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Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF 3)

# Gender Equality and Vulnerable People

## In Rural Development and Poverty Reduction



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## Message from the PRF Executive Director

The Poverty Reduction Fund operation (PRF) is focusing on empowering rural communities. This is achieved by supporting community people to take lead in developing their plan and identify priorities based on their needs, including implementing the village development activities by themselves, in parallel with promoting Gender Equality and Vulnerable People Inclusion (GEVPI) in PRF targeted village often located in remote areas.

In order to integrate GEVPI into each steps of PRF implementation, appropriate method is applied across each stages such as planning development, implementation, operation and maintenance. PRF also apply the vulnerable people inclusion and gender equality principles into the livelihoods activities through the self-help group (SHG) initiative that strongly encourages women participation. Moreover, as important part of the PRF, the project strictly apply social and environmental safeguard measures to avoid negative impacts that can potentially be created by the PRF supported sub-projects during implementation. These safeguards also ensure that the rights and interest of rural women, ethnic, poorer and vulnerable group are considered and applied.

To increase awareness on GEVPI mainstreaming into our development work, the PRF Project Management Team at the central level has compiled good practices and real experiences from the field that are summarized in this booklet. Lastly, we hope that the booklet will provide fundamental information and data as guidance for implementation of rural development and poverty reduction programs. Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,  
Executive Director of PRF



**ບຸນກວ້າງ ສຸວັນນະພັນ**

## **Women and Men equal development is a key PRF focus**



*Figure 1*

**Female and male Kum Ban facilitators are holding certificates after attending the training workshop on “*Deepen Community Driven Development*” At Vientiane capital , during 13-16 May 2014. The workshop was conducted by Mr. Gamini Batuwitige, World Bank consultant in Lao PDR.**

Participatory development planning at village and Kum Ban level is considered as one of the utmost step for sustainable community development, due to it is a step where voices are given to all villagers taking part in planning process especially women, ethnic people, poorer and vulnerable people and where their desire for a better life and future for their family and the community well-being is identified and expressed.

In the past, Lao women in rural communities are not confident to speak in public and therefore to participate in any decision making process. As a consequence, men usually decide on their behalf. To this end, PRF is empowering Kum Ban Facilitator to promote community women to have equal access and participation in the decision making process so that they are able to develop equal interest on the community development activities in quantitative or qualitative matter. Strengthening Kum Ban Facilitator is highlighted composition of PRF, they are made of three persons (which two persons are women). Their main task is: to facilitate and assist their fellow villagers within their Kum Ban to fully participate in the community development initiatives on a participatory manner and to implement their activities with minimum external support.

The Kum Ban facilitators (KBF) are selected by the community through a secret voting system and following certain criteria of eligibility to be candidate – speaking ethnic language and community trust, etc. Since 2012 - 2017, to build the capacity of Kum ban facilitators, PRF organizes a series of trainings covered different topics and issues such as participatory village and Kum Ban development planning, social and environment safeguards, facilitating skills in meeting organization and sub-project monitoring, supporting Village Implementation Team (VIT) as well as promoting feedback and resolution mechanism, There are currently more than 3,500 Kum Ban facilitators that are participating to these capacity building trainings (44% are women).



