

Measuring the Impact of Community-Driven Development Projects on Gender

*A Toolkit for the Poverty
Reduction Fund, Lao PDR*



GAP funded



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A Toolkit for the Poverty

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CDD	Community-driven development
GoL	Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic
GRID	Gender Resource Information and Development Center
LECS	Lao expenditure and consumption survey
MIS	Management information system
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
PRF	Poverty Reduction Fund
SPIM	Subproject implementation
VNPA	Village needs and priority assessment

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all dollars are U.S. dollars.

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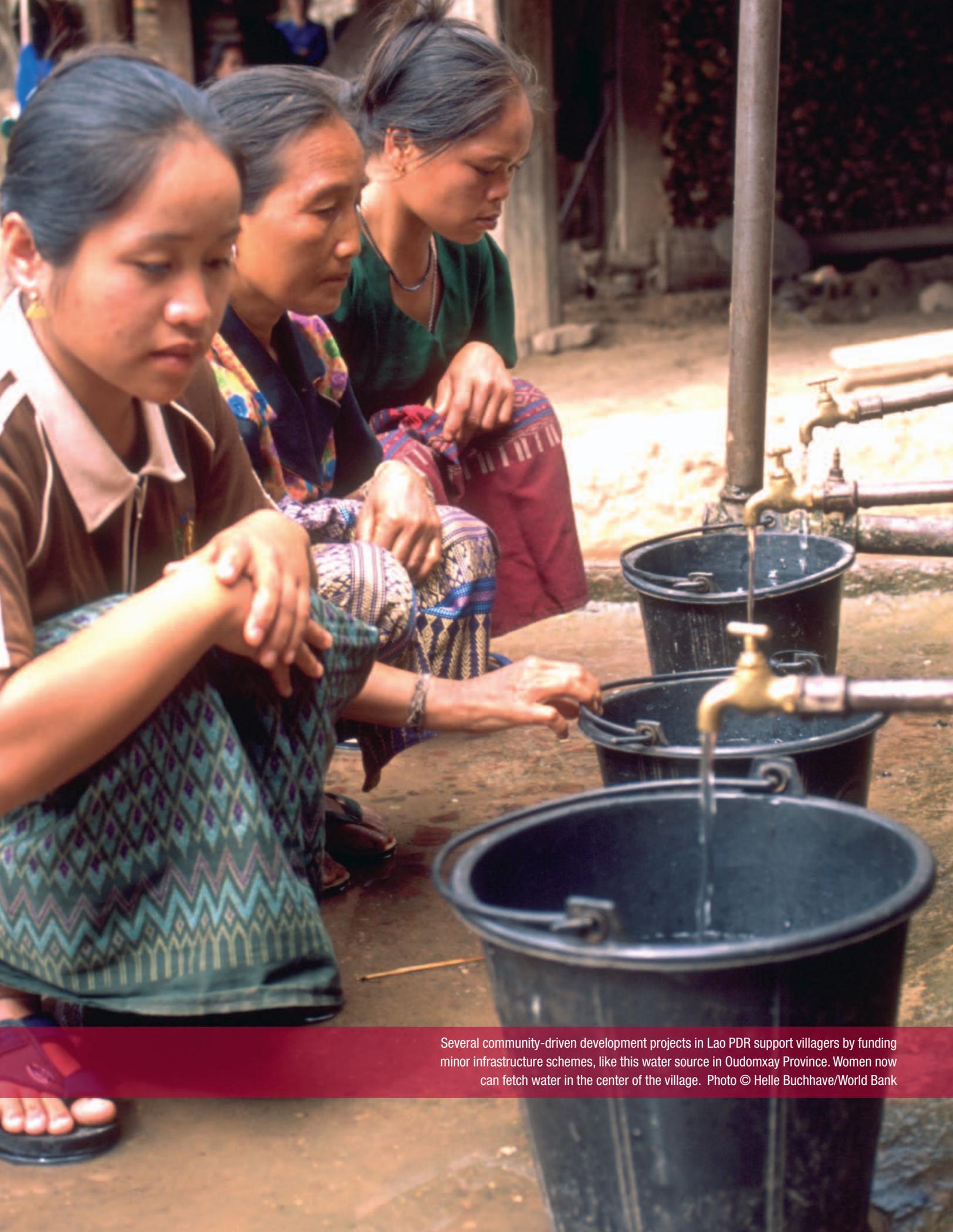
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Several community-driven development projects in Lao PDR support villagers by funding minor infrastructure schemes, like this water source in Oudomxay Province. Women now can fetch water in the center of the village. Photo © Helle Buchhave/World Bank

Executive Summary

Community-driven development (CDD) projects seek to empower communities, reduce poverty, and improve economic and social conditions of the poor, typically in rural and remote areas. No less important, CDD also typically addresses two persistent gender gaps: (1) women's lack of voice in public decision making, and (2) their poor access to services and markets.

Much of the development community finds CDD to be appealing, and its use is widespread and growing. Nonetheless, the evidence to support the assumption that CDD effectively promotes development and enhances women's opportunities can be strengthened. Although most development projects have monitoring systems, these systems often focus more on outputs and less on outcomes and impacts. Such systems do not provide policymakers, managers, and stakeholders with an understanding of the success or failure of their projects or whether the well-being of the intended beneficiaries has improved.

To address this concern, the World Bank's Environment, Social, and Rural Unit initiated a series of studies in Southeast Asia to identify and assess outcome-based indicators that can be used to assess the gender-related consequences of CDD projects. This toolkit contributes to the initiative through consideration of the Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). PRF, an autonomous organization established in May 2002, seeks to:

- Assist villagers to develop public infrastructure and gain improved access to services;
- Build capacity and empower villages in poor districts to manage their own development in a decentralized and transparent manner
- Strengthen local institutions to support participatory decision-making that includes women and the poor.

PRF has successfully demonstrated its commitment to increasing opportunities for women, but this commitment is not suitably matched with efforts to document these successes. For this reason, PRF and the World Bank collaborated in the identification and field testing of indicators that could usefully and appropriately contribute to an improved understanding of PRF's effects on women in Lao PDR. The toolkit assesses eighteen indicators in terms of four evaluative criteria: validity, reliability, and ease and cost of collecting the data associated with the indicators. When applying these criteria, several of the indicators fared well. They are recommended for PRF's ongoing use as are a series of steps that PRF might consider should it decide to incorporate the indicators into the PRF's monitoring and evaluation processes.

No less important, PRF's efforts to promote—and measure—women's opportunities are potentially instructive for CDD projects elsewhere.



Villagers working at construction site in Oudomxay province.
Photo © Helle Buchhave/World Bank

Introduction

Community-driven development (CDD) is an approach to poverty reduction in which the intended, community-level beneficiaries of development programs participate in and influence decisions about the allocation and investment of the programs' resources. As Wassenich and Whiteside (2004) comment, CDD operates on "the principles of local empowerment, participatory governance, demand-responsiveness, administrative autonomy, greater downward accountability, and enhanced local capacity." CDD projects share common objectives: to empower communities, reduce poverty, and improve economic and social conditions of the poor, typically in rural and remote areas. No less important, CDD also addresses two persistent gender gaps: (1) women's lack of voice in public decision making, and (2) their poor access to services and markets.

Given these attributes and perceptions that top-down decision making may be less effective than CDD, many clients and much of the development community find CDD appealing. Its use is widespread and growing. Nonetheless, the evidence to support the assumption that CDD effectively promotes development and gender equality can be strengthened. As an illustration, Mansuri and Rao (2003) concluded that "evidence on the actual record of [CDD] initiatives still lags considerably behind the speed at which such projects are being implemented and 'scaled up.'" A more recent study (World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and International Fund for Agricultural Development 2009) reached a similar conclusion, namely that "the documentation and evaluation of decentralization and CDD on building accountability to rural women and transforming gender relations are extremely limited."

However undesirable this situation may be, it is not uncommon. The investment of large sums of money in development projects typically and increasingly trig-

gers calls for rigorous monitoring and evaluation, but these calls often neglect outcomes related to gender and social equity. As the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development agree, "little progress has been made in measuring outcomes in these areas" (World Bank 2009).

A further characteristic of many monitoring systems is that they are designed to capture compliance and to "count" outputs.¹ Such systems focus on monitoring and assessing how well a project, program, or policy is executed. These systems focus on outputs, which typically measure the goods and services that are produced or supplied. A drawback with this approach is that it does not provide policy makers, managers, and stakeholders with an understanding of the success or failure of the project or whether the well-being of the intended beneficiaries has improved (Kusek and Rist 2004).

In contrast, results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) provides feedback on outcomes and the goals of project actions. Results-based monitoring helps to answer the "so what" question (Kusek and Rist 2004). Programs or policies may be implemented successfully, but have they produced the intended benefits? Successful implementation of poorly designed projects is of little value; doing the wrong thing well rarely rescues a poorly designed project. The introduction of a results-based M&E system takes decision makers an important step beyond traditional implementation-focused monitoring systems (that attend primarily to *outputs*) to assessing whether and how desired outcomes are being achieved.

¹As Kusakabe (2005) concludes in a study of gender mainstreaming in South East Asia: "While monitoring the quality of women's participation and taking steps to improve it might be a good strategy, in general the focus on participation remains quantitative. It is limited to documenting the number of female and male participants in different events."

Outcomes typically focus on the application or use of outputs to provide benefits or improvements in people's lives (or the improved performance of organizations). Unless outcomes receive attention in evaluation, they may be ignored or neglected.

This toolkit addresses these concerns about the gender-based evidence gap. The toolkit identifies and assesses indicators to measure, monitor, and evaluate the outcomes and consequences of CDD on women's engagement in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR). The objective is to create specific tools that enable the government's Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) and other CDD projects to improve their targeting and monitoring of changes in women's opportunities and actions, while also assessing ways in which the measurement of the impact and consequences of CDD projects on women can be improved. The toolkit offers PRF's management options to strengthen its operations to support increased opportunities for women to engage in their local public and economic spheres and provides tangible suggestions on how to enhance PRF's monitoring and evaluation. To do so, the toolkit assesses a series of indicators in terms of their validity and reliability, considers the cost and ease of the necessary data collection, and offers suggestions about how to integrate the indicators into PRF's M&E framework.

The indicators considered in this toolkit reflect an inventory of national and PRF-generated gender data and an analysis of potential links between key gender gaps in Lao PDR and PRF's objectives. In turn, to promote the toolkit's value and to encourage PRF's eventual ownership, the World Bank worked closely with PRF to design and implement a field-based pilot test to assess the practical value of the indicators (see Box 1).² The Bank team and PRF discussed the methodology for the field work, the data collection, the practical aspects of the field work in two provinces, and the desirability of coordination with PRF's staff

²However appealing indicators of outcomes may be conceptually, they are of little practical value unless they share several essential characteristics and can be used without difficulty by those responsible for monitoring and evaluation. For these reasons, pilot testing in the field is a critical step before developing and investing in a results framework that identifies intended outcomes and impacts. Piloting is a way of learning what works and what does not. It also alerts managers that there may be some indicators for which data do not exist or for which data are too costly, time consuming, or complex to obtain (Kusek and Rist 2004). Piloting represents a live test of a design and data-collection methodology, as well as the last step before questions of interest can be addressed (Iarossi 2006).

in the provincial and district levels where the field work occurred. In response to a request from PRF, its staff in the two provinces also participated in the data collection.

In addition to PRF, the toolkit's intended audience includes task teams of other CDD projects in Lao PDR, the Lao Women's Union, and government officials. At the same time, the toolkit is part of and complements a regional initiative to develop and pilot relevant outcome indicators that can identify long-term impacts of CDD projects on women's opportunities in East Asia. The toolkit also contributes to a Bank-wide effort (2006b, 2006c, and 2009) to improve the monitoring and evaluation of gender-related impacts by gathering data disaggregated by gender, by developing indicators to measure results and impacts with respect to gender, and by ensuring that gender is included as a key variable in the search for explanations of the outcomes and impacts of development projects.

GENDER-RELATED INDICATORS

Women can be important drivers of sustainable development, and their increased involvement in this process is increasingly included among the objectives of development projects, programs, and policies. Nonetheless, with CDD's emphasis on meaningful participation in decision making, the approach has the potential to promote equality of opportunity for everyone.

As the UN Millennium Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (cited in United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM 2008) emphasizes, gender equality has several dimensions, notably access to resources, opportunities, and capabilities related to education and health. Access involves representation and participation in the decision-making processes that affect people's lives, as well as equality of opportunity to use one's capabilities to access economic assets, including income and employment.³ As the Task Force further noted, empowerment, or the ability to control one's own destiny, is also essential. Access to resources and equal capabilities are insufficient when women do not also have the capacity to make decisions and to express and exercise their preferences so they can improve their lives.

³Gender equality, according to the Task Force, also requires security (as reflected in the elimination of violence against women and girls), but this is not an area in which the PRF has any mandate or responsibility.

BOX 1 Method Used in the Pilot Test

The field work for the piloting of the indicators was conducted in 2009 in villages in which PRF has been active since its first annual cycle, which began in February 2003. Six villages in two districts were included in the pilot test. To capture regional differences, three villages were randomly selected from PRF-targeted communities in the Sukhuma District of Champassak Province in southern Lao PDR and three villages in the Huamuang District in Huaphanh Province in northern Lao PDR. Thus the sampling frame consisted of: (a) one district in southern Lao and one in northern Lao and (b) three randomly selected villages in each district where PRF has been active since 2003 and remains active.

Several methods were used to gather information about the PRF in the six villages.

Individual Interviews

Data were collected from 125 women, all of whom had all participated in PRF's processes within their villages. Some of the women had also represented their villages in koumban- and district-level meetings. About 60 percent of the women were Lao-Tai, the majority population in Lao PDR. The other 40 percent represented Hmong (26 percent), Xuay (14 percent), and "other" (1 percent). A majority of respondents were in the "middle-age bracket," older than age 25 but not yet 46 years of age. About one-fifth were under age 25 and a similar portion were older than 45. All respondents were either married (98 percent) or widowed (2 percent). Almost all respondents had children; only five respondents were childless. More than a third of the women had five or more children. Finally, almost all respondents derived their primary income from agriculture, and almost a third derived some income from trade. Other sources of income, such as forestry or fishing, were of minor importance. This pattern is broadly representative of the situation in all rural areas in Lao PDR (National Statistics Center 2005).

All the women were interviewed using an identical questionnaire (See Annex 2). The questionnaire was based on the forms PRF currently uses. The questionnaire thus conforms, as much as possible, to forms PRF and the Department of Statistics use.⁷ This makes it possible to add the questionnaire, or parts of it, to PRF's existing monitoring and data-collection system.

The sample of respondents is not intended to be the basis for generalization to all PRF villages (and the sample is too small to do so in a meaningful way). In contrast, the primary purpose of the individual interviews was to test the suitability of the indicators and to assess the cost and ease (or difficulty) of collecting data related to them.

Focus Group Discussions

In addition to the interviews with 125 women, focus-group discussions were organized in each village with women who had participated in PRF's processes. The discussions gathered information about qualitative indicators of gender outcomes. To provide a means for data triangulation, the focus-group discussions offered the participants the opportunity to talk about a range of issues, challenges, observations, and comments on their lives as well as PRF's processes and perceived impacts.

