondary Education for Most Disadvantaged Regions Project*. Manila.

## Training of Teachers and Administrators

For each teaching subject in the program (mathematics, literature, biology, geography, and physical education), two “key” teachers from each school attended in-service training in the provincial center that included ethnicity- and gender-responsive elements, as well as student-centered methodologies. This means 19,476 key teachers (55% female) were trained who then turned around and “echo-trained” 199,766 lower secondary school teachers (47% female). While 6,151 new trainees in teacher colleges (63% female) received ethnicity- and gender-responsive pre-service training in addition to their standard studies.

A total of 33,951 lower secondary school teachers, 3,314 core subject teachers, and 4,519 education administrators and principals received training in (i) student-centered methodologies, (ii) continuing professional development, (iii) effective use of new materials for disadvantaged students, (iv) use of information and communication technology in the classroom, (v) support for the teaching of Vietnamese to ethnic minority students and in a multicultural environment, and (vi) gender and cultural awareness programs. A total of 1,028 teachers were trained as core trainers, and of these, 475 (46%) were women—which was seen as a strong performance against the 50% target, considering participants were largely from male-dominated teacher training colleges.

The project provided scholarships for ethnic minority students in upper secondary schools to train to become lower secondary teachers in their own communities. Nearly 57% of the transitional teacher training scholarships were awarded to women, exceeding the 50% target. Management training for school principals benefited 1,415 school principals, of whom 303 (21%) were female and 164 (nearly 12%) were ethnic minority. Overall, 3,021 school principals and administrators received training, of whom 681 (nearly 23%) were women.

## Housing Facilities as Incentive for Teachers in Remote Areas

As an incentive to retain teachers in remote areas, the project constructed the targeted 445 teacher rooms at schools. The action plan required priority be given to female and ethnic minority teachers for teacher housing, with separate sanitation facilities for women and men. A total of 160 teachers in four schools required housing, 59 of them women and 58 ethnic minority.

*“Teachers expressed appreciation for the provision of safe and secure housing in close proximity to their workplace, which provided them with the personal stability to be able to focus on their work. Prioritization of female teachers and staff in the allocation of project resources (training, teacher housing) also enhanced their status relative to their male peers. Training enhanced their career development.”*

— ADB Poverty Reduction, Gender, and Social Development Division  
Implementation Review Mission Report (August 2012)

## Pilot Initiatives to Improve Access and Equity for Ethnic Minorities and Girls

**Scholarships.** The pilot initiatives included a 4-year scholarship program for 771 students from the 17 smallest ethnic minorities, though that number decreased to 605 by the end of the project (with only 602 passing the national exam). Of these, 48% were female and 52% male. Of those who did not finish, 112 dropped out of school, 53 transferred, 25 repeated a grade, 4 died, and 1 violated the regulations and was asked to leave. Of the 602 scholars who finished, 317 students (about 53%) went on to pursue upper secondary education. This comprised 154 female students, or almost 49% of the total number of students who went to upper secondary school, significantly higher than the net enrollment ratio national average for ethnic minority groups.

**School feeding program.** The school feeding program for semi-boarders provided 15 kilograms of rice per student per month for 3 months annually over 4 years. This was to reduce the burden on parents to provide food, encourage children from poor minorities to attend school and reduce attrition, and improve educational outcomes. To increase the number of beneficiaries, the rice provision was decreased to 10 kilograms per student per month for 3 months annually for 3 years. The decrease in the provision also coincided with the student use of the new semi-boarding facilities. The most notable impact of the semi-boarding school feeding program is the government's decision to continue support beyond the project.

*“The pilot school feeding program is undoubtedly positively impacting on enrollment and completion rates for girls and ethnic minority children. All persons met explained that provision of food was an important incentive for parents to send their daughters to school. All students—girls and boys alike—repeatedly referred to the quality and quantity of meals as well as the range of nutrition as better at school than at home and were able to cite examples of meals which illustrate balanced nutrition.”*

—ADB Poverty Reduction, Gender, and Social Development Division  
Implementation Review Mission Report (August 2012)

*“Conversations with students also illustrated strategic benefits flowing from the project. Although the majority spoke about prevailing gender inequalities at home and in their communities (e.g., expectation of early marriage for girls and gendered division of labor in allocation of household tasks), there was a unanimous view amongst them that the school environment was a fair one. For example, the pilot school feeding program involved girl and boy students on a daily basis in food preparation, cooking and washing up in school kitchens, without differentiating tasks. Girl students also articulated high and uninhibited dreams for further study and careers, including in nontraditional areas such as engineering and sciences.”*

— ADB Poverty Reduction, Gender, and Social Development Division  
Implementation Review Mission Report (August 2012)



**Advocacy with parents and community leaders.** The benefits of secondary education were promoted among ethnic minority parents and community leaders in three disadvantaged provinces (the northern mountains, central highlands, and the Mekong River Delta).