## **PRF promotes participation of women, ethnic and vulnerable people in their development activities**



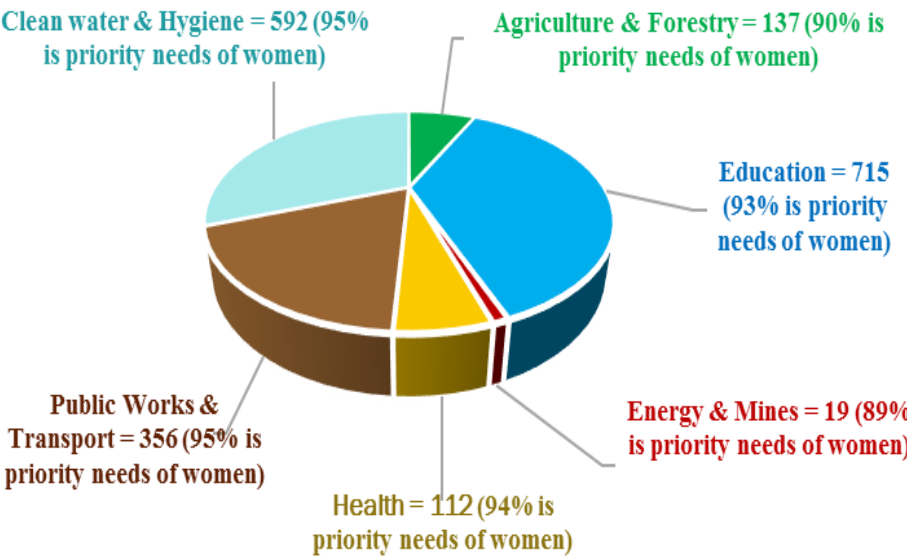
*Figure 2*

**Ethnic women are drawing a social and resources map during village participatory development planning session.**

**At PRF's target village in Xiengkhor district,  
Houaphan province, 2012**

The Kum ban Facilitator and PRF district staff provide support and facilitation for the village and Kum Ban development planning process. They also train and assist the village representatives to present the village and Kum Ban priorities and related needs to develop the community plan with full participation from the women and the poorest people. The needs identified and selected by the women are considered as the upmost village priorities, this is the reason why in the village development plan at least three of the top five priorities has to come from the women group list.

Through this process, the achievement of community women participated and benefit form village priority selection is higher that indicator. During 2012-2016, PRF supported 1,931 sub-projects of village priorities and 93% of those selected village priorities supported by the PRF come from the participation of women groups. The figure below shows the most important community priorities by sector during the PRF II, cycle IX to Cycle XIII, total 1,931 sub-project that supported by PRF and divide the percentage of women from the priorities selection of women group.



Data source: M&E Division, March 2017



## **Empower women in overseeing and monitoring development activities in their community**



*Figure 3*

**Ms. Peang-In , Kum Ban facilitator in Kum Ban Pongsa  
Monitoring construction of the small weir  
at Ban Pongna, Kum Ban Pongsa,  
Namo district, Oudomxay province, in 2015**

Between 2012-2016, total number of beneficiaries supported subproject reached 970,431 people (of those 479,177 people are female, 701,449 people are ethnics) in total 1,951 villages that PRF supported 1,931 sub-projects. This indicates that PRF has so far responded to a great number of ethnic people and vulnerable group needs of ethnic, Poorer and vulnerable people in remote areas.

For monitoring the implementation of sub-projects in the community Level, the female Kum ban Facilitators play a critical role in the development of their communities. Out of a total of three Kum ban facilitator per Kum ban, two Kum Ban facilitators are female who can speak community ethnic languages. They have better knowledge and understanding about the village context and their community than PRF staff. As per Kum Ban facilitators responsibilities, community people can approach them to seek for support regarding sub-project implementation issues. The Kum Ban facilitator responsibilities are described below:

- 1) Liaise with village implementation team to undertake monitoring support for sub-project implementation in terms of finance management, accounting, procurement and infrastructure construction and supervision;
- 2) Conduct training to enhance knowledge and capacity for community people, create favourable condition for women to participate during the decision making process;
- 3) Strengthen community capacity through active participation and engagement in PRF's investment activities during the sub-project cycle (Female participation in village development planning is expected to reach 50% of all participants);
- 4) Provide support and counselling services for women to increase their confidence and empowerment in the village and Kum Ban development plan included another process of sub-project implementation;
- 5) Encourage community ownership in social audit at village level to ensure transparency and accountability during sub-project implementation;
- 6) Promote feedback and resolution mechanism, ensure that women are engage in the community feedback and resolution process during the sub-project implementation.

*Data source: M&E Division, March 2017*

**Social and Environmental safeguards are a key component for women development, poorer, ethnic and vulnerable people**



*Figure 4*

**Ms. Seuthnilan , PRF Community Development Officer in Huameuang district, Huaphanh province, is moderating group discussions represented by Kum ban facilitators and village mediation committee in a training on social and environment safeguards and, village social audit, included Feedback and Resolution Mechanism. At Huameuang district, on 7 July 2016.**

In order to carry out mitigating measures against potential social and environmental impacts that may affect women, poorer and vulnerable people, PRF is committed to deploy safeguards measures to mitigate social and environmental impacts. A safeguard training manual has been developed for this purpose simultaneously.

Throughout the sub-project implementation cycle, PRF provided TOT on the social and environmental safeguards for field staffs; and also provided this training for facilitate and trained more than 600 Kum ban Facilitator (including more than 330 are women). After being trained, the Kum ban Facilitators became trainers for the Village Mediation Committee (VMC) and the Village Implementation Team (VIT). Each year, total 14 people/village from approximately 350-400 target villages of PRF are invited to participate in the social and environmental safeguards training. The purpose is to enhance skills of VMC and VIT in implementing and monitoring social and environmental activities; village social audit to ensure the transparency and accountability, especially the issue that happen during sub-project implementation.