Interviews with Village Representatives

Each of the six villages has two PRF representatives, one man and one woman, and each was interviewed. They represent their villages at the koumban-level meetings and have a central role in voicing village-level concerns and priorities for subprojects. The interviews focused on the nature of active participation of community members and village representatives and tested the relevance of the items in the questionnaires used in the individual interviews, which are discussed above.

Case Studies

Case studies were conducted in the six villages to assess situations in which PRF has affected women's opportunities and their engagement in local political, economic, and social spheres. The study team used local knowledge to identify suitable participants for the case studies; women who participated actively in the villages' economic, social, and political life were the main targets.

The need to substantiate the relevance of the gender-based indicators for measuring PRF's impact on women motivated the case studies. The studies offer narratives about women's engagement in local decision making outside PRF. The case studies provided an opportunity to gather opinions from women active in the PRF process and their perspectives about how PRF is influencing their lives.

⁷ The Department of Statistics was formerly the National Statistics Center.

If gender equality requires access to resources and opportunities and capabilities related to education and health, then it is equally essential that data be available to assess the status of and changes in these characteristics. Data informing the results of development interventions such as PRF can come from two sources—a monitoring system and an evaluation system (Kusek and Rist 2001). Monitoring typically involves the periodic collection of information to assess adherence to time schedules, completion of required activities, and appraisal of progress. Monitoring entails measurement; what is measured is the progress toward achieving an objective or desired outcome. In many instances, however, outcomes cannot be measured directly. They must first be translated into indicators that provide information about whether outcomes are being achieved.

Gender-sensitive indicators have the special function of identifying gender-related changes in a community. The usefulness of such indicators lies in their ability to point to changes in the status and roles of women or men over time. The use of indicators and other relevant monitoring and evaluation techniques can lead to a better understanding of how results can be achieved, so using gender-sensitive indicators can also lead to enhanced project planning and delivery.

A rudimentary way of capturing gender differences involves the collection of sex-disaggregated data. Such data capture differences—as well as similarities—between males and females and can be used to construct indicators highlighting biases or (in)equitable project outcomes. Sex-disaggregated data can thus be used to identify policies unfavorable to women or men and to affect changes in policies or practices that are

inequitable and hinder the development the policies are intended to promote.

More sophisticated quantitative gender analysis goes beyond disaggregation to capture other meaningful information. This can include information on socioeconomic outcomes of particular importance for women, such as information on child care, reproductive health, or time devoted to collecting water or wood for fires.

At the same time, some gender specialists (such as Reinharz 1992) argue that quantitative indicators by themselves insufficiently capture and characterize women's experiences. For this reason qualitative indicators are also of value, but quantitative and qualitative indicators are complementary. Both are important for effective monitoring and evaluation because they can cross-validate each other, while both can also illuminate different but related problems. For example, quantitative indicators commonly reveal the presence of a problem (such as unequal access to health services), whereas qualitative indicators can highlight the causal relationships creating the problem (such as social perceptions serving to diminish the importance of female and maternal health problems).

What are appropriate gender-related indicators for Lao PDR and its Poverty Reduction Fund? Equally important, what quantitative and qualitative methods can assist in the building of a database to assess PRF's impact on women's actions and opportunities? After a brief introduction to PRF's operations, the chapters that follow address these questions by assessing indicators that relate to (a) women's opportunities to participate in decision making that affects their lives; (b) women's economic well-being; and (c) women's access to essential public infrastructure, including health, education, and sanitation.

The Poverty Reduction Fund

The Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) was established as an autonomous organization by prime ministerial decree in May 2002 and was initially supported by the World Bank in the form of a low-interest credit of approximately \$19.5 million. The decree allows PRF to receive and use funds from other sources.⁴

PRF aims to create strong links between the local government and the aspirations of villagers with PRF staff at the district, provincial, and national levels. The Fund has three primary objectives:

- Assist villagers to develop community public infrastructure and gain improved access to services
- Build capacity and empower villagers in poor districts to manage their own public investment planning and subproject implementation in a decentralized and transparent manner
- Strengthen local institutions to support participatory decision-making and conflict resolution processes at the village, koumban, and district levels, involving a broad range of villagers, including women and the poor.

PRF launched its first subprojects in ten districts in three provinces in 2003 and subsequently expanded to twenty-one districts in seven provinces in 2009–10.⁵ The PRF invested \$21 million to support more than 2,900 subprojects between February 2003 and

early 2010.⁶ Of these subprojects, over 75 percent involved infrastructure with the remainder devoted to local capacity-building activities. As this distribution of resources suggests, PRF seeks to provide public infrastructure that serves everyone's needs while strengthening the participation of traditionally disadvantaged groups in the Fund's decision-making processes. Due to PRF's size and coverage, it is among the most important community-driven initiatives in the country (World Bank 2008a).

PRF'S FUNDING CYCLE

PRF invests in an annual cycle of activities; the first cycle began in February 2003. The Fund promotes its principles and methods in all villages of the targeted districts by encouraging residents to express their needs, instructing them how to prioritize their wishes at the village, koumban (a group of villages), and district levels, and then to organize themselves in implementing the investments. Each participating district receives an annual, formula-based grant based primarily on its level of poverty. Seventy-five percent of PRF's budget is invested at the village level: in 2009, PRF provided benefits to over 900 poor villages. All investments proposed by villagers must be within the limits of a menu of possible subprojects (Table 1) to ensure they conform to PRF's objectives, and all investments are limited to the equivalent of \$30,000 per subproject. The mean amount per project for the three most recent cycles (covering 2007–10) was about \$11,500.

For each subproject, a village signs a contract with PRF. The community is then responsible for construction, managing contractors, maintenance, and bookkeeping, with support from local authorities as well as PRF's district and provincial teams.

⁴ PRF received additional funding in 2008 from the World Bank (\$15 million) and from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (\$5 million). The additional funding covers three years, from 2009 through 2011.

⁵ In this report PRF is considered to be the "project" and its activities and investments to be subprojects. Lao PDR has seventeen provinces and 142 districts. Of the latter, the government considers seventy-two to be poor and forty-seven of these to be priority districts for implementation of its poverty reduction strategy.

⁶ Between February 2003 and early 2010 (cycles I through VII), PRF built or renovated 571 schools, 420 roads, 155 irrigation schemes, 84 bridges, and 54 health facilities. It also provided 3,245 school packages and 1,667 vocational training sessions (PRF 2010).

PRF'S APPROACH TO GENDER

PRF seeks to promote equitable involvement of women in decision making and the implementation of its sub-projects. When it began its operations in 2003, the initial focus was on ensuring women's opportunity to express their preferences for subprojects. Less attention was devoted to the outcomes of the preferences expressed. At the village level, men and women would participate in separate meetings where they each identified three proposed priorities for the use of PRF funds. A subsequent village needs priority assessment (VNPA) meeting of both genders then created a combined list of three priority subprojects for the village. None of the proposals had

to reflect the preferences that women had expressed in their single-sex meetings (PRF 2003). Four village representatives were also selected to present their village's priorities at koumban-level meetings, and two of the representatives had to be women.

A review of these procedures in 2007–08 led to several important changes that have increased women's roles and opportunities. The single-sex meetings continue; each proposes three infrastructure subprojects and two priorities for training for consideration at the VNPA meetings. Participants at these meetings still select three of the proposed infrastructure subprojects, but two of them must now be from the women's list. Similarly, among the two proposals for training activities selected at the VNPA meeting, one must come from the women's proposals. Village representatives are also still selected to attend koumban-level meetings, and one of the representatives must be a woman. Representation of a minority ethnic group is encouraged but not required (PRF 2008b).⁷ The VNPA meetings (as well as the koumban-level meetings) must also be conducted in the native language of the villagers. Prior to the changes, many of PRF's informational materials were in Lao and many of the village-, koumban-, and district-level meetings were conducted only in Lao as opposed to the languages used in the villages.

At the koumban level, there are additional opportunities for women's equitable participation. A team of three koumban facilitators heads the socialization and planning process. At least one of the team's members must be a woman. The village representatives also elect four koumban representatives, who then represent the villages at district-level meetings. Two of the four representatives must be women and one should belong to a minority ethnic group. Each koumban procurement team has three elected members, and at least one should be a woman. The same composition holds for each koumban's implementation and maintenance team.⁸

⁷ PRF's emphasis on representation of the country's ethnic minorities reflects the fact that more than 80 percent of the population of the forty-seven priority districts is from non Lao-Tai ethnic groups. In contrast, the Lao-Tai population represents about two-thirds of the country's overall population (PRF 2008b). Villagers also select three members of a village implementation and maintenance team, one of whom must be a woman.

⁸ PRF encourages village representatives to choose at least one person for the procurement team and inspection and maintenance teams who belongs to a smaller ethnic group if the person has the appropriate education.

TABLE 1 PRF menu of subprojects

Subproject Type	Items Eligible	Item Not Eligible
Access	Small bridges, footpaths, tracks, culverts, ramps, piers, road repairs, and upgrading	New roads and road surfacing/sealing
Community electrical supply	Minihydro generators, wiring, line extensions	Gasoline or diesel generators
Primary health care facilities	Health centers (buildings, furniture, latrines, supplies and medicines, temporary allowances for contracted nurses/midwives in cash or kind, village medical kits, training, scholarships, medical equipment)	Generators
Domestic water systems	Wells, gravity water supply, latrines, etc.	Piped household water hookups
Education	Schools and nurseries (buildings, latrines, temporary allowances for contracted teachers, supplies, equipment, furniture, training, scholarships, textbooks, and musical instruments)	Any supplies provided by the government
Agricultural Infrastructures	Weirs, ponds, canals, bunds, gates, spillways, and other structures	Electrical pumps
Markets, community halls	Buildings, drainage, wells, and furnishings	Generators

Source: PRF (2008b).

The mandatory inclusion of women in PRF's decision-making has important parallels in other countries. More than thirty countries require or "reserve" quotas for women's political representation (World Bank 2001), and some research has investigated whether these quotas affect the choice of public policies and the allocation of public resources. As an illustration, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004a, 2004b) examined the distributional consequences of women's representation in village-level councils, or panchayats, in India.

As implemented, the seats reserved for women in India were allocated randomly, which means that some panchayats had women members while others did not, at least during the period of the study. This procedure allowed Chattopadhyay and Duflo to compare decisions made in villages with and without women's representation in the panchayats. They found important differences. In the two Indian states included in the study, panchayats with women members invested more in goods that were relevant to the needs of local women and less in goods that were less relevant to the needs of women compared with panchayats that did not have women members. As the authors concluded, India's reservation policy has important effects on policy decisions at the local level, and these effects were consistent with women's priorities.

This research reinforces the desirability of assessing the gender-based outcomes of PRF's procedures. In turn, the Lao experience offers the potential to contribute to the growing literature on the policy consequences of gender-sensitive policies.

PRF'S MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

PRF has a comprehensive M&E framework with three main objectives: (a) to ensure that the Fund proceeds according to PRF's principles and procedures and that inputs are efficiently transformed into targeted outputs and outcomes to achieve PRF's development objectives; (b) to document PRF's experiences and provide guidance for policy making; and, (c) to support day-to-day management. Provincial M&E staff compile and enter information into the Fund's management information system (MIS). The national PRF office maintains a complete, updated, and aggregated master database of data from all participating provinces.

In addition to the responsibilities just noted, PRF's M&E unit must also ensure that it captures and monitors all



Women attending PRF meeting in Hua Moug village. A key feature of PRF's approach to gender is that men and women participate in separate meetings, where they each identify three proposed priorities for the use of PRF funds. © Anders Engvall/World Bank

aspects of the Fund's activities, including the participation of women and ethnic groups. For this reason, gender-disaggregated data are collected in each village. These data include the number of women and men in PRF villages; the number of each gender participating in decision-making meetings and in training events; and the registration of female and male representatives and facilitators in PRF meetings at various administrative levels. Subprojects selected by women-only and men-only groups are also entered into the database (PRF 2008b).

The MIS provides data for measuring the progress and achievements during the planning and implementation of subprojects. It also stores quantitative information collected through a series of surveys conducted at various levels. In addition to reports generated for internal purposes, the Fund's M&E system ensures that decisions about future funding are based on results and assures stakeholders that money is spent appropriately. The MIS data also help inform external assessments. PRF also commissions thematic reports and assessments by external consultants all of which incorporate MIS-generated data for an analysis of PRF's impact.

The existence of an M&E framework and a well-functioning MIS, both of which exist within the PRF, do not currently provide the information needed to fully assess



Women digging canal for piped water source granted by a community-driven development project in Sayaboury Province. Photo © Adam Rogers/UNCDF

the Fund's contribution to gender equality.⁹ Likewise, the data currently available within the system do not address the full range of potential opportunities for informing CDD stakeholders about gender-related benefits or an explanation of why these benefits do or do not occur. If PRF is successful in promoting gender equality, then it is clearly desirable to monitor and document this success and to allow other CDD efforts to benefit from PRF's experience.

Furthermore, although the primary focus of the toolkit is on how PRF can identify the gender-based consequences of its intervention, a secondary purpose is to enhance the internal capabilities of PRF's M&E staff. As is often the case, organizations' monitoring capabilities typically exceed their capabilities in evaluation. Consideration of the indicators discussed in this toolkit and the methods used to collect the necessary information for these indicators can provide an opportunity to improve PRF's evaluation skills. PRF staff members have access to the data collected during the pilot testing; additional analyses of these data can improve PRF's analytic skills.

Several of the indicators present opportunities to use rigorous and state-of-the-art evaluation designs, including those associated with impact evaluations that involve treatment and comparison groups as well as data collected before and after PRF's interventions in a village. These designs may be of considerable interest to PRF. PRF's Administrative Board has expressed a desire to know more about the Fund's quantitative outcomes (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the World Bank 2009), and impact evaluations have been suggested as a way to respond to these desires.

CONSIDERING GENDER-BASED INDICATORS FOR PRF

For PRF's monitoring system to remain effective and efficient, it must make wise choices about which indicators to use and which data to collect. Moreover, however appealing gender-based indicators may be conceptually, they will be of little practical value unless they

⁹ The Government of Lao PDR (GoL) recognizes the value of strengthening the integration of women into socioeconomic development. Promoting gender equality is a central national goal, as expressed in the government's Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan (2006–10) (GoL 2006). The plan also identifies PRF as a key vehicle for implementing the national poverty reduction strategy.

share several essential characteristics and, ideally, are tested in the environment in which they will be applied before they are incorporated into the Fund's M&E systems. These essential characteristics are reflected in four evaluative criteria: *validity, reliability, ease of collection, and cost* (Box 2)

The four evaluative criteria are the basis for the pilot testing of the gender-based outcome indicators discussed in the chapters that follow. For each of the indicators the goal is to provide a practical approach that explains how to integrate gender-based outcome indicators into PRF's M&E system. This goal is addressed by (a) assessing each indicator in terms of the four evaluative criteria; (b) making recommendations about the suitability of the indicator; and, (c) offering some options and suggestions about data collection and who should collect the data.

Not unexpectedly, the pilot test revealed that some indicators are more (or less) desirable than others. Indeed, the pilot test revealed that some indicators should be dropped from further consideration due to concerns about their validity, reliability, or ease or costs of data collection. Nonetheless, these indicators are discussed to ensure that readers understand why the indicators are not recommended for PRF's use.