*“Conversations with parents by an ADB monitoring team indicated positive attitudinal change toward secondary education for daughters, and increasing acceptance of semi-boarding for girls. Mothers explained that educated women who speak Vietnamese are less dominated by men in families and viewed education as important for their daughters.”*

—ADB Poverty Reduction, Gender, and Social Development Division Implementation Review Mission Report (August 2012)

*“Some parent–teacher associations were reported to be proactively mobilizing community support to families with daughters at risk of dropping out.”*

—ADB Poverty Reduction, Gender, and Social Development Division Implementation Review Mission Report (August 2012)

The government institutionalized into law the school feeding program and the scholarships for ethnic minorities; thus, these are expected to be highly sustainable.

## The Project’s Value

The project aimed to reach a net enrollment rate of 90% by school year 2015–2016. The most recent available data (school year 2014–2015) has shown that it had surpassed the target year early, reaching nearly 91%. Additionally, the project reached gender parity 2 years early. The female dropout rate fell by nearly 51%, while the female dropout rate among ethnic minorities declined by nearly 44%. In a complex project in an area where enrollment rates are pushed down by a myriad of factors, including lack of facilities, remote populations, poor access, negative attitudes toward girls’ enrollment, and cultural norms among ethnic minorities, the reduced dropout rates were considered an impressive achievement.



**Empowering the girl-child.** “I like to study math and literature, and physics. I would like to become a teacher of math when I grow up,” reports eighth-grader Giang Thi Dua, in the San Chai Lower Secondary School in Lao Cai province, another facility strengthened through the project.



**Big dreams begin with equity and inclusion.** Girls huddle in their new boarding school room, in the Ta Van Chu Lower Secondary School in Lao Cai province.



**Building classrooms, breaking invisible glass ceilings.** Teachers and students of Ta Van Chu Lower Secondary School in Lao Cai province, which received four classrooms, a library, a boarding house for teachers and boarding rooms for students, as well as training of teachers through the ADB-funded project.

Source: ADB. May 2013. Value Reaching the Unreached: Increasing Girls’ Access to Lower Secondary Education in the Most Disadvantaged Regions in Viet Nam. *SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News*. Volume 7 (1).

# What Happens When a Woman Helps Build a Village Drain in Indonesia



It was an infrastructure project that aimed for massive impact. And not only did it succeed at empowering communities, but it included women in unexpected roles. At completion in 2013, the activities had contributed toward improved living conditions for about 3.2 million poor people in 1,500 villages across four Indonesian provinces (Jambi, Lampung, Riau, and South Sumatra) by constructing, upgrading, or improving drains, sewerage connections, electricity access, roads, paths, and bridges. Local residents, including women, decided how to spend a block grant their village or community received through the project and participated in the construction work.

Approved in 2010, the Rural Infrastructure Support to the PNPM Mandiri II in Indonesia Project demonstrates that well-designed, community-led infrastructure development can shake up the norms. The project's interventions worked to increase women's participation (and, thus, their social capital) in local planning and decision-making processes. In the long run, these activities have the potential to break down traditional barriers and truly broaden women's economic, political, and social empowerment.

## Returning to a Previous Success Strategy

For many years before the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997, Indonesia successfully used infrastructure investments to chip away at rural poverty. The crisis prompted the cancellation or suspension of many planned public and private infrastructure projects. Subsequent governments prioritized more urgent financial sector restructuring and fiscal consolidation. As a result, infrastructure investments, which accounted for more than 6% of gross domestic product before 1997, fell to a low 2% in 2000, and only reached 3% in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Since 1997, only basic preservation and maintenance of infrastructure have taken place, with minimal expansion.

Consequently, about 50 million Indonesians lacked access to safe water, 90 million lacked access to electricity, and nearly 200 million were not connected to a sewerage network in 2007.<sup>6</sup> Such conditions result in increased need for health care. But poor roads or no roads mean that government services (education and health services), jobs,

<sup>5</sup> World Bank. 2007. *Indonesia Public Expenditure Review 2007*.