The mitigation measure on potential social and environment impact to community has been implemented successfully over the past five years (PRF phase II) in 10 target provinces, covering 42 districts, 278 Kum Ban (village cluster), 1,951 villages that implemented 1,931 sub-projects, have only 156 sub-projects (8% of total sub-projects supported) have had a social impact especially community land use that needed for sub-project construction, count for less than 5% of the total holding lands of the households impacted and small impact of environment on land slice, block fish way, cutting the trees from grid line and sedimentation in weir and irrigation.

**Through implementation of PRF activities, women's role and abilities in development process had enhanced**

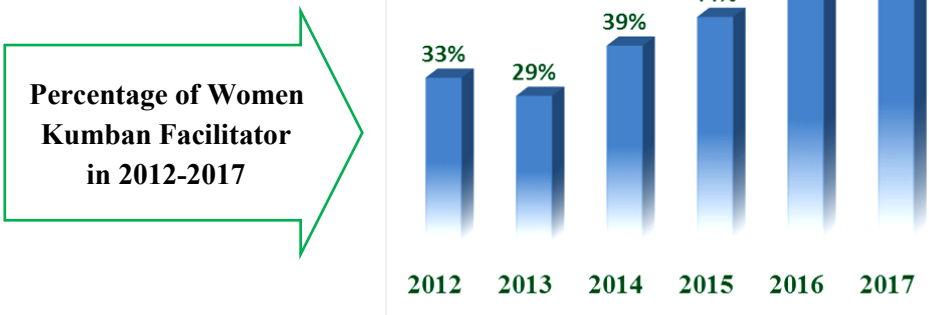


*Figure 5*

**Ms. On, Pako ethnic, KBF facilitator in Kum Ban Danvilay is explaining to households representatives how to make a participatory village development plan meeting. At Ban Palor, Kum Ban Danvilay, Nong district, Savannakhet province, 2015.**

PRF staff train selected community members to become Kum Ban facilitators (KBF) or female community developer to become a trainer and assist the communities in their Kum Ban to do the village and Kum Ban development planning, survey-design, implementation, operation and maintenance and etc. Ms. On, she is a KBF in Kum Ban Danvilay, for more than five years, that she has been coordinating with PRF district staffs to assist the communities in her Kum Ban to do the procurement, give an advices and implementation, supervision, operation and maintenance sub-projects of their communities. She also acts as translator in ethnic language, mobilizes poor and ethnic groups representatives to ensure their full participations.

In order to promote gender equality, PRF enhanced and developed the ability of community's representative or KBF and promoted community women to be a KBF. As the figure bellow shows percentage of female facilitators has been continuously increased since 2012 till the first year of PRF III in 2017.



To promote the work of female community developer, PRF closely monitor and evaluate their performance following a grading system separated into three levels as described bellow:

- **Satisfactory:** Refers to their ability to organize a meeting and training at village level by themselves, coordinating well between village within Kum Ban.
- **Moderately:** Refers to their ability to organize meeting and training at village level for some times;
- **Unsatisfactory:** Refers to their inability not be able to organize a meeting and the need for the PRF staff to continue to support them.



## **Promote livelihood linkage nutrition of mother and child through self-help group (SHG)**



*Figure 7*

**Mr. Satoshi Ishihara, WB Task Team Leader for PRF II,  
visited the member of a Village Nutrition Center  
At Ban Wat, Xone district, Huaphanh province,  
23 July 2015.**

The objective of Livelihood linked Nutrition activities is to pilot an innovative livelihood focused community driven development program enabling beneficiaries of women in rural areas, Improve their livelihoods and health well-being through group based activities. The community capacity is strengthened through the Self-Help Group (SHG). Since 2012 till 2017, SHG have been established 915 SHGs in 165 villages with a total of 9,863 group members, of whom 8,645 are female members (or 88% of the total number of SHG members). In these total villages also promote 23 Village Nutrition Center and improved nutrition of family through cooking demonstration and learned using local products, awareness raising on hygienic practices, three cleanness model, child growth index, etc.

In each village there is a SHG committee made of people who assist in monitoring the SHG activities together with the young graduates who play the role of PRF coordinators, 41% of all the PRF coordinators are women. Throughout their work they stayed at the village to assisting communities, at the same time they also have the opportunity to gain knowledge and experiences that will help them for their career opportunity.