For each indicator discussed below a rating is provided for each of the four evaluative criteria. A rating of – indicates a problem or weakness with the evaluative criterion, a single + reflects some strengths but

BOX 2 Evaluative criteria for gender-based indicators

Indicators are deemed to be valid when the information they provide is close to the reality being measured. As an illustration, enrollment rates in primary schools are generally considered to be a valid indicator of the number of students in school. In contrast, the number of a company's customers is not necessarily a valid indicator of the economic viability of that company. Validity can be enhanced through triangulation, which involves the use of multiple sources of information and data as well as through the use of methods that rely on both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection.

An indicator is reliable when multiple uses of the same method of measurement yield the same or similar results, regardless of who is using the indicator. Reliable indicators are of no value when the indicators are not also valid.

Ease of collection is largely self-explanatory. Collection of data for the indicator should not be unduly burdensome or require skills or expertise that exceed the data collectors' abilities.

Cost considerations are essential to ensure that the data needed for the indicators can be collected and used at a reasonable cost.

some weaknesses or concerns as well, and a double ++ reflects strength or appeal with respect to the evaluative criterion. Regardless of an indicator's seeming appeal based on the four criteria, there may be other factors that increase or diminish that appeal. *For this reason, although PRF is encouraged to consider adopting the highly rated indicators, the final decision about which indicators to adopt is best and appropriately left to PRF.*

A total of 125 women in four villages in the provinces of Champassak and Huaphanh were interviewed for the pilot testing of gender indicators. They had all participated in the PRF process at local level and some had represented their villages in koumban or district meetings. Photo © Anders Engvall



Women's Opportunities to Participate in Decision Making

According to the Gender Resource Information and Development Center (GRID) of the Lao Women's Union, women's empowerment should provide opportunities and create appropriate conditions for women to build their own capacities and decision-making abilities about their lives and communities. To be empowered, women must have access to basic services, have confidence in their ability to improve their lives, and participate in development activities.

For the purposes of this report, the discussion of the components of gender equality well illustrates the compelling links between the support for women's participation in local decision making and PRF's objective to include women in its decision-making processes. Does PRF effectively promote these objectives? If so, what evidence is there to demonstrate that PRF is doing so? To answer these questions, in this chapter the toolkit derives and assesses indicators related to political participation. In chapter 4, it looks at indicators for economic well-being; and in chapter 5, indicators for women's access to essential public infrastructure, including health, education, water, and sanitation.

GENDER-BASED ISSUES IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE

As in many countries, regardless of their level of development, women are underrepresented in Lao's political sphere. Among the members of Lao PDR's National Assembly elected in 2006 (for a term of five years), about one quarter were women, which is high by international standards but disproportionately low based on the proportion of women in the country.¹⁰ More important,

¹⁰ Lao PDR's Decree on the Electoral Law for the National Assembly declares that it shall "include appropriate proportion of the representatives of the people of different strata, sex, and ethnic minorities" (cited in Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women 2005). Of the 115 members of the National Assembly elected in April 2006, 86 (or 75 percent) were men. The vice-president of the National Assembly in 2009 was female (Buchhave 2009).

women's representation in the National Assembly is not matched at lower levels of government. In 2004, there were only three female district governors and two female vice-district governors throughout the country. The situation changed little in the years that followed (Table 2).

Among government employees, about six of ten are male, but males occupy more than 80 percent of the most senior positions (World Bank 2010). There were no female village heads in 2000. Less than one in fifty vice-village heads were women in 2005 (GRID 2005), although this situation did improve in later years (Table 2).

A livelihood study sponsored by the UN Development Program and the National Economic Research Institute of Lao PDR (Alton and Ratthanavong 2004) in Luang Nam Tha Province identified similar gaps. The authors found limited women's representation in virtually all formal village organizations other than the Lao Women's Union and the youth league. None of the eight villages in the study had women represented at their development councils.

The Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (2009) recently lamented the "very low participation of women in all areas of public, political, and professional life, including the realms of government, diplomacy and public administration." The committee also noted its concern about the lack of women's representation in the judiciary and among the police and "the low number of women in senior management in general." To address this situation, the committee recommended that the government pursue policies to promote women's "full and equal participation" in decision making in all areas of public, political and professional life and to "empower village women so that they can participate equally in village matters and serve as village chiefs."

Despite such advocacy on behalf of women, national policies that attempt to mainstream gender into deci-

TABLE 2 Public positions held in Lao PDR, by sex (2009)

Position	Total	Women		Men	
		Number	%	Number	%
Ministers and vice ministers	64	6	9.4	58	90.6
Provincial governors	17	0	0.0	17	100.0
Vice-provincial governors	34	1	2.9	33	97.1
District governors	143	2	1.4	141	98.6
Vice-district governors	192	4	2.1	188	97.9
Village head	8,726	148	1.7	8,578	98.3
Vice-village head	17,128	863	5.0	16,265	95.0

Source: Statistics on Local Administration 2010, Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Local Administration, Division of Local Administration and Statistics. Here from World Bank, 2010

sion making have a tendency to “evaporate” at the lower levels. In the case of Lao PDR, Kusakabe (2005) concluded that training on gender awareness and a nationwide women’s network did not ensure gender equality throughout the country.

PRF IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE

The low levels of women’s participation in decision making at the local level represent an issue that PRF’s procedural requirements address. At the village and koumban levels PRF generates outputs related to political participation: that is, meetings where villagers participate in decision making and receive information about the decisions made at these meetings.

Both of these outputs create opportunities for PRF to influence the gender gap discussed above and suggest several questions related to gender-related outcomes. As an illustration, does women’s increased participation in PRF’s decision-making processes result in:

- More active participation among women in other decision-making venues?
- The provision of public services that are priorities for women?
- Increased capacity among women to engage in decision making at the village, koumban, and district levels?
- Increased participation in public decision-making forums unrelated to PRF’s processes?

Active Participation

PRF monitors the number of women and men attending the village needs priority assessment (VNPA) meetings, but mere attendance is a poor indicator of women’s influence and thus an inadequate and insufficient measure of outcomes (Narayan 2005; World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and International Fund for Agricultural Development 2009). Moreover, when attendance is perceived to be compulsory—as is often the case with PRF (World Bank 2008a)—attendance is not a refined measure of influence. Attendance at VNPA meetings can be useful as a measure of outputs and compliance with PRF’s requirements, but active participation is a more meaningful indicator of engagement.

PRF recognizes the importance of active engagement. According to PRF’s guidelines for facilitators of the VNPA meetings, participants should be encouraged to express their opinions to other participants (PRF 2008b). As a result, measuring the proportion of women using this opportunity during VNPA meetings may reveal the level of active and *meaningful* participation. Similarly, forming an opinion on a village’s needs and expressing this opinion by voting or speaking at the meetings can be a proxy for how actively women engage in PRF’s decision-making processes.

Potential indicators:

Indicator P1: Percentage of women at VNPA meetings who speak or vote

P1: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection + Cost of collection +

Indicator P2: Percentage of women at VNPA meetings who are active participants

P2: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection + Cost of collection +

Indicators P1 and P2 accurately capture the level of participation among women attending village-level PRF meetings. The two indicators summarize the level of active participation at PRF meetings. During the pilot testing, women were asked whether they spoke in front of the other participants at the most recent VNPA meeting they had attended and whether they had voted on the proposed subprojects. The pilot testing found the indicators to be fairly consistent when replicated, thus confirming their reliability.¹¹

If a woman either spoke or voted (but not both), she was recorded as “actively participating.” About two-fifths of the Lao-Tai women and about one-third of the minority women surveyed belonged to this group of speakers or voters (Table 3). The women that both spoke and voted were deemed to be the most active. About half of all the women interviewed belonged to this group. The inactive women neither spoke nor voted.

The relative consistency between the Lao-Tai and the minority women is both interesting and instructive. Although it is not possible to generalize to all PRF villages, the data in Table 3 suggest that PRF has successfully encouraged and increased the participation of ethnic minorities. In prior years, PRF (2008c) had expressed concerns that language barriers and the lack of translation services had discouraged this participation. PRF’s policy that requires VNPA meetings to be conducted in the local language provides a plausible explanation for the nearly equivalent levels of active participation. This is all the more noteworthy because the minority women in the survey were much less likely to have completed upper primary education than were the Lao-Tai women. In contrast, the data do not reveal the extent of women’s participation relative to men’s.

¹¹ The pilot testing did not take place when the village meetings occurred, so women were asked to recall their participation. This situation required active prompting from the interviewers. The need to prompt the respondents increased the cost of data collection because it increased the time required for the data collection. Moreover, the prompting may have encouraged some women to provide responses they believed interviewers wanted. In addition, the interviewers had to assume that the women’s recall matched what had actually occurred at the meetings.

TABLE 3 Percentage of women actively participating at VNPA meetings

	Lao-Tai Women (%)	Ethnic Minorities (%)
Only talked in front of group	14.7	6.1
Only voted on subprojects	25.3	28.6
Both talked and voted	46.7	53.1
Neither talked nor voted	13.3	12.2
N =	75	49

Recommendation

The indicators are recommended for PRF’s use but with a revised process for data collection to improve reliability and the ease and cost of this collection. The indicator is an ideal measure of outcomes for gender-focused reports, reviews of participation processes, and for annual reports on the progress of PRF’s implementation.

At least four options exist for collecting the information needed for the two indicators:

- A PRF meeting facilitator’s assistant or village M&E assistant can observe, count, and record participation during VNPA meetings using a standard form.¹² For purposes of comparison, the information about participation should be collected about the behavior of both males and females.¹³
- A facilitator, facilitator’s assistant, or village M&E assistant can ask participants (again, both males and females) as they leave VNPA meetings whether they spoke or voted at the meeting and record the replies anonymously.¹⁴ To promote the success of this approach, the facilitator would explain the process to the participants before they leave the meeting and assure them of the anonymity of their responses.

¹² An example of a form used in Indonesia for a similar purpose can be found in Annex 4.

¹³ Recording information about speaking and voting from all participants may require that two people be responsible for recording what occurs.

¹⁴ If this option is chosen, PRF should consider the possibility that some women may be hesitant to reveal whether they spoke or voted at the VNPA meetings. Likewise, the women may provide answers that they perceive to be “correct” or expected by the person asking the questions.



Women from the White Hmong ethnic group participating in a focus group discussion for this initiative in Lang Anh village. One of the key findings of the 2008 PRF evaluation was that village meetings had to be conducted in the native language of the villagers in order to better ensure active participation, particularly by women, since more ethnic women than men only speak their native language. Photo © Andres Engvall/World Bank

- Secret balloting is a possibility. Before each VNPA meeting each participant could be given a token, which could be as simple as a small stone, to use when voting for or against proposed subprojects. Males and females would receive tokens of different colors, so the results could be disaggregated by gender.
- The data can be collected by PRF staff (or a consulting firm) in a random sample of villages each year. The questions can be included in questionnaires and would require about ten minutes per person to collect. The challenge with this approach is that it relies on participants' ability to recall events, several of which may be considered insignificant, that occurred many months in the past.

Once the data are collected provincial-level PRF staff can enter the data into the Fund's management information system. The data could then be analyzed at the national level and included in PRF's annual reports.

Awareness and Capacity Building

For women—and naturally also men—to be able to participate in the PRF process, it is necessary to understand and be aware of how decisions are made. Conversely, if participants fail to grasp the basics of PRF's decision-making processes, achieving the Fund's objectives regarding ownership and participation would be challenging. Consequently, women's knowledge of the subprojects nominated at the last VNPA meeting can serve as a proxy for awareness of PRF's processes (World Bank 2005b).

For capacity building, if women have developed knowledge about how to affect public decision making through their participation in the PRF process, then qualitative data can be collected to assess how lessons women have learned have been used to engage in decision making outside the PRF operation.

Potential indicator:

Indicator P3: Percentage of women who are aware of PRF's decision-making processes

P3: Validity + Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

This indicator relies on a proxy measure to assess women's awareness of PRF's decision-making processes. Relying on a proxy measure invariably raises concerns about an indicator's validity because awareness of a decision is not the same as awareness of how the decision was reached. In contrast, the reliability of indicator P3 is high. Women's responses about which subprojects were nominated can be compared with the actual list of nominated subprojects. This list, for every PRF village, is already included in PRF's management information system. Data on women's recall of previous decisions can be collected at little cost at the start of each PRF cycle.

Among all the women interviewed approximately one month after the VNPA meetings had occurred, including the ethnic minorities, just over 70 percent indicated they knew what subprojects the women's group in their village had nominated in the most recent VNPA meeting they had attended. The responses indicate a high degree of awareness of decisions taken and that most women are able to remember the outcomes of the decision-making process. The results thus suggest that women are knowledgeable about the decision-making processes and are informed participants in these processes.

Recommendation

Data on indicator P3 should be collected routinely from both men and women. There are several ways these data can be collected. As in the pilot test, a questionnaire could be used. With well-trained enumerators, the use of a questionnaire would promote consistent measurement because the same data-collection methods would be used in each village. With another alternative, PRF staff could collect the required information immediately before a VNPA meeting simply by asking participants to raise their hands to indicate

whether they were aware of the priorities identified at the previous meeting. The easiest (and recommended) approach would be to include collection of the information in PRF's current data-collection procedures used for each VNPA meeting.

Once the data are collected, they would be entered into the Fund's MIS at the provincial level and analyzed at the national level. Finally, because the indicator represents a measure of outcomes related to capacity building and participation, the indicator could appropriately be included in PRF's annual reports.

Impact of Women's Participation on Decision Making within PRF

One of PRF's objectives is to empower villagers, especially women, the poor, and minorities, to engage in decision making that affects their lives and the implementation of the Fund's subprojects.¹⁵ Empowerment occurs when women can advance their interests through their own choices and actions (Petesch, Smulovitz, and Walton 2005). For this reason it is desirable for CDD programs like PRF to establish a mechanism to monitor and report on women's successes in achieving their desired outcomes because of their participation in public decision making.

PRF presently collects data that reflect women's success in advancing their priorities at VNPA meetings. As shown in Table 4, 9 percent of the priorities identified by women-only groups in PRF's first cycle were endorsed at the larger VNPA meetings compared with 14 percent of the priorities advanced by the men-only groups. In other words, men were more successful in advancing their agendas than were women. Nonetheless, a far higher percentage (77) of proposals that both men and women had favored were approved as village priorities at these meetings.

By the fourth cycle, the success at VNPA meetings of proposed subprojects originating from women-only and men-only groups had declined to 5 and 6 percent, while the success of proposals that both groups had advocated had increased to 89 percent. Much changed during the sixth cycle when PRF changed its procedures. As noted above, beginning in 2008–09, PRF required that at least two of three infrastructure proposals selected at each VNPA meeting must come from the women's list. There has been a large increase in the number of proposed

¹⁵ According to the World Bank (2000), empowerment is one of the key priorities of development policy.

TABLE 4 Proposed PRF subprojects by sex and cycle

Subprojects proposed by:	Cycle 1 2003-04 (%)	Cycle 2 2004-05 (%)	Cycle 3 2005-06 (%)	Cycle 4 2006-07 (%)	Cycle 5 2007-08 (%)	Cycle 6 2008-09 (%)
Women-only groups and approved at VNPA meetings	9	7	8	5	7	21
Men-only groups and approved at VNPA meetings	14	10	10	6	8	20
Both women-only and men-only groups and approved at VNPA meetings	77	83	82	89	85	59

Source: PRF, personal communication.