<sup>6</sup> ADB. 2008. *Initial Poverty and Social Assessment of the Indonesia Infrastructure Reform Program II*. Manila.

and markets are difficult to access. High transportation costs become an additional barrier to services or opportunities. It is little wonder rural poverty thrives where people lack access to basic infrastructure.

While both men and women suffer from such poor access, women and girls are disproportionately affected because of their expected role in managing household needs such as retrieving water or coping with family illness. Cultural and social norms also tend to exclude women from community decisions on needed infrastructure investments—and the job opportunities those decisions can yield.

## How Women Were Targeted

The project set out to support the government's flagship community-driven poverty reduction program by targeting the poorest villages in southern Sumatra. Both the first and second phases of the project aimed to use infrastructure as a way to reduce poverty while strengthening local governance: each participating village received a block grant of rupiah (Rp)250 million (equivalent to about \$27,500) to finance rural infrastructure improvements. How that money would be used would be decided by a community implementing organization (CIO), with members elected. A 40% quota was set for women's participation in CIO elections and membership.

A 40% target was also set for women's participation in all consultations on village development plans. Lessons learned from previous community projects stressed that, although rules and quotas are necessary, they are sometimes not enough to ensure women participate and have a genuine voice. Often, in patriarchal cultural settings, women are inhibited from voicing their opinions, and men may dominate a community forum, or meetings might solely be attended by local elite women due to their greater visibility and capacity, to the exclusion of poor and marginalized women. Thus, the project included additional filters such as separate meetings at convenient times for poor women to identify their priorities.

The project instituted additional transparency tools such as ensuring selected community investment proposals are evaluated against poverty impacts, potential sustainability, and majority preferences; and attention to the needs of both women and men.

The gender action plan also specified that 30% of all jobs created through the project were to be provided to women. These included



**Women in construction work.** Women helping to building a village access road in Indonesia.

Source: ADB. ADB Support to the National Program for Community Empowerment (Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat, PNPM) Mandiri. Unpublished.

jobs in construction, operation, and maintenance. This intervention not only provided employment for local women, but also supported women's entry into nontraditional fields (including in jobs such as technicians, meter readers, and women's leadership in water-user associations), thereby breaking local stereotypes of what women can do.

## How the Road, Bridge, and Drain Projects Responded to Women's Needs

Overall, about 1,750 kilometers of rural roads were constructed and upgraded; 4,500 bridges were erected; more than 1,000 units of water supply and sanitation facilities were provided; and 51 kilometers of drains were constructed. The built infrastructure and facilities benefited more than 600,000 households, of which about 296,000 were impoverished.

More than 166,000 village residents—at least 30% of whom were women—were employed as workers (for about 3 months on average) earning an average daily wage of about Rp50,000 (about \$5). In total, the project improved living conditions for about 636,000 households (about 3.18 million village residents) in 1,500 project villages. The project also covered 960 neighborhoods in 34 cities.

In addition to improved access to basic education and health services, the project resulted in improved hygiene and health environment due to access to water supply and sanitation facilities. Higher incomes due to better harvests (including more crop cycles per year and increased yield per crop cycle) were reported as a result of the improvements in irrigation, the increased reliability of water supply, and savings from flood-related damage.

A gender audit found the quality of women's participation encouraging. Overall, women constituted 295,279 (38%) of the total 770,050 participants in village decision-making meetings, project socialization, and consultation forums, with about 10% of women reporting they were actively involved, and even leading, in decision-making.

The medium-term poverty-reduction planning process involved 41% of women. Women's involvement in the community group responsible for operation and maintenance of community infrastructure was less than targeted and was due to women's own prioritizing of domestic and family obligations.

Only about 20% of the job opportunities created under the project went to women. This could be due to some women choosing not to do hard labor in construction because (i) they were occupied with domestic jobs, (ii) they were generally reluctant to do hard labor, (iii) they were not allowed by their husbands, or (iv) they had other jobs with better pay. Male and female workers received equal pay for work of equal value.



## Achieving the Targets

Overall, most of the targets to strengthen communities' competence in planning and carrying out projects were achieved:

1. CIOs were established in 1,500 villages, with about 35% representation of women in each; all members were trained in bookkeeping, report preparation, operations, and maintenance.
2. Two separate planning meetings for women were conducted in each of the project villages, thereby providing opportunities for women to voice their ideas, interests, and needs.
3. The medium-term poverty reduction plans were created in a participatory manner in all project villages, with about 41% women's participation and 49% poor residents' participation in planning meetings and other community meetings.
4. Investment and implementation plans for community-driven development projects were formulated and approved in all project villages, and most of them were adopted as the official village medium-term planning documents, to be used in the future for obtaining financial support for villages from district governments or other sources.

