

## Vietnam: Third Rural Transport Project



### Empowering Local Women, and Delivering Better-Maintained Roads in Rural Vietnam

#### Overview

In Vietnam, a World Bank project provided financing support to ethnic minority women to undertake road maintenance in rural areas, thereby increasing women's employment in poor, remote areas, and developing a cost-effective way to maintain rural roads that are often poorly cared for.

#### Challenge

Vietnam has made remarkable economic progress in the last decade, averaging 7.5 percent growth in gross domestic product (GDP), resulting in significant investments in the road network. By 2002, expenditure in the transport sector reached 4.5 percent of GDP, 90 percent of which had been invested in roads. But the rapid expansion of the road network – particularly in rural areas – has created new challenges in terms of sustainability.

The World Bank's Third Rural Transport Project was created to help Vietnam implement a coherent and sustainable national rural roads program, in particular by improving the planning, programming, budgeting and procurement process for both rural road improvement and maintenance at the provincial level.

One immediate challenge was to address the under-funding of road maintenance. Moreover, it is often difficult to engage local contractors to conduct routine maintenance of rural roads in remote areas. Many maintenance operations are simply not profitable for contractors who are based far from these areas, and for whom the size of the projects are often relatively small.

At the same time, many poor women in these areas desire employment. Their farming responsibilities are seasonal, and there are significant portions of the year when they are underemployed.

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More Results



# 13,470

kilometers of road maintained

# 1,533

women trained as rural transportation managers

## Approach

The World Bank's Third Rural Transport Project identified missing links that left many rural Vietnamese communities off the map from the country's remarkable development successes. The project prioritized road maintenance and local infrastructure management above new construction projects. The project identified barriers along the route to more accessible road networks, including a lack of incentives to local bureaucracies to regularly maintain rural roads in remote areas. This situation led to deteriorating roads in places desperate for improved access to goods, services and social networks.

In speaking with people across Vietnam, the project team discovered that many women from ethnic minority communities expressed interest in volunteering and actively participating as stewards of their local roads. The team secured funds from the World Bank's Gender Action Plan, created in 2007 to improve women's economic opportunity, to pilot an initiative across four communes in Bach Ha District in Lao Cai Province. The pilot trained local ethnic minority women in engineering and road building practices, and provided formal employment opportunities for those tasked with responsibility for specific sections near their communities. The Lao Cai Provincial Women Union acted as a key implementing agency for the project, given its deep roots in the community and solid reputation at the district, commune and village levels. The Women's Union managed and monitored the recruitment of women in Ban Lien, Nam Mon, Nam Tri, and Hoang Thu Pho villages, and provided them with training and equipment.

## Results

A total of 13,470 km has been maintained and 1,533 ethnic minority women from four communes were trained as rural transportation managers; many more eagerly await the opportunity. Following the training courses, women became road maintenance workers for the Provincial Women Union, and paid a salary of about 100,000 Vietnamese Dong (VND) a day per person for each section of the road completed. In order to ensure high quality work, the district Office of Urban and Infrastructure Management within Bac Ha district supervised and monitored work along the road sections, assisted by community supervisors and technical guidance from the provincial Department of Transport staff. Across the road networks, between 10 and 30 women are responsible for maintaining a one to two kilometer section for three months. Each person who participates in daily maintenance is guaranteed VND 100,000.

Stakeholder consultations undertaken by the task team have also identified several specific advantages relating to the initiative:

- Road maintenance is more efficiently managed by local people, who have clear incentives to promote quality and limit corruption;
- Project funds provide direct benefits to communities and rural women rather than be spent on leisure activities, including alcohol consumption or gambling.
- Improved awareness of the critical importance of road maintenance among local communities creates trust and accountability across villages and builds cooperative capacity;
- Women have achieved greater voice in community decision-making and a more visible role in managing affairs at the household level, arising from increased economic power and social status.

### MORE INFORMATION

- » [More details in Social Development Notes](#)
- » [Feature Story](#)
- » [Improved Energy Technologies for Rural Cambodia \(PDF\)](#)
- » [Making Infrastructure Work for Women and Men \(PDF\)](#)
- » [Gender Website](#)
- » [Gender Action Plan](#)
- » [Gender in East Asia and Pacific](#)
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- Participation of women in road maintenance contributes to enhanced social cohesion among members of local women's unions and neighborhoods, which in turn strengthens mutual cooperation, and social capital endowments in rural areas.

## Voices

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“Women like to do this work; they are competing to join. They think that maintaining the road makes the roads nicer, and more convenient for transporting commodities to develop the household economy. During this time of the year, it often rains so maintaining the roads during this time is good.”

— *Phung Pha Sui, ethnic woman trainee*

“Regarding efficiency, I think -- for the first time women have started to realize that maintenance is necessary for commuting, and serves the local communities that they live in.”

— *Tran Thi Khanh, vice president of Lao Cai Women's Union*

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## Bank Contribution

- IDA credit: US\$106.3 million.
- World Bank's Gender Action Plan funding: US\$35,000

## Moving Forward

The World Bank scaled up the maintenance activities by signing one more contract of USD 30,000 with PWU in January 2011. The Provincial Women Union is using these funds to provide training to village and hamlet ethnic minority women in Bac Ha, Lao Cai Province to do routine maintenance of the village and inter-village roads during January to June 2011. In addition, the World Bank task team has integrated gender issues into the training materials and curriculum to be taught by six vocational schools under the capacity building component of the project. With the closing of the Bank's Third Rural Transport Project, it is hoped that the Government of Vietnam will adopt a number of lessons learned from this experience and promote participation of ethnic minority people in general and women in particular into future road development projects.

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