TABLE 5 Approval of proposed PRF subprojects by sex and cycle

Subprojects proposed by:	Cycle 1 2003-04 (%)	Cycle 2 2004-05 (%)	Cycle 3 2005-06 (%)	Cycle 4 2006-07 (%)
Women-only groups and converted into implemented subprojects	7	6	4	2
Men-only groups and converted into implemented subprojects	12	5	5	1
Both women-only and men-only groups and converted into implemented subprojects	81	90	91	97

Source: PRF (2008a).

subprojects that differ between men and women (and a corresponding decrease in the percentage of proposed subprojects on which both men and women agreed in the single-sex meetings).

A more important issue concerns the successful conversion of proposed subprojects into implemented subprojects. As shown in Table 5, the gender-based results are similar to those discussed above. As an illustration, 7 percent of proposals originated from women-only meetings (and 12 percent of proposals from men-only meetings) were converted into implemented subprojects during PRF's first cycle. These percentages declined in the following three cycles.¹⁶ The most successful proposals were those that both men and women had supported in their separate meetings.

Several possible explanations exist for this convergence; unfortunately, there is no way to discern which explanation is the best. For example, convergence may have occurred because men and women shared similar priorities and aspirations for their villages. The adults in a

village may also have discussed and decided their priorities before the single-sex meetings. It is not possible to know whether and how well these decisions reflected women's preferences and priorities as opposed to decisions that may have been imposed on women in traditional ways—by men.

An alternative explanation suggests that decisions about which priorities to advance to the VNPA and koumban meetings may occasionally be made in ways that do not fully reflect the preferences of single-sex meetings. Some evidence supports this explanation. A review (World Bank 2008a) of the effectiveness of CDD programs in Lao PDR found that some district officials decided which projects one PRF village would receive before the single-sex and VNPA meetings had occurred. The same report also noted an instance in which local officials had selected projects already included in the district's development plan, while another report (PRF 2007) found that one-third of approved subprojects were not necessarily part of needs identified at VNPA meetings but had been added at the koumban or district level. PRF's revised procedures, noted above, attempt to address this situation. District administrative offi-

¹⁶ Comparable data subsequent cycles are not available.

cialists are no longer allowed to attend either the VNPA or koumban-level meetings.

Potential indicators:

Indicator P4: Percentage of infrastructure subprojects solely and initially selected at each single-sex meeting at the village level and (a) forwarded to the koumban level; (b) selected at the koumban level; and, (c) approved for funding at the district level

P4: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

Indicator P5: Percentage of infrastructure subprojects that both single-sex groups selected and that are (a) forwarded to the koumban level and (b) selected at the koumban level; and, (c) approved for funding at the district level

P5: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

Collecting data for these indicators should be relatively easy and will provide an important measure of women’s influence. PRF already records all subprojects that are nominated by the women’s and men’s groups at the VNPA meetings (and should continue to do so), so it should be able to track the outcomes of proposed subproject as they move through PRF’s selection system.

Recommendation

The indicators are highly recommended as standard indicators for regular data collection and for reporting on gender outcomes. The indicators will allow PRF’s managers and other stakeholders to assess the relative influence of men and women in PRF’s decision-making processes and provide lessons regarding opportunities to increase awareness of these processes, as well as women’s potential to influence future decisions.

In addition, PRF might also consider using the data generated for these indicators to determine whether and how men’s and women’s preferences for PRF’s interventions might differ. The results may have value for the way PRF operates, as well as for the gender targeting of other public service providers in Lao PDR.

Spillover Effects

A critical indicator of PRF’s influence on women’s political engagement is the extent to which women partici-

pate in public decision making external to PRF. In other words, are there spillover effects associated with PRF? Narratives and case studies from other CDDs indicate that there may be such spillovers (e.g., Department of Social Welfare and Development 2009), so a plausible hypothesis is that women who have participated in PRF subprojects are more likely to participate in decision making external to PRF (World Bank 2008b).

Potential indicators:

Indicator P6: Percentage of female PRF participants who participate in non-PRF public decision-making institutions as a result of their experience with PRF

P6: Validity – Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

Indicator P7: Percentage of female leaders in local non-PRF public decision-making institutions as a result of their experience with PRF

P7: Validity – Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

Indicators P6 and P7 serve as proxies for the impact of PRF on women’s engagement and leadership in local decision making other than PRF. The indicators have reasonably acceptable validity only if one is willing to assume that participation in PRF’s processes encourages or facilitates participation and leadership in other decision-making institutions. This is not an unreasonable assumption.¹⁷

During the face-to-face interviews women were first asked about their participation (but not their leadership) in “any other group making decisions for the people in the village.” Respondents were then offered examples to illustrate what was meant. Respondents were expected to answer “yes” or “no.” These simple choices and the unlikely presence of preferred responses suggest that indicator P6 is acceptably reliable. Reliability was also strengthened because respondents were next asked to identify the other decision-making groups with which they had participated. Interviewers were

¹⁸ The possibility exists, of course, that some women participate in non-PRF decision making without having participated in the PRF’s activities. In other instances, participation in some village-level meetings may predate the PRF’s presence. If these situations exist, the indicator’s validity as a measure of the PRF’s influence would be compromised—unless participation rates of PRF attendees were considerably higher than those for non-PRF attendees.

instructed to probe for several alternative “engagement” opportunities.

As the pilot test found, the information needed for this indicator can be collected at low cost in a few minutes using only two questions.

The pilot test found a high level of participation at non-PRF meetings. Eighty-six percent of ethnic minority women had attended other decision-making forums, compared with 92 percent of the majority Lao-Tai women. Understandably, however, this participation cannot be attributed solely to experience with PRF.

Table 6 shows the type of village-level meetings the women attended. Village meetings were the most common. The popularity of these meetings might reflect their inclusive nature. All villagers are eligible to participate in such meetings, but also strongly encouraged to participate. Similarly, the Lao Women’s Union is intentionally inclusive. Other meetings might be more exclusive in nature (and may meet less frequently), such as village water groups and school boards. Groups like local school boards are intentionally small, may not encourage or facilitate participation (or have special provisions to encourage women’s active participation), and voting may be limited to elected members.

TABLE 6 Type of other village-level meetings attended

Type of meeting	Lao-Tai Women (%)	Ethnic Minorities (%)
Village meeting	94.2	93.0
Lao Women’s Union	55.1	44.2
Youth Union	15.9	9.3
School board	5.8	7.0
Village credit group	5.8	0.0
Village water group	0.0	2.3
Lao Front for Development and Reconstruction	1.4	2.3
Labor union	2.9	0.0
Other	5.8	2.3
N =	69	43

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100 because multiple responses were possible.

A third tested indicator related to women participating in public decision making external to PRF includes:

Indicator P8: Lessons learned by participating in PRF used in non-PRF decision making

P8: Validity + Reliability ++
Ease of collection – Cost of collection –

This qualitative indicator assesses the degree to which women participating in PRF’s processes are able to apply the skills acquired in PRF meetings in other decision-making venues.

The pilot test used focus group discussions to examine the extent to which women’s experiences with PRF enhanced their participatory skills elsewhere. Participants in these discussions identified several beneficial effects, but the women also suggested that they had much to learn. They requested that training targeted at participants in PRF meetings be increased. These findings were consistent among all participants in the focus group discussions, including the ethnic minorities.

The disadvantage of the indicator is that it requires a high degree of participation from facilitators of the focus groups and training of the facilitators. Processing of the information is also time consuming. Nonetheless, the pilot testing showed that it is possible to collect data for the indicator using local consultants experienced in the collection of qualitative data.

Recommendation

Indicators P6 and P7 provide interesting information about women’s political engagement but not necessarily about PRF’s role in promoting this engagement or leadership. As the data in Table 6 indicate, participation beyond village meetings and the Lao Women’s Union is negligible more than five years after PRF’s first funding cycle. If participation is negligible, then levels of women’s leadership will be even lower. Equally important, in the absence of comparison with women not involved with PRF, it is not possible to attribute participation or leadership in other village groups to participation in PRF.¹⁸ Indeed, the opposite situation may be just as likely. Participation in other village meetings may be

¹⁸ The challenge of attribution is further compounded by the fact that participants and nonparticipants are self-selected rather than randomly assigned to one group or the other. Participants may be predisposed to engage in public decision making without the need for any experience or success in PRF’s processes.

the explanation for women’s attendance at PRF meetings. For these reasons, PRF’s collection of data for these indicators is not recommended unless it is possible to initiate an evaluation that compares levels of women’s leadership in PRF villages with these levels in villages that have not participated in PRF. This approach would represent an impact evaluation, which can be expensive and methodologically complex.

With regard to indicator P8, rather than using focus groups to collect information for this indicator, targeted interviews may be more appropriate as well as less costly. Given the value of the information collected in the pilot, use of this indicator is recommended for inclusion in thematic impact assessments of PRF, but not as part of its regular monitoring process. The assessments can be outsourced to a local consulting firm.

Perceptions of Women’s Roles in Decision Making

If PRF influences and promotes women’s opportunities to affect decision making in their villages, then one can reasonably expect that women’s and men’s attitudes about gender equity will change as a result, although not necessarily in preferred ways. Men have long been accustomed to making key decisions in PRF’s villages (and continue to do so), but the increased influence of women may be seen as altering traditional and widely accepted norms and mores about appropriate gender roles. If men perceive the changes to be undesirable or as diminishing their own importance, they may resist or undermine PRF’s progender approach to development. Conversely, men may also approve of the changes and act to support them.

Potential indicator:

Indicator P9: Perceptions of women’s roles in decision making¹⁹

P9: Validity + Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection +

If PRF’s interventions do affect women’s and men’s attitudes, then it could benefit by assessing their attitudes and subsequently changing its processes and implementation of its subprojects in ways that reflect these attitudes, while maintaining PRF’s progender approach to development. Unfortunately, measuring attitudes is always problematic, especially when those assessing the attitudes share a socially desired preference and when that preference may not be shared by the groups from which the information is collected. For this reason, the indicator is not as valid as is desirable. In contrast, using a simple survey instrument with standard questions could provide acceptable levels of reliability and allow collection of the needed data relatively easily and at a moderate cost.

Recommendation

PRF should consider the periodic use of a short survey instrument with four or five closed-ended questions related to perspectives on PRF’s gender-based rules.²¹ As an illustration, questions could assess (a) how strongly men and women favor or oppose women’s involvement in village-level decision making, (b) perceptions of PRF’s decision-making processes; and (c) opinions about the value of subprojects that women propose in their single-sex meetings.

To enhance the value of the survey, it would first be pretested to ensure the appropriateness of the questions. In addition, when PRF adds villages and districts to its agenda, relevant portions of the village survey could also be used to gather baseline data, thus permitting subsequent assessment of the changes that have occurred over time.

¹⁹ This indicator was not included in the field test for the current initiative. Instead the issue captured in this indicator was included in the 2008 assessment of PRF (World Bank 2008a). PRF suggested the desirability of including the indicator in the toolkit.

²⁰ Closed-ended questions limit the choices respondents can choose, such as “yes” or “no” or “I strongly agree, I somewhat agree, I have no opinion, I somewhat disagree, I strongly disagree.”



Woman harvesting. Sayaboury Province.
Photo © Adam Rogers / UNCDF

Women's Economic Well-being

GENDER-BASED ISSUES IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

Agriculture and rearing of livestock are the main sources of rural peoples' livelihoods and well-being in Lao PDR. Agriculture is typically the most important source of a rural community's income. Poverty in the Lao context often results from a poor harvest or the shortage or lack of rice and livestock. Secondary causes of poverty include a lack of (or limited) arable land and water; agricultural pests, livestock diseases, sickness, and poor health. Other causes involve the lack of (or limited) roads and accessibility to remote and mountainous areas; lack of (or limited) clean drinking water and poor sanitation, diseases such as malaria and diarrhea; and limited or no access to health and education facilities. Poverty is especially pronounced among rural populations and ethnic minorities, notably women (GRID 2005; World Bank 2006a).

Poverty in Lao PDR thus has several dimensions. To escape from this poverty women must have the opportunity to do so, but at least two barriers constrain these opportunities: (1) the use of their time, and (2) the responsibilities they have as women.

PRF IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

PRF neither monitors women's participation in economic activities related to PRF's training or infrastructure subprojects nor does it profile men's and women's participation in labor or economic markets in PRF villages. This is unfortunate because the omission precludes attention to several important outcome-related questions, including:

- Are women gaining economic capital as a consequence of increased access to basic infrastructure?
- Are women gaining time as a consequence of increased access to basic infrastructure?

- Has access to PRF's infrastructure subprojects or training affected women's ability to create small businesses?
- Is increased participation by women in PRF processes affecting the number of women engaging in entrepreneurial activities?

How these questions can be answered is addressed in the sections that follow.

Economic Capital

PRF's subprojects can affect women's overall economic situation and opportunities as entrepreneurs. Economic conditions can expand as infrastructure improves access to economic, labor, production, and financial markets for isolated communities. Training can improve the quality of locally produced handicrafts and provide skills in marketing, business development, and counting of profits and losses. PRF's subprojects can create a nearly unlimited agenda of economic opportunities.

Although assessing the impacts of PRF's subprojects on incomes, livelihoods, and opportunities for engaging in markets is challenging and perhaps better left for comprehensive evaluations or national socioeconomic surveys, it may be possible to use simple quantitative indicators to summarize the perceived impacts of economic infrastructure on household incomes and expenditures.

Potential indicator:

Indicator E1: Perceived economic improvements due to increased access to economic infrastructure

E1: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

Poor people typically know when their economic situation has improved, so asking them whether that situation has improved provides suitably valid information

(although not necessarily about the explanation for the changed situation). To promote reliability, significant effort was made during the pilot test to ensure that the data collection on the household-level impacts of PRF's subprojects was based on a consistent method across communities. Enumerators were instructed to use specific and standard examples from the respondents' everyday life and to probe for both negative and positive effects.

The pilot test shed some light on the utilization of PRF subprojects and their economic impact on households and communities. All respondents were asked whether their household had used (or accessed) PRF subprojects in their villages and all but a few did so. Those that did were then asked whether the subproject had an effect on their income, including nonmonetary income (Table 7). Of those using or accessing the subprojects, most reported a positive effect.

Women were next asked whether their village's PRF subproject had affected their household's cost of living. Among all respondents to this question, a majority reported that their cost of living had either decreased or had no effect (see Table 8). The decreased cost of living was especially notable among ethnic minorities. In contrast, nearly one in five women reported that the PRF subproject had increased these costs. In developed economies, with high standards of living, such increases are rarely perceived favorably. In Lao PDR, however, an increased cost of living is not necessarily undesirable. In some cases, costs may increase due to the expenses associated with attendance at a newly constructed, PRF-supported school or because previously unavailable medicines have been purchased after a PRF-funded bridge improved access to health care. In both cases, the

	Lao-Tai Women (%)	Ethnic Minorities (%)
Increased income	80.3	63.0
Decreased income	0.0	4.3
No effect	19.7	32.6
N =	71	46

Note: Includes only those respondents who indicated that their families had used or accessed a PRF subproject in their village, but excludes responses coded as not applicable.

presumed benefits far exceed the costs. Moreover, when incomes have increased faster than the cost of living, these costs may be less burdensome than they otherwise would be.