The construction and upgrading of roads, pathways, and bridges improved the business conditions for informal entrepreneurs (including food-stall owners, small restaurants, and small shops) and farmers. Better roads also provided easier and safer access for residents to their places of work (rice fields, and rubber and oil palm plantations), generally contributed to reduced transportation costs, and improved access to local markets to deliver goods and services and buy products, as well as to schools and health centers. Improving drainage systems contributed to reduced damage and losses from flooding. Additional economic benefits include (i) improved public health and reduced per capita costs for health care and medical treatment due to greater coverage of sanitation services and improved access to safe drinking water, (ii) greater income-generating opportunities through improved essential infrastructure, and (iii) considerable short-term employment during construction of village infrastructure.

At completion in 2013, the impact evaluation report suggested the project contributed to increasing village residents' income by 15%. The project impact evaluation study also indicated the improved transport facilities contributed to a 15% increase in the number of women in project villages having prenatal care checkups and a 9% reduction in student (including female student) dropout rates. In villages opting to improve their water supply schemes, the time spent collecting water was reduced by as much as 50%.

Most women indicated they were actively involved and provided inputs during community decision-making meetings. Women's participation in training and memberships in CIOs and user groups improved their capacity to influence decision-making, including on how project resources were spent.





**Women in road construction.** Women workers leading the road construction at Kabupaten Tanjung Jaung Timur in Jambi province.



**Why gender matters in water and waste.** A proud mother in central Java stands in front of her house now connected to the communal sewage treatment plant. The covered hole with a red mark is part of the plant's system to check wastewater disposal to ensure no polluting of groundwater.

Source: ADB. ADB Support to the National Program for Community Empowerment (Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat, PNPM) Mandiri. Unpublished.

# Golden Opportunities for Women in Myanmar



Myanmar's opening of its doors to economic reform and democratic governance has opened many windows of opportunities. The surge in both foreign and domestic tourism, greatly aided by a massive road construction project in the East–West Economic Corridor, created the potential for poor household members to reconsider risky foreign migration by building or expanding small businesses that tap into lucrative new markets.

## Seizing the Moment

The Economic Empowerment of the Poor and Women in the East–West Economic Corridor Project set out in 2015 to demonstrate how technical training, skills training in business management, appropriate technology, and financial credit could help residents in Mon State seize opportunities created by the country's domestic and foreign tourism surge.

As of 2014, about 15% of the 2.3 million Myanmar nationals who migrated to Thailand in search of better-paying jobs were from Mon State. And of the estimated \$1.7 billion remitted annually to Myanmar by migrant workers outside the country, more than \$588 million was sent to Mon State.<sup>7</sup> Yet, more than 39% of the population was underemployed, and more than 16% of families were classified as poor, despite rapidly increasing trade and tourism in the area. Approximately 55% of the state's population was self-employed through small and medium-sized enterprises selling agricultural products, such as processed food and snacks, and handicrafts, in nearby markets.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the earning potential was held back by insufficient product knowledge, poor access to appropriate processing technology, lack of skilled employees, lack of business development and management skills, limited financing, and inability to reach out to new markets (locally and regionally). These constraints prevented residents from moving out of poverty.

<sup>7</sup> Many of the migrants are men who leave behind women to head the households. International Organization for Migration. Presentation on Assessing Potential Changes in Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and their Impacts on Thailand, Analysis of Findings for Stakeholders in Myanmar. 24 February 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Myanmar, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; United Nations Children's Fund; and United Nations Development Programme. 2011. *Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009–2010)*. Nay Pyi Taw.

It was an area prime for change through technical skills training on how to use remittances more productively or, even better, how to avoid the dangers of migration by developing value-added products and flourishing businesses at home.

The project chose four townships that are increasingly popular tourist sites: Kyaikthiyo (home of the Golden Rock Pagoda, which recorded more than a million visitors in 2013); Chaungzon Island; Mawlamyine; and Mudon, with the country's largest reclining Buddha, and old churches, caves, and huge rock formations.

These businesses will tap into the potential for handicraft and local food production that appeal to both local and tourist markets. It also will tap into the country's new consumer market by helping local women producers access markets in Yangon and the border area between Myanmar's Myawaddy township and Thailand's Mae Sot town.