In order to promote the livelihoods linked nutrition of SHG, In 2012 till 2017, they has been saving total 1.6 billion kip for help each other of their group. And PRF has allocated a fund equivalent total 9.8 billion kip to support the income generating activities of SHG that selected by group's members namely: poultry raising (chicken, ducks), Pig, goat and fish raising, mushroom growing, home vegetables garden, banana plantation, handicraft, weaving, cooking, food processing and so on.

Livelihood activities have been implementing sine 2012 till of 2017, SHG members could make income total worth 11.5 billion Kip. Incomes are mostly coming from poultry raising, weaving and goat raising respectively. The results of evaluation for household level showed that, the livelihood of households' members have improved, nutrition intake and living behaviours had changed, and household members are increasingly educated.

*Data source: LN Unit, May 2017*

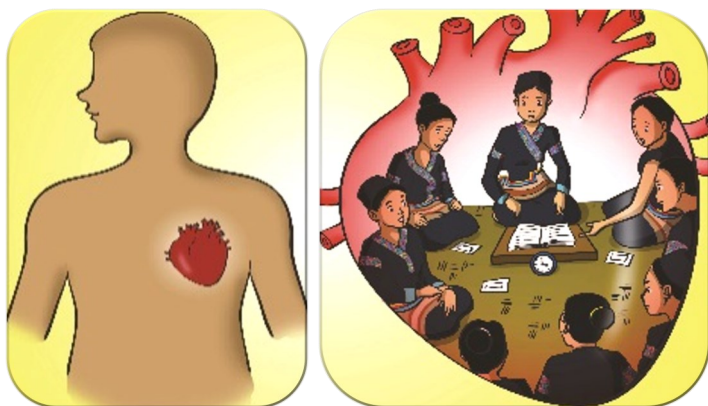
**Build a capacity of communities  
through regular participation in the  
meeting of self-help group members**



*Figure 8*

**Young graduates, health workers of Sepon district  
jointly organize a SHG meeting, at La-Ang village,  
Sepon district, Savannakhet province, 2015.**

To promote the opportunity in participation and building capacity of women. Therefore, the Livelihood linked Nutrition activities, each Self Help Group (SHG) are having a regular meeting in around 2 times/month. Each time of meeting was conducted for 2-3 hours. The purpose of meeting is to raise the issue and sharing lessons learnt related to their living conditions of the household's members such as: education of children, nutrition intake, health, production and etc. After that, the members was through up to improve their living condition in their households. At the end of the meeting the SHG members simultaneously save money and some of them also borrow money for doing income-generating activities of their household according to the potential of the members. Having regular meeting of SHG members is much critical as the heart of man as shown in the picture below.



***“A man has living life because of heart beats normally, this is similar notion of SHG, if without regular meeting of the SHG function, the group will have no capacity and finally disappear”.***

The meeting of SHG is a small meeting, each time has participated only 8-12 persons. Therefore, all SHG members has a opportunity to give a feedback or increases of participation that strengthen them in the process. There is also a rotation of meetings in each household's members, if organized in the house those house owner will be the chair of the meeting. Continued practice like this will increase the capacity of the members as well.



## **Encourage women's participation in rural road operation and maintenance**



*Figure 9*

**Women members of road maintenance group who  
completed on the job training on rural road maintenance  
techniques, at Ban Paphai, Viengkham district,  
Luangprabang province.  
June 2017.**

To ensure the sustainability of rural roads related to the poverty reduction and promotion of women in rural remote areas to have an employment and income to improve life living of their families. Therefore, by the year 2017 PRF has started a pilot of Road Maintenance Group (RMG) in 4 villages, Viengkham district, Luangprabang province and 9 villages in Sepond district, Savannakhet province.

This pilot project covers rural roads for total 49 kilometres, with a total of 58 people RMG members (all member are women). The achievements and lessons learned from this pilot will be used and develop to be RMG model of the Public Work and Transportation, but will be first scaled up to the other PRF 3 target districts.

The RGM member selection had been implemented through the process of election in the village participation meeting to elect the member that they are come from the poorest households. The number of RMG depends on the length of the road in average one person per kilometre. The main role of the RMG is:

- Ensure routine maintenance activities is done regularly;
- Avoid major damage that may happen to the road that responsibility by the RMG.

The group members will get labour wages on rural road maintenance in average 50,000 kip/day or around 250,000kip — 300,00kip/month depend on the working day for road maintenance by average 5-6 days/month. The allocated budget for the RMG will be transferred into the private account of the member or transferred into the village account, it is depend on the availability of the members. After the Public Work and Transportation office come to inspect the quality of the road maintenance work, the payment will be approved and pay to the RMG members on a monthly basis.





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