Recommendation

Indicator E1 should be included in the routine data collected as part of PRF's monitoring. PRF staff can use surveys to collect the information on household incomes and costs of living from a sample of villages and respondents each year. Collecting the information will require about ten minutes per individual.

Once the information is collected, it can be entered into the MIS at the provincial level and then analyzed at the national level. The results can be reported in gender-focused reports as well as in PRF's periodic reports. The reports would ideally be linked to recent economic data at the village or district level.

At least one important concern exists about this indicator. Although respondents are likely to know whether their economic situation has improved, their ability to attribute the change to PRF will be problematic if there are other development projects in their village or district. These other projects may explain some or much of the perceived change in the respondents' economic situation. In the absence of valid comparisons with villages in which PRF does not operate, the Fund will not be able to determine whether its subprojects are responsible for any improvements. The ideal approach would compare perceptions in similar villages with and without PRF's interventions. In the language of evaluation, PRF villages would be in the "treatment group,"

	Lao-Tai Women (%)	Ethnic Minorities (%)
Increased cost of living	24.2	10.9
Decreased cost of living	32.9	63.0
No effect	42.9	26.1
N =	70	46

Note: Includes only those respondents who indicated that their families had used or accessed the PRF subproject in their village, but excludes responses coded as not applicable.

and villages without PRF would be in a “control” or “comparison” group. All else being equal, it would then be possible to assess perceived changes in villagers’ economic situation and to identify how much of the change could be attributed to PRF.

Use of Time

Three in four people and five in six poor people live in rural areas in Lao PDR (Ministry of Planning and Investment 2010), and about two-thirds of the population work in the agricultural sector (National Statistics Center 2004). Paid employment outside the household exists in large numbers primarily in Vientiane, but is almost totally absent in rural areas. Without paid employment, access to desired goods and services is often limited and occasionally even impossible. For this reason, it is useful to examine women’s opportunities to engage in financially remunerative tasks.

Such opportunities are often related to the time available to pursue these tasks. “For poor women and girls,” UNIFEM (2008) has observed, “lack of time is perhaps the most crippling form of poverty because it contributes to their lack of capability in almost all other dimensions.” Without adequate time for themselves, women are deprived of opportunities for education, health services, and employment.²¹

Data from the 2007–08 Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey reveal that women spend about 0.3 hours per day on weaving, sewing, and other handicrafts compared to 0.1 hours for men. Handicrafts contribute a significant proportion of cash income to households in rural areas (GRID 2005). Women also spend more time on their own businesses—0.7 hours per day compared to 0.4 hours per day for men. Combined with their handicraft work, this takes up much of women’s total income-generating activity hours.

These numbers suggest that women’s opportunities to increase their earnings are constrained. They have less time per day to devote to income-generating activities than do men and have more household and child-care obligations than do men. As an illustration, rural women in Lao PDR are responsible for their families’ food

security (Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women 2005). Women spend about twice as much time collecting firewood and fetching water than do men and more than four times the labor hours on housework (World Bank 2010). As UNIFEM (2008) has noted, although unpaid household work and child care are essential, women’s reproductive and child-rearing roles mean that women “will probably still do more family care than men . . . and be more likely to choose part-time work in order to balance work and family.”

Given all the tasks for which women have some responsibility, they have less time for sleep, leisure, and for education than do men, at least according to the data available for Lao PDR.²² Women’s daily obligations restrict their access to education, paid employment, participation in village decision making, and opportunities to increase their incomes (UNIFEM 2008). In short, time is an economic asset as well as a potential outcome of PRF’s investment.

A possible measure of such outcomes for PRF’s impact on women’s opportunities in the economic sphere could thus be measured by the amount of time released to women due to specific infrastructure subprojects, including wells, access roads, or walking paths (Buchhave 2009). Such outcome monitoring would ideally be supported by evaluations that examine the use of the released time, thus validating whether the time is merely transferred from one onerous task to another or whether it is applied to more economically productive uses.

Potential indicator:

Indicator E2: Increased availability of time for women for nonhousehold tasks			
E2: Validity +	Reliability ++		
Ease of collection ++		Cost of collection ++	

This indicator focuses on the impact on women’s household chores as a result of increased access to the improved access to infrastructure that PRF provides. Indicator E2 accurately and reliably captures an important measure of PRF’s economic effects, especially for women and their opportunities to engage in economi-

²¹ In an analysis of gender inequality, poverty, and human development in South East Asia, Francisco (2007) argued that women’s time spent on nonmarkets activities takes away time for them to participate in market activities, and concluded that gender dynamics at the household level reinforces the economic, social, and political arrangements in the community and the society as a whole.

²² A livelihood case study (Alton and Rattanavong 2004) of minority villages in Luang Nam Tha Province revealed differences in labor divisions between males and females and concluded that girls and women have more chores during the day than boys and men, both in terms of numbers and time needed.

cally productive activities. No less important, the data for this indicator are easily collected and require only a few minutes.

In the pilot test, women who had confirmed their use of or access to the PRF subproject in their villages were asked whether the subproject had changed the time they spend on daily household tasks; they were also given specific examples, such as cooking or collecting water or firewood. The results, shown in Table 9, are interesting and perhaps even counterintuitive. On the one hand, one-third of the Lao-Tai women and nearly three of five ethnic minority women reported that they spent less time on household chores as a result of the PRF subproject.

On the other hand, about one-third of all women reported that the time spent on household chores had increased despite the PRF subproject. To understand why this situation occurred, the pilot test included several focus group discussions. These discussions indicated that educational subprojects can affect the time devoted to household chores. When older children attend school, the burden on their mothers can increase because they must assume responsibility for taking care of infants, gathering firewood, or other tasks formerly handled by their older children.

Other research conducted in Lao PDR (World Bank 2008a) has found that women experience significant time-use savings when infrastructure projects provide

drinking water. This finding suggests the desirability of more nuanced questions about the use of women's time with respect to PRF's subprojects. Some of PRF's subprojects may decrease the time women spend on household chores while others can increase the time devoted to such chores.

Recommendation

The indicator is recommended as a suitable proxy for women's opportunities to engage in economically productive activities. If a decision is made to collect data on this indicator, several options are available.

First, PRF staff can use a questionnaire to collect the data in a few minutes per respondent. Second, the data can be estimated by subproject implementation groups and recorded in the first—and a subsequent or last—subproject implementation form (SPIM), which is already in use. The information would be collected only on selected subprojects, notably those where collection of data is simple and the positive impact on time use for women and men is assumed and relevant. Such subprojects could include those that provide access to water or other infrastructure, including roads, foot paths, and bridges. Using this option would not add much time or cost to the data-collection process.

The second option would permit comparison before and after the completion of a relevant subproject. For example, in the first SPIM, before the subproject is initiated, information would be recorded on the estimated time (e.g., minutes/round trip access) for villagers to access water or markets and then entered into PRF's MIS. Comparable data would then be collected a few months after the subproject's completion. This before-and-after comparison would represent a form of impact evaluation despite the absence of an explicit counterfactual or comparison group. When there is no other plausible explanation for an outcome, such as decreased time to collect water, the counterfactual is implicit (White 2009).

A third option exists. Monitoring the effectiveness of gender-based policies does not always require that experts be imported into a village. As UNIFEM (2008) recommends, data should be collected through methods that are gender responsive and that reflect women's concerns. One means of doing so would involve village women in data collection as enumerators with the assistance of PRF staff. As an example, after being trained, one or two village women could be hired for one day

TABLE 9 Effects of PRF's infrastructure subprojects on the time spent on household tasks

	Lao-Tai Women (%)	Ethnic Minorities (%)
Increased time spent on daily household tasks	37.3	33.3
Decreased time spent on daily household tasks	32.8	57.8
No effect	30.0	8.9
N =	67	45

Note: Includes only those respondents who indicated that their families had used or accessed the PRF subproject in their village, but excludes responses coded as not applicable.

a month to observe and record the amount of time a sample of women spend collecting firewood, fetching water, or preparing meals. Hiring local women would represent an extension of PRF’s current practice of hiring villagers to assist with the construction of PRF infrastructure subprojects while also developing local capacity, one of PRF’s implicit objectives.

This approach risks diminished reliability, but the trade-off would be easily justified. Nepal’s experience with female enumerators and supervisors in its 2001 census demonstrates the viability and success of such an approach (UNIFEM 2008). Before this option is considered, however, it should be field tested to assess the feasibility of engaging women in this task.

Finally, this indicator shares the same concern associated with indicator E1, namely the issue of attribution. The solution is the same, namely the collection of data in villages in which PRF does not operate.

Engagement in Entrepreneurship

PRF’s subprojects encourage development through the provision of infrastructure, such as electricity or roads that improve access to markets. In addition, however, PRF also promotes development through the provision of vocational training designed to encourage new economic activities in villages. Income-generating activities received little attention from PRF in its early years, but villagers repeatedly requested assistance with these activities, and PRF now provides that assistance. If this assistance is successful, then there should be an increase in the number of women-operated businesses (or an increase in the volume of existing businesses) in PRF villages after the infrastructure was built or the training provided. A related indicator would assess the perceived benefits that PRF’s subprojects create for women entrepreneurs.

Potential indicator:

Indicator E3: Percentage of women in PRF villages operating small businesses

E3: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection +

If PRF increases women’s opportunities to engage in entrepreneurial activities, there should be an increase in the number of women operating small businesses in PRF villages. To assess this assumption, respondents in the pilot test were asked whether they “operate a business on a regular basis” (not including sales of crops they



Female stall owner being interviewed in Hua Meaung village, where PRF is active. This pilot M&E initiative found that information on women’s entrepreneurship was relevant for assessing PRF’s impact on women’s economic activity.

had grown). Only 12 percent of minority women did so in comparison with 45.3 percent of Lao-Tai women.

Despite these attributes, attributing changes in economic activity to PRF is problematic—unless there is a comparison group. Unlike the previous indicator, in which there was no plausible alternative explanation for the reduced time required to complete household tasks, the situation is different for operating a business. There are many reasons why poor women in PRF villages might start a small business, including economic necessity independent of anything PRF might do.

Recommendation

Information on women’s entrepreneurship is relevant for assessing PRF’s impact on women’s economic activity, although the number of questions about business activities could usefully be increased. Additional questions might inquire about the kind of businesses in which women engage (or would like to engage), how their incomes have changed as a result of their businesses, and whether they have hired anyone to help them with the business. In addition, because some women already operate small businesses, it would be useful to ascertain how their incomes may have increased as a result of PRF’s subprojects.

As just noted, however, the information about business activity should be placed in context. If PRF chooses to assess changes in women's economic activities, information should also be collected on economic activity in villages in which PRF does not operate.²³ Doing so would permit a reasonable assessment of PRF's impacts on economic activity but will also increase the overall cost of data collection.

Collecting data in villages not involved with PRF will increase costs, but there are benefits to PRF doing so. One objective of the Bank's collaboration with PRF is to strengthen the Fund's capabilities to monitor and evaluate. Comparing outcomes in villages with and without PRF's subprojects provides an opportunity for the Fund's M&E staff to learn about and implement impact evaluations. Such evaluations are typically the most effective means to identify and assess outcomes that can be reliably attributed to a project's intervention. Familiarity with the methods of impact evaluation is highly desirable at a time when attention to results-based management is increasingly important.

Potential indicator:

Indicator E4: Benefits for women's entrepreneurship

E4: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection +

The impact of PRF's subprojects on female entrepreneurs is important for understanding the Fund's effects on poverty reduction and the economic opportunities created for women. Is it the case that these subprojects have positive impacts on women's entrepreneurial activities? To answer this question, respondents in the pilot test who said they operated a business were asked whether and how PRF subproject in their villages had affected their business. In contrast to the previous

²³ Under ideal circumstances, villages would be assigned randomly to treatment and comparison groups. The former group would be the PRF villages; villages in the comparison group would not receive any of the PRF's interventions. If the number of villages in each of the two groups was sufficiently large, random assignment would produce two groups that would be nearly identical in terms of the characteristics deemed to be potential explanations for levels of economic activity. Given that PRF is several years old and that villages in PRF have certain characteristics (such as high levels of poverty and high percentages of ethnic minorities), random assignment is not likely to be possible. As an alternative, a comparison group could include nonparticipating villages that share with the participating villages the key characteristics believed to be related to different kinds of activity, including economic, political, and social.

indicator, which focused on whether women operated a business, indicator E4 focuses on PRF's effects on existing businesswomen.

Among the number of women operating businesses, there was virtually universal agreement among them that PRF subprojects had several positive impacts.²⁴ As an illustration, among respondents who said that PRF had an impact on their businesses, all agreed that their costs for the goods they sold had decreased, while the access to these goods had increased as had the sales of these goods. Almost all of these respondents also agreed that the number of their customers had increased as a result of PRF's subproject in their village.

These results suggest that these direct indicators of positive benefits are both valid and reliable. In turn, the information about these benefits is easily collected by asking the women about the effects of PRF subprojects on their business operations. Attribution remains a concern because the costs of goods acquired and sold (as well as the number of customers) can be due to many factors, only one of which is PRF. PRF is likely to be a plausible explanation for the positive impacts identified, but not necessarily the sole or even primary explanation for these impacts. Assessing the relative role of PRF in creating positive benefits would require comparison of the situation with and without PRF but would provide still another opportunity to consider and implement an impact evaluation.

Recommendation

Indicator E4 provides relevant information about the economic benefits of PRF. Although information for the indicator probably should not be collected routinely, such as for monitoring PRF's implementation, the indicator can be of considerable value in demonstrating PRF's overall value, assuming that future results are similar to those noted above.

Nonetheless, one change in the information collected might be desirable. PRF seeks to improve women's economic situation, but there is also good reason to collect comparable data from men. PRF might provide benefits for women, but it may also be the case that more of

²⁴ If respondents said that the PRF project in their village had not affected their business, it made no sense to ask them how the subproject had affected their business. As a consequence, a small portion of female entrepreneurs in the PRF villages did not identify any positive effects of the PRF subproject in their villages.

these benefits accrue to males (and for a larger number of males) than for females. If that situation occurs, then women’s economic situation will have improved, but their economic status or well being relative to men will have declined.²⁵ A 10 percent increase for females might be noteworthy, but it becomes much less so if males have experienced a 25 percent increase (or if males receive 75 percent of a subproject’s benefits and females the remainder). In sum, determining changes in females’ relative well-being will not be possible without data from both males and females.

Potential indicator:

Indicator E5: Support for women’s entrepreneurship

E5: Validity - Reliability -
Ease of collection - Cost of collection -

Support for women’s entrepreneurship is a qualitative indicator. To assess this support, the pilot test included interviews and focus group discussions with women in several PRF villages. One of the topics in these discussions was the kind of support that women might need to create new businesses.

Among the women in the discussions, many looked favorably on PRF as a potential driver of increased female entrepreneurship, and many recommended that PRF’s training programs could be one means to support entrepreneurship. Some women also suggested that existing entrepreneurs could be instructors in these programs.