## Increasing the Productivity or Employability of Poor Women and Men

A selection of target villages followed field surveys at the project's inception and were based on seven requirements:

1. Villages have poverty rates of at least 16%.
2. Communities have sufficient basic skills to produce crafts and food products.
3. At least 75% of products selected will be produced mainly by women in women-led enterprises.
4. There is proven market demand for the type of products that can be produced in target villages.
5. Families of migrants who are interested in setting up small business with the use of remittances are eligible.
6. Households headed by women (in particular for skills training to increase employability in micro and small enterprises), very poor community members, and/or women from ethnic groups.
7. Participation in the project is endorsed by community leaders and the intended project recipients.

As a result, 900 households and 12 villages will receive exposure to microenterprise development that focuses on locally made handicrafts and processed food. The enabling environment for local entrepreneurship will help build human capital and help households manage risks, promote investment and entrepreneurship, and improve participation in the labor market. Ultimately, it will strengthen the ability of poor women and men to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic growth.

The technical training, along with business development and management skills training, primarily targets women entrepreneurs. The access to finance, markets, and

business support services the project provides aims to create jobs and align new skills with labor market needs—thus, helping the unemployed, poor, and marginalized residents, especially women, enter the workforce.

The project will also work to strengthen local government capacity and institutional arrangements that will improve the business-enabling environment. Strengthening community-based enterprises and availability of life-skill training programs are expected to provide young women and men with alternatives to unsafe migration. Training in gender equality and life skills also helps promote gender-fair division of resources and labor and, thus, better access for women to livelihood opportunities.

## Applying Lessons Learned from a Similar Project

ADB has a growing Greater Mekong Subregion portfolio of support for increased regional economic integration and connectivity. The projects in this portfolio represent efforts to maximize benefits for women of increased integration through tourism-related livelihoods and skill development (for processed foods, handicrafts, textiles, etc.). Lessons learned from a similar project in Cambodia<sup>9</sup> influenced the design of the Myanmar project: adequately assess market demand for products and services; involve private sector partners early and front-load business support services; and involve both women and men in decision-making processes and give them the skills to engage in all stages of the value chain (processing technology, financing, and accessing information and markets).

Applying these lessons, the Myanmar project preparation included a value chain analysis and market studies to guide the selection of product types and project locations. That analysis and the market studies continued throughout the project to make sure the products and businesses remained relevant and responded to market potential.

## How Women Entrepreneurs Were Targeted

The Myanmar project took an integrated approach to help women entrepreneurs access training in technical skills, and business development and management, and access value chain and supply chain services (such as processing technology, financial credit, market information, and access to markets). Businesses varied from processed food to handicrafts and textiles.

Thus, the project's gender action plan sought to ensure women's participation in

- all village consultations and awareness-raising seminars (women comprise at least half of all participants);
- producer groups to be established through the project (with 60% female membership);
- preparation of all training materials to ensure they are easily understood and are

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<sup>9</sup> ADB. 2011. *Technical Assistance to the Kingdom of Cambodia for Improving Market Access for the Poor in Central Cambodia*. Manila.



sensitive to gender and ethnicity issues (all training materials on safe migration and life skills were to include gender issues in migration, including gender dimensions of risk, vulnerability, and protection);

- all training activities, including master trainers (both with at least 60% women), and this training was to be conducted in locations and at times convenient for women (with training in safe migration, life skills, business development, and accounting);
- ownership in newly developed enterprises (with at least 60% female owners);
- increased access to business services, credit, and commercial networks (with at least 60% of participants receiving financial credit or in trade fairs being women); and
- village consultations and planning meetings on the development of project infrastructure (with 70% of producer and retailer participants being women).

When completed by 2020, the project ideally will have demonstrated how to help local residents take advantage of the socioeconomic benefits resulting from road improvements. It is a model that can be easily scaled up in Mon State and replicated in other parts of the country. It promotes entrepreneurship among migrant returnees and families of migrants through the productive investment of remittances. And by promoting infrastructure improvements, it connects lower-income groups with markets and enables lower-educated residents to access training and salaried employment.



**Seizing opportunities to increase productivity.** Stalls at Bogyoke Aung San Market, a tourist destination situated in the heart of Yangon, Myanmar.



**Reaping benefits of increased integration and tourism.** Souvenir and handcraft stall owners keep shop at the Bogyoke Aung San Market.



# Helping Tourism Benefit People Who Stay at Home in the Greater Mekong Subregion



**T**ravel expands travelers' horizons and enriches lives. So why has it had only a checked impact on the massive poverty where tourism flourishes? Why have so few rural incomes been enriched by the rapid increase of travelers in their communities?

