

GENDER & VULNERABLE GROUPS OFFICER

Draft Terms of Reference

Project Name: The Poverty Reduction Fund

Number of positions: 1

Position: **Gender & Vulnerable Groups Officer (National position)**

Reporting to: Head of Community Development Division

General Responsibility: Manage the overall implementation and monitoring of the PRF's Gender Action Plan, including gender mainstreaming of the PRF organisation, its guiding documents and implementation of activities throughout the project cycle, in order to ensure that its objectives are met and the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the project activities

Duty Station: PRF national office in Vientiane with regular visits to target provinces and districts. The Gender & Vulnerable Groups Specialist is expected to spend 2/3 of his/her time in the field.

Duration: A one-year contract renewable subject to annual performance review with an initial probation period of 3-6 months

BACKGROUND

The Poverty Reduction Fund Project was legally established by Decree from the Prime Minister of Lao PDR (No. 073/PM) on 31 May 2002, initially supported by the World Bank in the form of a low-interest credit, repayable over a forty-year term. The Prime Ministerial Decree allows the PRF to also receive and use funds from other sources.

Phase I (2003-2008), PRF received soft loan of total USD 19.3 million from the World Bank to implement number of participatory rural development projects in 1,984 villages, 21 districts within 7 provinces. PRF particularly invested into such development projects as construction of 254 secondary schools, 50 small bridges, 64 dispensaries, 1,012 community water supply, 199 irrigations, and 2,420 kilometer long of roads.

Transitional period (2008-2011), PRF further gained a grant aid of total USD 20 million from international organizations, including USD 15 million from the World Bank and USD 5 million from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to implement 1,266 sub-projects associated with 4 sectors - healthcare, education, agriculture and public work. In 2010, PRF gained additional financial support of total USD 7.92 million from the Lao Uplands Food Security Improvement Project (LUFSSIP), which is a project financed by the three sources of aid assistance (totally USD 14.60 million)

PRF Phase II, with the overall project cost of US\$57 million, was approved in 2011 would provide assistance to approximately 275 rural kum bans in 38 districts and 10 provinces. The Project would

continue to provide support to villages in six of the seven existing PRF I target provinces (Savannakhet, Saravanh, Houaphanh, Luang Namtha, Sekong and Xiengkhouang). In addition, the Government has requested that the Project expands to villages in an additional four provinces (Phongsaly, Oudomxay, Luangphabang, and Attapeu).

Specifically, **the project development objective** is to improve the access to and the utilization of basic infrastructure and services for the project's targeted poor communities in a sustainable manner through inclusive community and local development processes.

PRF's approach to empowerment of the poor recognizes the central importance of women and gender relations as well as and more generally inclusion and strengthening of vulnerable groups for the success of the project. The PRF has further strengthened its *gender strategy* in the second phase with the overarching goal to empower women to actively participate in the PRF Program Implementation as well as overall socioeconomic development in their communities. It will mainstream gender into the PRF organization, and into all project interventions and investments, by ensuring gender balance and promoting women's empowerment in local decision-making. Given that gender disparities are particularly pronounced within non-Lao speaking ethnic groups, PRF II will place particular emphasis on addressing the needs, and listening to the voices of these women, as well as the other vulnerable groups in the Kum ban covered by the project.

A Gender Mainstreaming Framework and Action Plan for the PRF II have been developed as a means to engender the project implementation by strategically involving women and incorporating their needs and demands in every component of the project (see Annex 1). The Poverty Reduction Fund is now looking for a candidate for the position of a *Gender & Vulnerable Groups Officer* to ensure smooth implementation of the Project's Gender Action Plan and to strengthen its focus on other vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, persons with disability, youth, etc.

MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE POSITION

The main objective of the position is to manage and coordinate the overall implementation and monitoring of the Project's Gender Mainstreaming Framework and the corresponding Action Plan and other vulnerable groups inclusion in project activities in order to ensure that:

- Gender is mainstreamed throughout the PRF organization, and is highlighted in key guiding HRD documents and procedures;
- Special attention will continue being paid to address women's needs in the prioritization of investments, as well as throughout the project cycle;
- Knowledge with regards to gender and vulnerable groups issues is generated and shared;
- Capacity of PRF staff, and Government counterparts is enhanced;
- Gender and vulnerable groups-differentiated data is collected and evaluated; and
- Specific needs of other vulnerable groups such minorities, persons with disability, youth, are considered and addressed in the Project.

SPECIFIC TASKS

While working in close cooperation with the Monitoring & Evaluation and Engineering divisions of the project and under direct supervision of the Head of Community Development Division, the Gender and Vulnerable Groups Officer shall perform the main following tasks:

A. Management and Oversight

- Further develop, oversee and ensure the implementation and monitoring of the Gender Action Plan at all levels;
- Work closely with a recruited short-term consultant to carry out a gender assessment of the PRF organisation and the project cycle, drawing on findings from the ethnographic special study;
- Ensure that gender and vulnerable groups dimensions are integrated throughout the PRF organization, project cycle, capacity building activities, IEC materials, organization and structure, and other aspects of program implementation, and reflected accordingly in the PRF Operations Manual;
- Maintain regular communication on gender issues and related tasks with Provincial Coordinators, the Community Development Officers at the Province and district levels, and Kum ban facilitators, and make regular visits to target provinces, districts, Kumbans and villages;
- Ensure that women and men's particular needs are addressed equally in Disaster Risk Management process, and help specify how gender issues will be addressed in the Operations Manual Disaster Risk Management chapter;
- Coordinate and follow up on specific needs and issues related to other vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, persons with disability, youth, etc.

B. Capacity Building

- Based on the findings in the PRF organizational gender assessment, define gaps and design training and awareness activities in order to enhance equal representation and opportunities for women in the organization;
- Provide and/or organize training on gender issues, gender sensitivity and analysis to PRF project staff at national, provincial, and district level in partnership with relevant local research and training institutions and/or international experts; and ensure that PRF staff at all levels have been concretely trained about their specific roles, responsibilities and how to implement the Gender Action Plan;
- Build continuously gender awareness among the PRF staff and teams, as well as among PRF key partners such as line ministries and the NCRDPE;
- Develop a handbook for Kum ban Facilitators with practical guidance on how to implement the Gender Action Plan at the community level;
- Facilitate exposure visits to female community leaders in other Kum bans/districts;
- Collaborate regularly with relevant institutions, such as Lao Women's Union, to increase their understanding of the project context and enable them to provide support to women in target communities;
- Participate to the social study including gender dimensions of PRF, which will explore further structures beyond the community that affect men and women's access to and control of

resources, power of decision-making, and how these structures might be influenced by the project;

- Together with an international Gender / Human Resources Specialist, analyze further the roles, responsibilities, cultural constraints, stereotypes and relationships between males and females in the project.

C. Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting

- Monitor and conduct supervision of all gender and vulnerable groups related activities in each province, districts and Kum ban;
- Work in coordination with the IEC to ensure regular media release related to gender and vulnerable groups project activities;
- Ensure that the gender and vulnerable groups-specific data is regularly collected and analyzed;
- Analyze on continuous basis strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and suggest improvements to ensure gender equity and other vulnerable groups inclusion in project implementation;
- Submit on monthly basis a brief report to the PMT (M&E Division) with all relevant information, including the latest gender-differentiated data; and
- Perform other tasks as may be assigned by the Head of the CD Division and according to project's needs.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCES

- A university degree in fields related to community development, social sciences, political sciences, law, or management / organizational development;
- At least 3years relevant working experience in the field of rural development in mountainous and remote areas, working directly with the communities and local authorities, with an emphasis on women and gender issues would be preferable;
- Experiences in project/program using participatory development tools, and community driven approaches;
- Experience in capacity building;
- Familiarity with government and foreign aid project operations would be an advantage;
- Experience in training of trainers;
- Good level of written and spoken English is essential; is essential;
- Comprehensive computer skills: in particular MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint and basic database management.
- Women and small ethnic group members are encouraged to apply.