As might be expected, the requirements for support to women’s entrepreneurship vary. Likewise, what constitutes entrepreneurship can differ from one village to another, with the consequence that the concept may be too abstract for some women to understand. Indeed, due to the concept’s complexity, the indicator is difficult to measure consistently and its validity is problematic. Unfortunately as well, data collection is work-intensive; it relies on identifying existing or potential female entrepreneurs and then lengthy interviews or focus group discussions with skilled facilitators.

Recommendation

Despite the challenges associated with this indicator, gathering data about the factors that motivate women

²⁵ The issue of the PRF’s relative benefits for males and females applies not only to indicator E4, but to several other indicators as well.

to establish businesses can be of value to PRF. PRF has an implicit theory of change, but this theory should be informed and amended based on information gained from the intended beneficiaries. If data are to be collected about the support women need to start a small business, the data-collection process should be simplified, perhaps by including consideration of this issue in one of PRF’s periodic thematic studies. The necessary data would be collected only once and used to inform PRF’s decision making.

Food Security

Food insecurity is a persistent characteristic of poverty. Almost by definition, poor people do not have enough to eat. When there is not enough to eat, women are typically the most likely to suffer. In poor Lao households women are largely responsible for providing and preparing food for their families. As UNIFEM (2008) explains, when women have to increase their effort to produce more food or work to earn money to purchase food, the household chores of their daughters often increase. The result is that girls may be kept out of school, and the mother’s poverty is perpetuated through her daughters’ lack of education.

This situation surely exists in Lao PDR. According to the most recent Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS) (World Bank 2010), over 25 percent of the country’s rural population suffered from food poverty in 2007–08. Nearly 40 percent of the population in rural areas without access to roads found themselves in this situation. Moreover, families that are not able to grow or buy enough rice will also find themselves unable to afford the costs of other necessities, such as education for their children or medical care and medicines for their ill members.

Potential indicator:

Indicator E6: Number of months in the past year a household did not have sufficient rice²⁶

E5: Validity + Reliability +
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

Rice is a staple crop in Lao PDR and among the most commonly grown and eaten foods. As a result, access to rice can serve as a suitable proxy for food security as well as changes in economic security. No less important, Lao PDR’s periodic expenditure and consumption surveys (LECS) assess rice insufficiency by asking village chiefs

²⁶ This indicator was not included in the field test.

Scenery from
PRF village in
Huaphanh province.
Photo © Anders
Engvall/World Bank



about rice insufficiency. Should PRF decide to collect information on rice insufficiency in the poor villages in which it works, the data collected can be compared with information from the LECS.

Recommendation

Data on rice insufficiency can be collected routinely from women by asking a single question at the single-sex meetings (prior to the VNPA meetings in each village). To promote comparability with the LECS data, village chiefs can also be asked the same question. In addition to inquiring about food security, it would also be desirable to gather information about the nutritional and caloric value of what villagers consume. Unfortunately, there is no inexpensive and convenient way to do so. As an illustration, the nutrition portion of the 2007–08 LECS involved twelve questions about food consumption.

Women's Access to Public Services

GENDER-BASED ISSUES IN ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES

A healthy and educated population is a fundamental requirement for development, and countries invariably include attention to these areas in their national development strategies. Lao PDR is no exception. Its National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2006–10 emphasizes the importance of improving the country's education and health systems and, in particular, women's access to these basic services.

Lao PDR has made remarkable progress in reducing infant mortality over the past decade as well as that for mothers and children under age five. Similar progress is also evident in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis (World Bank 2006a). Despite this progress, many Laotians continue to suffer from poor health and inadequate access to medical care. Women and their newborn children are notably disadvantaged.

According to the World Health Organization (2010), Lao PDR had a maternal mortality ratio of 580 in 2008, a rate far higher than in Thailand (48), Vietnam (56), or Cambodia (290). Only 20 percent of Lao women had their deliveries of children assisted by skilled health staff in 2008 compared with 97 percent in Thailand and 88 percent in Vietnam. In villages without roads, only 7 percent of women gave birth in a hospital in 2007–08 (Ministry of Planning and Investment 2010).

As with access to education in Lao PDR, there are considerable differences between rural and urban areas in terms of access to health services. Whereas 81 percent of the country's urban population has access to medical staff only 28 percent of the rural population with all-year roads has such access. In 2007–08, the average village without a road was located more than 25 km from the closest hospital, and the average time

to travel to that hospital exceeded five hours (Ministry of Planning and Investment 2010). Access to a pharmacy is severely constrained for rural populations, even for those who can use all-year roads. For those without these roads, access is almost impossible.

Access to education is equally important. Low levels of literacy are widespread, especially among ethnic minorities and in rural areas without roads. According to the LECS conducted in 2002–03, in 28 percent of cases where children had never attended school in rural areas the primary reason was the schools' distance from the children's homes (King and van de Walle 2007). Urban children are more likely to be in school than are rural children, and boys in rural areas are more likely to be in school than girls, in particular non-Lao-Tai girls. Similarly, nonpoor children are more likely to be in school than are poor children. There are notable differences among the country's major ethnic groups. As an illustration, 90 percent of Lao-Tai girls were enrolled in primary schools in 2007–08, compared with less than 70 percent of Mon-Khmer and Sino-Tibetan girls. Similar disparities exist for enrollment in lower and upper secondary schools.

Finally, access to clean water and proper sanitary facilities are inextricably linked to good health. Without access to clean water, chronic and debilitating illnesses are prevalent and often life threatening. Diarrhea is rampant in areas without clean water. Without proper sanitary facilities, contamination of water supplies is possible. In both instances, females are the most common victims. When women are responsible for gathering water, their exposure to bacterial infections and unsafe water is increased. Girls may be reluctant to stay in school because toilet and washing facilities may not be available and when they are available they may not be private. Investments in

sanitary facilities can provide enormous economic benefits. Research reported by UNICEF (2007) found that for every dollar invested in sanitation, up to \$34 more in health, education, and social and economic development costs can be saved.

As Lao PDR recognizes, it is among the countries that would benefit by increased attention to clean water and proper sanitary facilities. As much as 25 percent of Lao's population does not have access to safe water in the dry season (Ministry of Planning and Investment 2010), and this percentage increases in rural areas without access to roads. Similarly, less than half of Lao PDR's poor population has access to a modern toilet, a squat toilet, or a dry toilet.

PRF GENERATED ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES

One of PRF's objectives is to increase access to public services, including health and education. Between 2003 and 2010, about one-quarter of PRF's subprojects were related to education and almost 26 percent to health. PRF has thus increased access to both educational and health resources. Nonetheless, measuring access alone is insufficient if there are not also benefits associated with PRF's investments. In view of the gender gaps noted above, a relevant gender outcome for PRF would be a sex-disaggregated measure for beneficiaries of the subprojects within the two social categories.

For health care there are additional considerations. Traditional perceptions, language barriers, and cost considerations are potential barriers influencing health-seeking behaviors (World Bank 2006a). From a gender perspective, the degree to which women are able to influence the choice of seeking health services might also influence utilization. Given the focus on integrating women into PRF's decision-making processes and women's potential opportunity to influence the provision of health services to their communities, it is likewise important to assess whether women also have an increased voice over the use of the health services that PRF provides.

Access to Public Services

Increasing the supply of public services is often defined as an output. Nonetheless, access to water, sanitation, education, and health services has such a strong relationship with improved well-being that such access is

often considered to be an outcome.²⁸ This is especially true when these services were not previously available, as is the case in many of Lao PDR's villages that benefit from PRF.

Potential indicator:

Indicator S1: Number of beneficiaries and percentage that are female who have gained (improved) access to (a) health services (b) education; (c) clean water; and, (d) appropriate sanitary facilities.

S1: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection ++ Cost of collection ++

PRF routinely collects data that identifies the infrastructure—including social infrastructure—provided in its villages. The number of women and men in these villages is also available in PRF's MIS.

Recommendation

PRF is encouraged to count the number of beneficiaries by gender in each village for each of the four service areas and to include the results in its overall summary reports on subproject implementation rates.²⁹ Access to public services is an ideal indicator for annual reports and can provide compelling evidence of PRF's contributions to poverty reduction and to Lao PDR's overall gender strategy. Once data on access are collected it will also be possible to assess the relationship between access to the services and perceived economic benefits, such as on household incomes (indicator E1). Equally important, knowledge of this relationship can help PRF to learn which subprojects are most and least effective in reducing poverty.

Attention to these issues can provide still another opportunity to enhance PRF's M&E capabilities in terms of the selection of evaluation designs, data collection, and data analysis. A primary purpose of evaluation is to promote learning and improve decision making. Identifying the relative effectiveness of different PRF investments can contribute to both.

²⁸ As an illustration, the African Development Bank's (2009) core outcome indicators for water and sanitation include access to improved drinking water sources and improved sanitation facilities resulting from a project intervention (number), of which are female (percentage). Health services are defined to include access to a nurse, a health clinic or center, or a dispensary where medicines can be obtained.

²⁹ PRF already collects information on the number of villagers in each village in which it operates.

Influencing Access to Health Services and Education

Potential indicator:

Indicator S2: Women’s influence on access to health services

S2: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection + Cost of collection -

When to seek medical care and who to see about this care are typically important personal choices for women, at least in many developed countries. Elsewhere, however, these decisions are subject to the availability and anticipated costs of the care and, often, the preferences of other family members, especially husbands. Such is the case in Lao PDR, as shown in Table 10.

Respondents in the pilot test were first asked whether they had any health problems during the previous twelve months. Among Lao-Tai women, three-quarters reported having had a health problem compared with 92 percent of the ethnic minorities. These women were then asked whether they had sought help for that problem and who had made the decision to seek or not seek help for that problem. The results indicate that husbands were overwhelmingly the primary decision makers about their spouses’ health care.³⁰ The need to consult other family members, especially husbands, before seeking health care may be due to the expenses associated with this care. Nationwide data from Lao PDR indicate that the cost of health services affects decisions

³⁰ Among all 125 respondents, 123 were married and 2 were widows, so there were few decisions required about the health care of unmarried women.

TABLE 10 Persons making decisions to seek health care for women

	Lao-Tai Women (%)	Ethnic Minorities (%)
Respondent	40.0	21.7
The husband	78.2	91.3
Other family member	23.6	13.0
Nonfamily member	1.8	0.0
N =	55	46

Note: Includes only those respondents who had a health problem in the previous twelve months and who had sought help for that problem. Respondents could select more than one option.



Portrait of villager in Khammoune province.
Photo © Meriem Gray / World Bank



Children in resettlement village, Nakai Plateau. Khammoune province. Photo © Meriem Gray / World Bank

about whether to use these services (GRID 2005; World Bank 2006a).

There is little reason to believe the results related to indicator S2 are not valid or reliable. On the one hand, information about access to health services is already part of PRF's data-collection processes. On the other hand, information about health-seeking behaviors and decision making is best collected through interviews, which can be time consuming. Gathering this information in the pilot test required about fifteen minutes per respondent. A choice thus needs to be made whether the value of the information about health-seeking behaviors justifies the cost of its collection.

Potential indicator:

Indicator S3: Women's influence on access to education

S3: Validity ++ Reliability ++
Ease of collection + Cost of collection +

Unlike access to health services, which some believe should be a personal decision, the same cannot be said about children's access to education. Decisions about whether to enroll children in school are typically parental, and this is the case in Lao PDR. Respondents were asked to indicate who made the decision to send their children to school. Over 80 percent of all respondents who had children in school reported that both parents had been involved in the decision making, and this was true regardless of whether the respondent was a member of a minority ethnic group or the majority Lao-Tai population.

Recommendation

If PRF's objectives include the promotion of gender equity and increasing women's opportunities, then PRF may wish to consider how access to health services can be changed. The construction of additional health clinics is one way of doing so. More than thirty health dispensaries were constructed and staffed by trained nurses during PRF's first four years.³¹ The construction of additional health facilities is clearly desirable, but there is only a weak causal connection between construction and who makes decisions about accessing these facilities.

PRF should continue to monitor and report data on access to the health facilities it constructs. Information on who makes decisions about accessing these facilities might best be left to thematic assessments or periodic but infrequent surveys. Information on the indicator can be reported in annual reports as well as those on gender and participation.

With regard to Indicator S3: Given what appears to be appropriate roles for both parents in decisions about enrolling their children in schools, there is no reason or rationale for PRF to become involved with this process.

³¹ None of the villages included in the pilot test had benefitted from health subprojects.

Recommendations for Next Steps

AMPLE REASONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEASURING PRF'S IMPACT ON GENDER

Good intentions are never enough, especially with regard to development. The same is true for efforts to promote gender equality. Few people oppose such equality, and there is no shortage of documentation espousing its virtues or desirability for poverty reduction. Nevertheless, much remains to be done before gender equality is achieved, as the existence of the Poverty Reduction Fund acknowledges. PRF is an admirable effort to promote gender equality, and Lao PDR's commitment to this equality should be applauded. The Fund's design and implementation are well-suited to this commitment. PRF's mandate—that women play a central role in decision making about the allocation of the Fund's resources—creates essential opportunities that otherwise would not be available—and for too many poor and disenfranchised women in Lao PDR have never been available.

Creating opportunities for women is merely an initial step on their well-deserved path to equality. As the country's National Socio-Economic Development Plan recognizes, Lao PDR cannot realize its “goals of reducing poverty and improving national education, health, and population indicators without the active participation of all women, and particularly poor and ethnic minority women.”

A step of at least equal importance is the identification and measurement of the results, especially outcomes, of PRF's gender-focused efforts. What are PRF's benefits for women, and how can its advocates demonstrate its success? Are there gender-related political, economic, or social successes within PRF that have occurred, but are not well-captured or iden-

tified though the indicators now in use? What are appropriate indicators of success in the Lao context? This toolkit has addressed these questions and identified several indicators of outcomes that can be added easily and efficiently to PRF's ongoing approaches to monitoring and evaluation. In most instances as well, the indicators suggested in the toolkit are compatible with PRF's management information system.

The indicators considered in this toolkit are not meant to be exhaustive. Other gender-relevant indicators can be considered or continued depending on PRF's needs and changes in its implementation of the Fund. Gender-balance among PRF's employees at all levels offers an example of an indicator that PRF already tracks and should continue tracking. At the end of 2006, 74 percent of PRF's 140 employees were male. This percentage did not change in the years that followed. In early 2010, an identical percentage of PRF's employees at its headquarters in Vientiane were male. This percentage was even higher at the district level, where the employees are more likely to have contact with the villages in PRF. Among the seven provinces in which PRF operated in 2010, the percentage of female employees at the district level ranged from 0 to 38 percent. PRF has usefully extended its tracking of gender balance to include the percentage of koumban facilitators who are female (PRF 2010), but it may also wish to consider providing similar information on the percentage of its district and provincial coordinators who are female.

PRF can choose from among the indicators to strengthen its gender focus and its ability to generate compelling evidence of PRF's contributions to gender equality. These gender indicators can also be useful for capturing the impact on women from other CDD projects in Lao PDR and elsewhere in Asia.