Tourism certainly creates opportunities. But unmanaged and rapid tourism growth has resulted in a pattern of tourism concentrated in a few destinations, threatening natural, cultural, and urban heritage; and contributing to undesirable social impacts. New opportunities provided by the development of transportation corridors are not utilized, and the capacity of tourism-related small and medium-sized enterprises to service tourist needs, and of the public sector to sustainably manage growth are weak. As a result, the contribution of tourism to poverty reduction and sustainable, inclusive development in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) has been limited.

Due to household responsibilities and gender biases, women in tourism-potential areas have limited access to skills training, facilities, or the business services needed to access jobs in tourism-related service and production enterprises. Although women comprise more than half of tourism workers nationally, they are underrepresented in decision-making processes, and few hold high-level management positions, especially in the remote and underdeveloped areas of the GMS.

## Developing the Tourism-Related Value Chain

A GMS Tourism Sector Strategy for 2006–2015, prepared by the GMS Tourism Working Group, revolved around the urgent need for the sustainable use and development of natural, cultural, and urban tourism assets; spread the benefits of tourism more widely, especially among the poor; tap the tourism potential of the GMS transport corridors; and build the capacities of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises and of public officials.

When it was approved in 2008, the Greater Mekong Subregion Sustainable Tourism Development Project aimed to help the governments of the Lao PDR and Viet Nam find a sustainable, culturally and environmentally sound, pro-poor approach to tourism and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. The project particularly wanted to contribute toward implementation of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy to increase

tourism's contribution to poverty reduction by expanding the traditional community-based tourism approach to include tourism-related value chain development, improve tourism facilitation along the economic corridors, and expand public and private tourism management skills.

Demonstration projects in the Lao PDR and Viet Nam were set up to improve the environment at urban and natural tourism sites; benefit ethnic groups, minorities, and the poor; and protect vulnerable people from potential negative impacts. Tourism opportunities along roads were encouraged, and the human resource capacity of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises and public sector tourism organizations were improved through various training.

Handicraft markets, viewing points, small access roads, walking trails, tourism signage, information and visitor centers, parking areas, small river piers, community lodges, and protective and sanitary facilities were built. Tourism site development and management plans were drafted, and training offered to communities and private tourism operators on developing marketing strategies, products, and tourism manuals. The project promoted fair partnerships among local governments and communities and the private sector in developing, operating, and maintaining community tourism facilities and services.

The project covered nine provinces in the Lao PDR and five provinces in Viet Nam.

## How Women Were Targeted

The project's gender action plan included (i) mechanisms to promote women's participation in decision-making and increase their access to tourism-related economic opportunities; (ii) training for communities, government officials, and other stakeholders on gender issues; (iii) awareness programs for communities and government officials on how to reduce the risk of human trafficking and other social risks known to be associated with tourism; and (iv) preparation of 14 provincial gender plans for the tourism sector.

The gender action plan was regularly reviewed in consultation with men and women project beneficiaries, community-based organizations, government officials, and other development partners.

## How Women Benefited

In the Lao PDR, about 6,600 people (44% of whom were women) joined formal and informal skills training related to pro-poor community-based tourism, and 1,600 (41% of whom were women) participated in training to boost tourism development in economic corridors. Gender awareness seminars included government officials and business leaders. Gender- and ethnic-sensitive information and education materials were produced in the Lao and Vietnamese languages to support the seminars. Women comprised 68% of the 498 master trainers trained in small-scale hospitality management and/or sustainable tourism planning, and accounted for 52% of the 21 scholarships awarded to master trainers.

Men or women from provinces predominantly populated by ethnic groups received more than a third of the master trainer scholarships. The project provided training for tour guides, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and using materials World Vision developed for the regional Child Safe Tourism campaign. By the end of the project, up to 50% of working tour guides were women (female guides prefer to lead one-day cultural tours, while men prefer working as trekking guides and on multiday excursions).

In Klu village on the East–West Economic Corridor, women comprised 70% of 36 service group members, and 97% of the 63 vendors in the Luang Namtha night market in the North–South Economic Corridor were women.

### **Luang Namtha Night Market, Luang Namtha, Lao People’s Democratic Republic**

All vendors are equally entitled to low-cost kiosks. Approximately 12% are from households headed by women. Most women sell vegetables, food, and drinks; seven vendors (including three Akha ethnic women who sell specialized ethnic handicraft and jewelry) sell handicrafts, textiles, clothes, and jewelry. The seven women selling crafts earn between \$10 and \$50 per night; one woman earns between \$50 and \$70 from selling crepes. The Akha women earn between \$7 and \$15 net per night. Each of the Akha women supports 8–11 people in her household. Noi, a 15-year-old female vendor from a household headed by a woman, attends school during the day and works the market each evening. Her mother prepares food to sell during the day. Noi says that without the income from the night market, she and her siblings would be unable to go to school. A number of women selling in the market were unable to calculate their exact profits and said they needed more training in business skills. Almost all the women said the project significantly improved their lives, and the extra income enabled them to pay for daily living expenses, including food, electricity, and education.

Source: ADB. November 2012. *Tourists and Night Markets Bring Income and Hope to Lao PDR Women. SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News. Volume 6 (2).*



### **Weaver Increases Her Income and Status, Vieng Neua Village, Lao People’s Democratic Republic**

**Som Chit**, a farmer and weaver in Vieng Neua village, Luang Namtha province, built a reputation as an expert weaver over the past 2 years. Aside from weaving, she was also trained in handbag design, which boosted her confidence. She intends to find new markets and expand her business, which currently earns her about \$700 per year. In addition to the extra income from weaving, Som Chit gained status and respect from her fellow villagers, and her daughters are proud of her ability to support them.

Source: ADB. November 2012. *Tourists and Night Markets Bring Income and Hope to Lao PDR Women. SEAGEN Waves Newsletter: Gender and Development News. Volume 6 (2).*

## Training Boosts Women's Employment and Income, Quang Binh, Viet Nam

**Le Thi Hue** is 30 years old and used to be a farmer. She graduated from the project's 2-week photography training, earning a certificate and permission from local authorities to work as a freelance photographer at Paradise Cave in Phong Nha National Park. She earns dong (D)400,000 a day during the 5-month high season and D70,000–D80,000 a day in the low season. After deducting permit fees (D10,000,000 per year), she earns about D2.5 million per month, or around \$110, which is good income for a rural area. She is happy with the training and the employment opportunity she gained from the project.

In Viet Nam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, some 72,000 people considered as poor (50% of who were women) benefited from new livelihood opportunities. Awareness programs on tourism-related employment opportunities and negative impact management for men and women reached about 29,000 people (44% of whom were women in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and 53% of whom were women in Viet Nam). The gender-sensitive training program on environment, culture, and tourism for tour operators and guides involved 2,541 participants (59% of whom were women).

Source: ADB. Case Study 1: Training boosts women's employment and income, Quang Binh, Viet Nam. Unpublished.

**In Viet Nam**, the training and seminars to support pro-poor community-based tourism reached about 23,000 people (53% of whom were women). There were 572 participants (65% of whom were women) participants in the project's gender-sensitive tourism awareness and anti-trafficking seminars. These seminars targeted men and women living in the East–West Economic Corridor. The project conducted gender-sensitive training and workshops to boost environmental awareness for about 2,500 tour operators and guides (59% of whom were women). Consultations with 49 women leaders helped identify gender issues and improve the design of training and awareness-raising activities.

A total of 874 tourism officials (53% of whom were women) were trained in tourism planning and management, and 218 officials (53% of whom were women) were trained as master trainers (the project fully financed all training programs, including scholarships for master trainers).

A project management team based in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, consisting of a balanced number of men and women, monitored implementation of the gender action plan. Sex-disaggregated data was regularly included in quarterly progress reports. Counterpart gender focal points were established in the central project coordination unit and provincial project implementation units to support preparation and implementation of gender action plans for five provinces.

Gender-sensitive community-based tourism manuals were developed for the Lao PDR and Viet Nam. There are about 18 community-based tourism or enterprise groups in the Lao PDR and 10 in Viet Nam that involve both men and women in operations, management, and monitoring. With the help of those manuals, the Lao PDR developed or strengthened 36 products and services, while Viet Nam developed or strengthened 14 products and services, which include excursions, homestays, cultural programs, food and beverage services, textile and bamboo handicrafts, and iron handicrafts.

## Participation and Access to Project Resources and Practical Benefits

The community infrastructure (such as small markets, food kiosks, and tourist information centers) is providing much-needed safe public access and commercial opportunities for women. The facilities helped predominantly women-led micro and small enterprises expand and prosper. Although women's participation in civil works construction was less than 20% in the Lao PDR and only slightly higher in Viet Nam, women in both countries benefited from selling food to contractors at the construction sites. When the project closed, women used nearly 100% of newly constructed markets and other retail facilities to sell local produce, food and beverages, and locally made handicrafts.