NEXT STEPS

The indicators discussed in this toolkit provide PRF with multiple opportunities to demonstrate further its commitment to gender equality. The following steps are thus recommended actions for PRF to enhance its focus on gender quality and development:

1. Agreeing on gender-related outcomes to monitor and evaluate by reviewing the indicators and selecting those best-suited for the needs of PRF's management,

donors, and key stakeholders. Table 11 summarizes all the indicators and recommends the ones that PRF might consider for priority attention.

2. Developing and implementing routine and cost-efficient means—or amending existing approaches—to collect and analyze the data associated with each of the selected indicators. This toolkit provides some suggestions for how data can be collected (see discussion of each individual indicator in prior chapters).

TABLE 11 Summary of gender-based indicators

Indicator		Evaluative Criteria				Recommendations			
		Validity	Reliability	Ease of data collection	Cost of data collection	Should the PRF use?	Priority	For use in monitoring or evaluation?	Frequency of data collection
P1	% of women at VNPA meetings who speak or vote	++	++	+	+	Yes	Medium	Monitoring	Annually at a sample of VNPA meetings
P2	% of women at VNPA meetings who are active participants	++	++	+	+	Yes	Medium	Monitoring	Annually at a sample of VNPA meetings
P3	% of women who are aware of PRF's decision-making processes	+	++	++	++	Yes	Low	Monitoring	Annually at a sample of VNPA meetings
P4	% of subprojects solely and initially selected at each single-sex meeting at the village level and (a) forwarded to the koumban level; (b) selected at the koumban level; and, (c) approved for funding at the district level	++	++	++	++	Yes	High	Monitoring and evaluation	Annually
P5	% of subprojects that both single-sex groups selected and (a) forwarded to the koumban level; (b) selected at the koumban level; and, (c) approved for funding at the district level	++	++	++	++	Yes	High	Monitoring and evaluation	Annually
P6	% of female PRF participants who participate in non-PRF public decision-making institutions as a result of their experience with PRF	-	++	++	++	No	---	---	---
P7	% of female leaders in local non-PRF public decision-making institutions as a result of their experience with PRF	-	++	++	++	No	---	---	---

In general, there are several ways in which PRF can address cost efficiency and improve the practical value of the data it does collect. First, in its collection of gender-based data, PRF should consider using relevant questions already pretested and used in the LECS. The questionnaire used in the pilot test relied on several demographic questions included in the LECS, but there are other opportunities to do so with other items as well. Using items from the LECS will allow PRF to place these findings into context and to compare them with provincial and national-level data.

Second, PRF should consider the power and value of random sampling to collect individual or household-level data in its targeted villages. Depending on the margin of sampling error that PRF can tolerate and the confidence level desired, data from a sample of less than 400 people or households can be generalized to all people or all households in all of PRF's villages. In other words, a random sample *in which every person or household in the population has an equal probability of being included in the sample* can produce results that are representative of

TABLE 11 Summary of gender-based indicators (continued)

Indicator		Evaluative Criteria				Recommendations			
		Validity	Reliability	Ease of data collection	Cost of data collection	Should the PRF use?	Priority	For use in monitoring or evaluation?	Frequency of data collection
P8	Lessons learned by participating in PRF used in non-PRF decision making	+	++	-	-	Yes	Low	Evaluation	End of program
P9	Perceptions of women's roles in decision making	+	++	++	+	Yes	Medium	Evaluation	Baseline and end of program
E1	Perceived economic improvements due to increased access to economic infrastructure	++	++	++	++	Yes	High	Monitoring and evaluation	Annually
E2	Increased availability of time for women for nonhousehold tasks	+	++	++	++	Yes	Medium	Monitoring and evaluation	Annually
E3	% of women in PRF villages operating small businesses	++	++	++	+	Yes	Medium	Monitoring	Annually
E4	Benefits for women's entrepreneurship	++	++	++	+	Yes	Low	Evaluation	End of program
E5	Support for women's entrepreneurship	-	-	-	-	No	---	---	---
E6	Number of months in the past year a household did not have sufficient rice	+	+	++	++	Yes	High	Monitoring	Baseline and annually
S1	Number of beneficiaries and percentage that are female who have gained (improved) access to (a) education; (b) health services; (c) clean water; and, (d) appropriate sanitation facilities	++	++	++	++	Yes	High	Monitoring	Baseline and annually
S2	Women's influence on access to health care	++	++	+	-	No	---	---	---
S3	Women's influence on access to education	++	++	+	+	No	---	---	---

the entire population with which PRF works, regardless of the size of that population. Annex 3 provides additional information on random sampling, including a brief explanation of sampling errors and confidence levels.

3. Where appropriate, establishing baselines for the new indicators in (a) all prospective sites where PRF will work as well as in (b) the sites where PRF already operates.³² To address the recurring issue of attribution, PRF should also consider the collection of appropriate data, including baseline data, in villages in which it does not operate. Doing so will not only strengthen PRF's ability to claim responsibility for any improvements that occur, but it will also create opportunities to employ rigorous evaluation designs, including those associated with impact evaluations.

4. Selecting targets for the outcome indicators that specify the magnitude of the changes desired and the time period in which they should be achieved. The Millennium Development Goals provide useful illustrations of both of these desired characteristics. The goals are explicit about what should be changed or achieved and by when. Table 12 provides some examples of how these goals have been put into operation.

Performance indicators, which do not specify what is to be achieved, are commonly monitored. By themselves performance indicators are not useful for judg-

³² The PRF is also strongly encouraged to consider collecting comparable data in randomly selected villages that are not involved with the project. Doing so will create opportunities for rigorous impact evaluations, which are especially useful in addressing attribution as well as the amount or degree of change that can be ascribed to the PRF (as opposed to other possible explanations for changes that are observed). The World Bank's Development IMpact Evaluation initiative provides useful guidance about how to design and implement impact evaluations.

ing whether a program or intervention has been successful. Target indicators, in contrast, are especially useful for purposes of evaluation. They establish benchmarks or standards against which progress and accomplishments can be measured and judged. Without target indicators it is not possible to determine whether a program, such as PRF, has achieved its goals, other than anecdotally.

Table 13 displays PRF's gender-related goal, and some of the indicators discussed in this toolkit. More important, the table also offers some illustrative target indicators that PRF could use to judge its success.

5. Monitoring for results in a way that identifies benefits and improvements in women's well-being rather than merely counting outputs, such as the number of people trained and the number of subprojects completed.

6. Improving PRF's capacity to collect and analyze data to improve understanding of what kinds or types of infrastructure subprojects are most effective in promoting economic development and women's economic opportunities. Enhancing this capacity might start with one or more workshops on evaluation designs, impact evaluations, sampling, and data analysis, including bivariate and multivariate statistics, which involve the simultaneous analysis of two or more variables.

7. Integrating key monitoring results into evaluations that provide information on the benefits provided and achieved.

8. Reporting and using findings for purposes of learning, accountability, and improved decision making.

TABLE 12 Target and performance indicators for selected Millennium Development Goals

Goal	Target indicator	Performance indicator
Promote gender equality and empower women	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education
Reduce child mortality	Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	Under-five mortality rate
Improve maternal health	Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	Maternal mortality ratio

TABLE 13 Illustrative target and performance indicators for PRF

Goal	Illustrative target indicators	Performance indicators
Strengthen local institutions to support participatory decision-making . . . at the village, koumban, and district levels, involving a broad range of villagers, including women and the poor	25 percent of infrastructure subprojects selected at women's single-sex meetings approved for funding at the district level by 2012	P4: Percent of subprojects solely and initially selected at each single-sex meeting at the village level and (a) forwarded to the koumban level; (b) selected at the koumban level; and, (c) approved for funding at the district level
	75 percent of women in PRF villages report economic improvements due to increased access to economic infrastructure by 2014	E1: Perceived economic improvements due to increased access to economic infrastructure
	90 percent of women in need of health services due to illness, disease, or child delivery can access these services within two hours by 2015	S1: Number of beneficiaries and percentage that are female who have gained improved access to health services

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Annexes

Annex 1. Methods Used in the Pilot Test

Sampling

The field work for the piloting of the proposed indicators was conducted in 2009 in villages in which PRF has been active since its first annual cycle, which began in February 2003. Six villages in two districts were included in the pilot test. To capture regional differences, three villages were randomly selected from PRF-targeted communities in the Sukhuma District of Champassak Province in southern Lao PDR and three villages in the Huamuang District in Huaphanh Province in northern Lao PDR. Thus the sampling frame consisted of (a) one district in southern Lao and one in northern Lao; and (b) three randomly selected villages in each district where PRF has been active since 2003 and remains active.

Several methods were used to gather information about PRF in the six villages.

Individual Interviews

Data were collected from 125 women, all of whom had all participated in PRF's processes within their villages. Some of the women had also represented their villages in koumban- or district-level meetings. About 60 percent of the women were Lao-Tai, the majority population in Lao PDR. The other 40 percent represented Hmong (26 percent), Xuay (14 percent), and "other" (1 percent). A majority of respondents were in the "middle-age bracket," older than age 25 but not yet 46 years of age. About one-fifth were under age 25; a similar portion of respondents were older than 45. All respondents were either married (98 percent) or widowed (2 percent). Almost all respondents have children; only five respondents were childless. More than a third of the women had five or more children. Finally, almost all respondents derived their primary income from agriculture, and almost a third derived some income from

trade. Other sources of income, such as forestry or fishing, were of minor importance. This pattern is broadly representative of the situation in all rural areas in Lao PDR (National Statistics Center 2005).

All the women were interviewed using an identical questionnaire (see Annex 2). The questionnaire was based on the forms PRF currently uses. The questionnaire thus conforms, as much as possible, to forms PRF and the Department of Statistics use.³³ This makes it possible to add the questionnaire, or parts of it, to PRF's existing monitoring and data-collection system.

The questionnaire used in the pilot test contained six modules:

1. Respondent profile, which solicited information on the respondents' gender, age, marital status, number of children, number of people in the household, ethnicity, and main sources of income.
2. Participation in PRF, which solicited information on participation in PRF's activities, including its meetings.
3. Political Sphere
4. Economic Sphere
5. Social Sphere
6. Survey Assessment, which interviewers completed immediately after each interview.

Focus Group Discussions

In addition to the interviews with 125 women, focus-group discussions were organized in each village with women who had participated in PRF's processes. The discussions gathered information about proposed qualitative indicators of gender outcomes. To provide

³³ The Department of Statistics was formerly the National Statistics Center.

a means for data triangulation, the focus group discussions offered the participants the opportunity to talk about a range of issues, challenges, observations, and comments on their lives as well as PRF's processes and perceived impacts.

Interviews with Village Representative

Each of the six villages has two PRF representatives, one man and one woman, and each was interviewed. They represent their villages at the koumban-level meetings and have a central role in voicing village-level concerns and priorities for subprojects. The interviews focused on the nature of active participation of community members and village representatives and tested the relevance of the items in the questionnaires used in the individual interviews, which are discussed above.

Case Studies

Case studies were conducted in the six villages to assess situations in which PRF has affected women's opportunities and their engagement in local political, economic, and social spheres. The study team used local knowledge to identify suitable participants for the case studies; women who participated actively in the villages' economic, social, and political life were the main targets.

The need to substantiate the relevance of the proposed gender-based indicators for measuring PRF's impact on women motivated the case studies. The studies offer narratives about women's engagement in local decision making outside PRF. The case studies provided an opportunity to gather opinions from women active in the PRF process and their perspectives about how PRF is influencing their lives.

Annex 2. Questionnaire, English Version

Gender Empowerment Pilot Field Survey
Individual Questionnaire

<i>Identification</i>	
Province _____	Code
District _____	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Village _____	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Date of interview _____	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Respondent's name _____	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Interviewer's name _____	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Time at start _____	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Time at finish _____	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

Good morning/afternoon! We are researchers conducting a study on how projects such as the PRF made an impact on women’s lives. This study will allow future projects like PRF measure the effects of their projects on women and their families. We will ask you questions which may be personal, but your answers and your name will not be made public. Thank you very much!

Do I have your permission to continue?

Yes

No

I. Respondent Profile			
No.	Question	Alternative Answer	Answer code
1	Are you male or female?	Male = 1 Female=2 If "Male", go to next respondent	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	What is your relationship to head of household?	1=Head of household 2=Spouse 3=Parent/parent in law 4=Daughter 5=Daughter in law 6=Sister 7=Sister in law 8=Other relatives 9=Non relative	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	How many persons live in your household?	Total number of persons	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	How old were you at your last birthday?	Years Ask for year of birth and calculate completed years	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	What is your marital status?	1=Never married 2=Married 3=Divorced/separated 4=Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	How many children do you have?	Number of children Number of children living in or outside the household	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	What is your ethnic origin?	..... Enter code based on code list	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	What is your main source of income?	A = Agriculture, crops B = Agriculture, livestock C = Forestry D = Fishing E = Industry/handicraft F = Trade G = Construction H = Government employee I = Other specific Mark all relevant in alternatives order of importance. List from 1, 2, 3, etc.	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G <input type="checkbox"/> H <input type="checkbox"/> I <input type="checkbox"/>
Go to II. Participation in PRF			

II. Participation in Poverty Reduction Fund			
No.	Question	Alternative Answer	Answer code
1	Have you participated in any PRF village prioritization meetings?	1 = Yes 2 = No If "No", go to next respondent	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	How many times have you participated in PRF village prioritization meetings?	1 = One time 1 2 = Two to three times 2-3 3 = Many times 4<	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Have you ever represented the village in a koumban prioritization meeting?	1 = Yes 2 = No	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Have you ever been a member of the Village Implementation and Maintenance team?	1 = Yes 2 = No If "No" go to end of module	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	What was your role in the Village Implementation and Maintenance team?	1 = Implementation coordinator 2 = Material and equipment officer 3 = Operations and maintenance coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>
Go to III. Political Empowerment			

III. Political Empowerment			
No.	Question	Alternative Answer	Answer code
	Time at beginning of module		<input type="text"/>
1	Lets talk about the last PRF village prioritization meeting you attended. How did you participate in the prioritization meeting?	<i>A=Talk in front of group</i> <i>B=Vote on sub-projects</i> <i>C=Only joined meeting without talking or voting</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/>
2	What type of subproject did the female village prioritization group agree to suggest?	<i>1 = Remember project suggested</i> <i>2 = No, don't know/don't remember</i> If 2, go to Question 4	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<i>Please enter type of project stated by respondent</i>	..... ..... ..... Ask for 1 or more projects	Project code A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Would you be interested in representing the village in the next koumban meeting?	<i>1 = Yes</i> <i>2 = No</i> <i>3 = Don't know/unsure</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Lets leave the PRF. Do you participate in any other group making decisions for the people in the village? (Use examples to illustrate)	<i>1 = Yes</i> <i>2 = No</i> If "No" go to end	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	What other groups making decisions for the people in the village do you participate in?	<i>A = Village credit group/revolving fund</i> <i>B = Village meeting</i> <i>C = Lao Womens Union</i> <i>D = Village water group</i> <i>E = Village health facilitator</i> <i>F = School board</i> <i>G = Lao Front for Development and Reconstruction</i> <i>H = Youth Union</i> <i>I = Labor Union</i> <i>J = Other, specify</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G <input type="checkbox"/> H <input type="checkbox"/> I <input type="checkbox"/> J <input type="checkbox"/>
	Time at end of module		<input type="text"/>
Go to IV. Economic Empowerment			

IV. Economic Empowerment			
No.	Question	Alternative Answer	Answer code
	Time at beginning of module		<input type="text"/>
Module to be repeated for each PRF subproject implemented in village			
1	Subproject number (order the subprojects from 1, 2, 3...) Type of subproject _____		<input type="text"/>
	Enter subproject code		<input type="text"/>
2	Your village has been provided with (type of subproject). Does your household use/access this?	1 = Yes 2 = No	<input type="text"/>
3	Has (type of subproject) had an effect on your income? (also non-monetary income)	1 = Increased income 2 = Decreased income 3 = No effect 4 = Not applicable	<input type="text"/>
4	Has (type of subproject) affected your household cost of living?	1= Increased cost of living 2= Decreased cost of living 3 = No effect 4 = Not applicable	<input type="text"/>
5	Has (type of subproject) changed the time you spend on daily household tasks? Example: fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking	1= Increased time spent 2= Decreased time spent 3 = No effect 4 = Not applicable	<input type="text"/>
6	Do you operate a business on a regular basis? Not including sales of own grown crops	1 = Yes 2 = No Enter type of business If "No" go to end	<input type="text"/>
7	Has (type of subproject) affected your business operations?	1 = Yes 2 = No 3 = Not applicable If 2 or 3, then go to end	<input type="text"/>
8	How has the (type of subproject) affected your business	A = Costs B = Access to goods C = Number of customers D = Sales 1 if higher, 2 if lower, 3 if no change	A <input type="text"/> B <input type="text"/> C <input type="text"/> D <input type="text"/>
Repeat module for each subproject implemented in village			
When all subprojects has been covered, go to V. Social Empowerment			
	Time at end of module		<input type="text"/>

V. Social Empowerment			
No.	Question	Alternative Answer	Answer code
	Time at beginning of module		<input type="text"/>
1	If you want to sell assets that you own, do you ask other persons before you sell them? Use firewood for KIP 30 000 as example	A = <i>Decide by myself</i> B = <i>Ask husband</i> C = <i>Ask other family member</i> D = <i>Other person, specify</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>
2	If you have collected savings, do you ask other persons before you use the savings? Use KIP 50 000 for the example	A = <i>Decide by myself</i> B = <i>Ask husband</i> C = <i>Ask other family member</i> D = <i>Other person, specify</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Lets talk about health. Is there any nurse, clinic, health center or dispensary in the village?	1 = Yes 2 = No	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Have you had any health problem during the past 12 months?	1 = Yes 2 = No If "No", go to 8	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Did you seek help for your health problem?	1 = Yes 2 = No If "Yes", go to 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Why did you not seek help?	A = <i>Not serious enough/ wanted to wait</i> B = <i>Difficult to get there</i> C = <i>Too expensive</i> D = <i>Not good quality</i> E = <i>No cure possible</i> F = <i>Other, specify</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>
7	Who made the decision to seek or not to seek help?	A = <i>Myself</i> B = <i>Spouse</i> C = <i>Other family member</i> D = <i>Non family member</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/>

8	<p>Type of PRF health subproject in village _____</p> <p>Enter code of PRF health subproject in village <input type="text"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">If no health subproject in village, Go to 11</p>																		
9	<p>There has been a (type of health subproject) in your village Have you ever used this?</p>	<p>1 = Yes 2 = No</p>	<input type="text"/>																
10	<p>How has (health subproject) changed your ability to get help when you have health problems?</p>	<p>1 = Easier to get help 2 = More difficult to get help 3 = No difference</p>	<input type="text"/>																
11	<p>Lets talk about schooling. Is there any elementary school in the village?</p>	<p>1 = Yes 2 = No</p>	<input type="text"/>																
12	<p>Did you attend school as a child?</p>	<p>1 = Yes 2 = No If No, go to 14</p>	<input type="text"/>																
13	<p>What was the highest level you completed?</p>	<table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Level</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Class</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 = Lower primary</td> <td>1-3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 = Upper primary</td> <td>4-5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 = Lower secondary</td> <td>6-8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 = Upper secondary</td> <td>9-12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 = Vocational training</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 = University/institute</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Go to 15</p>	Level	Class	1 = Lower primary	1-3	2 = Upper primary	4-5	3 = Lower secondary	6-8	4 = Upper secondary	9-12	5 = Vocational training		6 = University/institute		<input type="text"/>		
Level	Class																		
1 = Lower primary	1-3																		
2 = Upper primary	4-5																		
3 = Lower secondary	6-8																		
4 = Upper secondary	9-12																		
5 = Vocational training																			
6 = University/institute																			
14	<p>Why did you not attend school?</p>	<p>A = Too expensive B = No interest C = Need to work D = School too far away E = No teachers/supplies F = Illness G = Language H = Other specify</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Mark all relevant alternatives</p>	<table border="0"> <tr><td>A</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>B</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>C</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>D</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>F</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>G</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> <tr><td>H</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr> </table>	A	<input type="checkbox"/>	B	<input type="checkbox"/>	C	<input type="checkbox"/>	D	<input type="checkbox"/>	E	<input type="checkbox"/>	F	<input type="checkbox"/>	G	<input type="checkbox"/>	H	<input type="checkbox"/>
A	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
B	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
C	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
D	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
E	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
F	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
G	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
H	<input type="checkbox"/>																		

15	Who made the decision for you to attend or not attend school?	<i>A = Father</i> <i>B = Mother</i> <i>C = By myself</i> <i>D = Other family member</i> <i>E = Non family member</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/>
16	Number of children between age 6-14 in household?	<i>Number of children 6-14</i> If "0" go to end	<input type="text"/>
17	Number of children in the household age 6-14 that attend school?	<i>Number of children 6-14 that attend school</i> If all children go to school, go to Question 19	<input type="text"/>
18	Why did the child/children not attend school?	<i>A = Too expensive</i> <i>B = No interest</i> <i>C = Need to work</i> <i>D = School too far away</i> <i>E = No teachers/supplies</i> <i>F = Illness</i> <i>G = Language difficulties</i> <i>H = Other specify</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G <input type="checkbox"/> H <input type="checkbox"/>
19	Who made the decision to send or not to send the children to school?	<i>A = Myself</i> <i>B = Spouse</i> <i>C = Other family member</i> <i>D = The child</i> <i>E = Non family member</i> <i>F = Other specify</i> Mark all relevant alternatives	A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>
20	Type of PRF education subproject in village _____		
	Enter code of PRF education subproject in village		<input type="text"/>
If no education subproject in village, Go to end.			
21	How has (education subproject) made it easier for children in the village to go to school?	<i>1 = Easier to go to school</i> <i>2 = More difficult to go to school</i> <i>3 = No difference</i>	<input type="text"/>
Thank the respondent for participating in survey.			
Time at end of module			<input type="text"/>
Also note time of completion on cover page			
Fill in the survey assessment			

VI. Survey Assessment				
No.	Question	Alternative Answer	Answer Code	Answer Code
To be filled in by the field researcher immediately after the interview				
1	List all questions that the respondent answered with difficulty or were unable to answer. Indicate the type of difficulty A = Unclear wording of question B = Language difficulty due to respondent not fluent in Lao C = Respondent lack information/ respondent don't know D = Respondent unwilling to reveal information/sensitive question E = Other, specify in "Difficulty" column	Module	Question no.	Difficulty
		<i>I. Respondent profile</i>	.....	.....
		<i>II. Participation in PRF</i>	.....	.....
		<i>III. Political Empowerment</i>	.....	.....
		<i>IV. Economic Empowerment</i>	.....	.....
		<i>V. Social Empowerment</i>	.....	.....
2	What is your overall judgement of the reliability of the responses?	1 = Very reliable 2 = Somewhat reliable 3 = Somewhat unreliable 4 = Unreliable If 3 or 4, please provide reason		<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Please provide any other suggestions for improving the questionnaire	..... ..... ..... ..... .....	

Subproject Codes				
No.	Subproject Type	Items Eligible		
	<i>Please inform us about all projects implemented in village since the village started participating in the Poverty Reduction Fund</i>		Number of sub-projects implemented	
A. Community Infrastructure				
1	Access	A = Small bridge B = Footpath C = Track D = Culvert E = Ramp F = Pier G = Road repairs and upgrading H = Other, specify	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Community electrical supply	A = Mini-hydro generator B = Wiring C = Line extension D = Other, specify	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Primary health care facilities	A = Health centers building and furniture B = Supplies and medicines C = Allowances for contracted nurse or midwife D = Village medicine kit E = Training/scholarships F = Medical equipment G = Other, specify	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Domestic water systems	A = Well B = Gravity water supply C = Latrines D = Other, specify	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

5	Education	<p>A = School and nursery building B = Allowance for contracted teacher C = Supplies, equipment or furniture D = Training and scholarships E = Textbooks F = Musical instruments G = Other, specify </p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6	Agricultural infrastructure	<p>A = Weirs B = Ponds C = Canals D = Bunds E = Gates F = Spillways G = Other, specify </p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
7	Markets, community halls	<p>A = Buildings B = Drainage C = Wells D = Furnishings E = Other, specify </p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
B. Training Programs			
8	Training programs	<p>Specify type of training program </p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Annex 3. The Virtues of Random Sampling

Random sampling provides an efficient means to collect data from a relatively small number of people or households and then to generalize the results from a sample to an entire population. To produce a sample that is truly random, every member of the population must have an equal probability of being included in the sample, regardless of the potential challenges associated with that sample. Simple random sampling means that respondents in a survey cannot be selected merely because they are conveniently located, because they have volunteered to participate, or because they are friendly with the data collectors. A population need not be all Laotians or all people in a province. A population is simply all the “units” of interest. Units can be people, households, villages, rice paddies, school children, etc. For PRF’s purposes, a population can be all females in PRF villages over the age of 15 or all villagers who have accessed health services in the past year.

In deciding the size of a random sample, there are two key considerations. The first involves confidence levels, which indicate how confident one should be with the results of a random sample. A 90 percent level is often appropriate, but a typical confidence level is 95 percent. This confidence level indicates that if data were collected from twenty independent samples from the population, similar results would be obtained nineteen of twenty times. Likewise, a confidence level of 99 percent means that similar results would be obtained 99 times from 100 independent samples. The higher the confidence level desired, the larger the required sample size.

The second consideration involves sampling error. Random samples produce estimates of the characteristics of a population, so random samples reflect some amount of “error.” As an illustration, a survey using a random sample might find that 63 percent of women have had an illness requiring medical attention within the past year. The sampling error might be plus or minus (\pm) 3 percent, which would mean that the actual values might be as low as 60 percent but as high 66 percent. For PRF’s purposes, a sampling error of ± 5 percent is sufficient. The smaller the margin of error desired, the larger the required sample size.

Confidence levels and margins of error are commonly reported together. In the example just discussed, a report might indicate that 63 percent of Lao women in PRF’s villages have required medical attention in the

past year with a 95 percent confidence level that the actual values were at least 60 percent but less than 66 percent.

To determine the appropriate sample size, it is necessary to select a desired or acceptable confidence level and sampling error. There are several online tools that can be used to calculate sample sizes, and one of the easiest to use can be found at <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>. Using this sample-size calculator produces the sample sizes shown in Table A-1. As the sample sizes suggest, the cost of achieving low margins of error and high confidence levels is often prohibitively high and rarely worth the expense, especially when high levels of precision are unnecessary. For many of its purposes, PRF could reasonably and justifiably choose a margin of error of ± 5 percent and a confidence level as low as 90 percent when sampling villagers, households, and even villages. Conversely, there is no need or justification for PRF to use a margin of error of ± 1 percent or a confidence level above 95 percent.

It is important to remember, however, that these suggestions are based on an assumption of high responses rates among anticipated respondents. Likewise, sample sizes should be increased if the PRF anticipates that it will disaggregate the data in several ways, such as by gender, Lao-Tai ethnicity versus minority ethnicity, or geographic location. To illustrate, consider a sample of 1,066 villagers divided equally between males and females. For the entire sample, the margin of error would be ± 3 percent with a 95 percent confidence level, as shown in Table A-1. For the 533 females, the margin of error would increase to approximately 5.6 percent and the confidence

TABLE A-1 Sample sizes for large populations

Margin of Error	Confidence Level		
	90%	95%	99%
± 5	271	384	663
± 3	751	1,066	1,838
± 1	6,696	9,466	16,181

Note: Assumes a 100 percent response rate and a population size of 660,000, the approximate total population in PRF’s villages in 2009–2010.

level would decrease—because the subsample of females is much smaller than the overall sample.

There may be instances in which other considerations, including cost, are important, and alternative methods of sampling are possible or desirable, such as cluster and stratified sampling. There are many online sources of information about sampling procedures, including the “Research Methods Knowledge Base,” at [http://www.](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php)

[socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php](http://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~census/sample.pdf) and at <http://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~census/sample.pdf>. Iarossi (2006) also provides a useful and comprehensive introduction to sampling and the management of surveys. Considerable expertise with sampling and data collection also can be found within the Ministry of Planning and Investment’s Department of Statistics, which is responsible for conducting the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Surveys.

Annex 4. Community Participation at Various Stages of KDP (data collection form)

Name of FK:

Date:

Kecamatan:

District:

Province:

Activity	Date(s) of Activity	No. of Persons Participating in Activity				Quality of Participation (circle one)	General Comments
		Total	Male	Female	Poor		
UDKP I (First Village Development Unit)						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
MUSBANGDES I (First Village Discussion Forum for Development)						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
SOCIALIZATION DUSUN/DESA (sub-village/village)						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
MUSBANGDES II KHUSUS (Second Women Specific Discussion Forum on Village Development)						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
MUSBANGDES II (Second Village Discussion Forum for Development)						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
UDKP II (Second Village Development Unit)						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
MUSBANGDES III (Third Village Discussion Forum for Development)						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
PROJECT MAINTENANCE						Very Active Active Fair Poor	
NO. PERSONS ON O&M COMMITTEE						Very Active Active Fair Poor	

Instructions:

This form is to be completed by the *Kecamatan Facilitators (FKs) each month*. The form reports upon community participation throughout KDP's project cycle. Please fill out this form as completely as possible.

1. Write your name, date, and names of the kecamatan, district and province.

2. Date(s) of Activity

Fill in the date of each activity. If the activities occurred over several dates, write down the range of dates, i.e., 4 – 20 June, 2000.

3. No. of persons participating in Activity

From the attendance lists, write down the number of persons attending each activity, how many male, female, and poor.

4. Quality of Participation

Circle one of the following on the table to describe the quality of participation for each activity.

■ **Very active**

- All or the vast majority of villagers (over 70%) were involved in the activity.
- Everyone felt free to speak up and play an active role.
- Women and poor groups participated in the activity.

■ **Active**

- Over half (51-70%) of the villagers were involved in the activity.
- Most members participated actively and felt free to speak up and play an active role.
- Villagers asked questions during the activity and showed interest.

■ **Fair**

- Participation was still limited to some or the minority of villagers.
- The elite and some community members were involved.
- Only a few members felt free to speak up and play an active role.
- There was very limited involvement of women and poor groups.

■ **Poor**

- Participation was limited to one or two influential persons or the village elite.
- No members felt free to speak up and play an active role.
- There was hardly any involvement of women and poor.

5. General Comments

Please include any general or overall comments about each activity.



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