## Changes in Gender Relations

Women's participation in tourism planning and management workshops was more than 40%. This enables women to take a prominent role in the day-to-day management of community-based tourism and tourism supply chain ventures. Women's access to income enabled them to gain more control over household resources. In the Lao PDR, a female vendor said that her status in the household rose markedly because she was earning higher income, which paid for the household's critical expenses. This increased the "respect" she received from her husband and daughters-in-law. Another older woman said not having to ask her sons for money gave her newfound "freedom."



### Pottery Enterprise Changing Gender Division of Labor, Yor Village, Lao People's Democratic Republic

Skills and knowledge to produce earthen pots has been passed down from father to son through generations of ethnic Tai Lu farmers. With business training, the project helped transform pot production into a full-time successful enterprise. Women were included in the business training and training on pottery craft. The training, equipment, infrastructure, and marketing assistance contributed toward increasing family incomes by 30%, and improved women group members' status in their family and the community. Fourteen group members described pot making as easy compared to farming and as suitable for women.

Source: ADB. Case Study 3: Ban Yor Pottery Enterprise. Unpublished.

### English Training Helps Shopkeeper Increase Her Income, Quang Binh, Viet Nam

**Tran Thi Thuy** is 52 years old and sells cloths and souvenirs at her shop in the Phong Nha Tourism Center. She reports that after attending the project's 1-month English language training course, she earns about \$50 more each month from increased sales to foreigners. She mentioned this extra income is used to pay the school fees for her children. She is satisfied with the training and has even requested more courses. She found that offering courses from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. during low season is convenient and facilitated good participation by local vendors.

Source: ADB. Case Study 2: English training helps shopkeeper increase her income, Quang Binh, Viet Nam. Unpublished.



## Contribution of Gender Equality Results in Overall Project Outcome and Effectiveness

Women who were previously poor now operate micro and small enterprises or are employed as wage-earners in hotels, guesthouses, and other small to medium-sized tourism enterprises. They typically are earning between \$5 and \$50 a day in net income, sufficient to cover a range of family expenses. The increased numbers of tourists and greater visitor spending have created spillover opportunities for other women not directly involved in tourism, for example, by creating higher demand and new markets for agricultural products. While most economic benefits accrue to households involved in tourism, the improved community infrastructure and more revenue for communal village funds helped expand public services and access to microcredit.

### Tourism Management for Homestay Owners, Bac Kan, Viet Nam

**Gia Thi Phuong Que** has managed her family's expanding homestay (tourists spend a night with a village family in their home) business in Pfac Ngoi village since 2012, when she graduated from a tourism college in Ha Noi. Que attended the Asian Development Bank-funded training courses on tour guiding, gender and tourism for youth, tinh traditional musical instrument playing, and singing classes. She found the courses practical, and these helped her feel more confident to explain musical instruments and to sometimes sing for guests. Que and her peers would like to learn more English so they can better communicate with foreign tourists. They also want to learn other tourism skills, such as massage and cooking, to provide more services.

Source: ADB. Case 3: Tourism management for homestay owners, Bac Kan, Viet Nam. Unpublished.

### Learning from Experience

The Lao PDR organized the Lao Gender, Tourism and Microenterprise Development Forum to exchange lessons on (i) gender analysis using sex-disaggregated data, (ii) promoting gender equality in tourism and other sectors, (iii) monitoring the gender situation in provinces to contribute to policy and legal reform when needed, and (iv) measures to foster greater gender equality, such as quotas and booster groups for women. Of the 231 participants (entrepreneurs, policy makers, and development partners), 131 were women. Successful entrepreneurs shared lessons and recommendations on marketing, product design, and sourcing local materials. The forum enabled the exchange of ideas between female and male micro-entrepreneurs from every province in the Lao PDR.

Viet Nam organized a GMS Conference on Tourism's Role in Poverty Reduction, in which 60 policy makers exchanged lessons on good practice approaches for increasing tourism's contribution to poverty reduction and women's empowerment.

Tourism development plans were prepared for two economic corridors that promote pro-poor tourism products and services predominantly managed by women.

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## **Development Without Women Is Not Development**

*Why Gender Matters to the Asian Development Bank*

Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for meeting Asia and the Pacific's aspirations of inclusive and sustainable development. Under Strategy 2030, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has committed to accelerate progress in gender equality. ADB is increasingly designing its projects to promote women's economic empowerment; boost gender equality in human development, decision-making, and leadership; reduce poverty of women; and strengthen women's resilience to external shocks. This publication features nine inspiring stories from Southeast Asia that showcase how, with ADB support, women are making positive changes in their lives and in the lives of others.

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**ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City

1550 Metro Manila, Philippines

[www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)