

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
PEACE INDEPENDENCE DEMOCRACY UNITY PROSPERITY



THE POVERTY REDUCTION FUND

**TERM OF REFERENCE
CAPACITY BUILDING STUDY**

March 2013

I. Background

The Poverty Reduction Fund Project was legally established by Decree of the Prime Minister of the Lao PDR (No. 073/PM), dated 31 May 2002 and amended in September 2006 (222/PM), as an autonomous organization, overseen by an Administrative Board were sat Government and province representatives, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Standing Member of the Government, Chair of the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication.

The PRF was initially supported by the World Bank in form of a low-interest credit, repayable over a forty-year term. The consented credit amounts approximately US\$19.5 million for the period 2003-2008. The PRF was extended until 2011 through an additional financing grant from the World Bank (US\$15 million) and the Swiss Cooperation for Development (US\$6.2 million). The additional financing allowed the PRF to scaling up and enhance its development impact by refocusing activities on the poorest districts and enhancing the capacity building aspects for the government officials in participatory approaches.

Entering its second phase in 2012 under the Decree of the Prime Minister No.10/PM, dated January 12, 2012 on the operation of the PRF, PRF II aims to improve access to and utilization of basic infrastructure and services for the targeted poor communities in a sustainable manner through inclusive community and local development processes. PRF II fills a critical gap by financing investments in small-scale rural infrastructure that facilitates poor villagers' access to basic services and markets in relatively remote and inaccessible areas. The second phase of the project is supported by the Government of Lao PDR, the World Bank, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Australian Agency for International Development with the total investment amount of approximately US\$ 68 million.

The PRF II is designed around six core principles that provide the basis for program implementation: Simplicity, Community Participation and Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability, Wise Investment, Social Inclusion and Gender Equality and Siding with the Poor.

Specifically the program objectives are to:

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.

The Project aims to create stronger links between the local government and the aspirations of villagers with Program staff at district, province and national level coordinating and building linkages. A forum was created at district level where villagers and district authorities meet regularly to discuss each other priorities and plans and reach a compromise that will satisfy each party.

To contribute to the government's objective to better harmonize and coordinate ministries and other GoL organizations involved in poverty reduction and rural development and to ensure the long-term sustainability of PRF funded infrastructures, the PRF has designed a new capacity building component which has been implemented since the Cycle VI, fiscal year 2008-2009 PRF phase I.

The subcomponent intends to advocate for the use of participatory planning and to strengthen the capacity of line ministries to engage communities in the planning process. Its objective is also to exchange with local institutions and to receive their feedbacks on PRF work and approach in order to improve PRF processes, procedures and manuals. In addition, it also aims at enhancing the coordination between local institutions which will contribute to efficient and sustainable management of local development.

During the first 2-year phase of the project (Cycle IX to X, Fiscal year 2011-2012 and 2012-2013), the PRF supported more than 500 subprojects in 40 districts located in 10 provinces (Phongsaly, Oudomxai, Luang Prabang, Luang Namtha, Huaphanh, Xieng Khouang, Savannakhet, Saravanh, Sekong and Attapue) representing 273 koumban, more than 1,900 villages and a total population of more than 800,000 people.

The PRF II has been working in 40 districts located in 10 provinces.. More than 500 subprojects have been supported by PRF corresponding to a total direct investment of US\$ 17.8 million of two cycle (IX and X)

In order to continue to support Poverty Eradication and the objectives of the Millennium goals through the PRF, a number of independent external evaluations to measure the achievements of key elements of PRF II are planned.

II. Objective of the Capacity Building Study

The overall purpose of the study is to evaluate the PRF capacity building component and related activities conducted during the course of the PRF II in order to:

- empower communities and more specifically vulnerable groups (women, ethnic minorities and the poorest community members), in assessing and plan their own needs, discussing them with the district authorities, implementing and monitoring the construction of public infrastructure and ensure proper utilization and maintenance of the sub-projects infrastructure investments supported by the PRF II;
- contribute to the government's objective of better coordination among ministries and other organizations involved in poverty reduction and rural development and better service delivery to the communities;
- Capacity of the PRF staff to fulfil their responsibilities as capacity builder and facilitator to ensure the projects objectives are meet.

III. Tentative Schedule

The Capacity Building Study shall be carried out over a period of twelve weeks,

Table 1: Indicative Schedule (to be adapted by the firm and finalized with PRF management team during the first days of the consultancy).

	Duration	Time Frame (2013)	Location/Action
Activity 1 - Develop final work plan for assessment - Methods preparation: Sampling, Criteria, questionnaires development, etc. - Present the work-plan to PRF's PMT, Concerned Division/Person(s) and donors Field questionnaires testing and present the outcome to PRF and World Bank	2 weeks	First half of April	Vientiane office/Field Work
Activity 2 - Data collection in target sampling areas - Data entry and analysis,	10 weeks	Second half of April – end of June	Field/Vientiane
Activity 3 - Present a brief outcomes of field work to PRF - Writing first draft of report - Present the finding of this assessment to PRF and World Bank	2 weeks	First half of July	Vientiane Office
Activity 4 - Draft/submit the final report, executive summary of report in English and Lao. - Submit the datasets collected during the study to PRF	2 Weeks	Second half of July	Vientiane office

IV. Methodology

In order to achieve its objective, the assessment will be based on data collection and interview in a sample of 4 Provinces (2 in the North and 2 in the South), 8 districts (2 districts in each province) and 32 Kum ban (2 Kum ban in each District) supported by the project during the Cycle IX and the Cycle X. The selected samples shall be carried out using a representative sampling method, giving due attention to the geographical coverage of the PRF II and the different level of the capacity building activities.

The sampling methodology and questionnaire will be discussed and validated with PRF management and the World Bank during the initial stage of the consultancy.

V. Scope of the Work

The assessment will mainly focus on reviewing the implementation of the capacity building strategy and related plan at each level and for each group of stakeholders as well as the related capacity building methodology, approach and tools used by the PRF staff / consultants.

The proposed assessment will particularly focus on the following areas:

PRF capacity building strategy, plan, principles, approach and tools

- Pertinence of the Project Capacity Building Strategy;
- Effectiveness and efficiency of the Capacity Building Plan;
- Relevance of the project capacity building approach;
- Relevance and application quality of the project capacity building principles;
- Appropriateness of the different capacity building tools (format and contents) to the different needs and functions of the target audiences with a specific focus on the vulnerable groups (women and poorest community members)

Delivery of the Capacity Building plan and related activities

- Relevance, frequency and quality of the trainings and meetings delivered to the PRF staff (National, provincial and district level), Government staff at all levels and the communities (Kum ban facilitators, village / Kum ban team, village authorities, mass based organization and community members) in the following areas:
 - Training on PRF principles, processes and procedures, etc.;
 - Training on procurement
 - Training on financial management
 - Training on Sub-project implementation
 - Training on Sub-project operations and maintenance
 - Training on improved participation
 - Training on environmental and social safeguards
 - Training on Feed back and Resolution Mechanism
 - Study tour and field visit
 - Meetings organised at each sub-project cycle stages
- Level of awareness understanding of the PRF staff and project stakeholders towards the PRF objectives, process and procedures, approach, cycle, through the implementation of trainings, meetings, cross Kum ban visit, workshop, etc.
- Project stakeholders perception on the appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of the capacity building activities and associated approach and tools used at different level and for each different steps of the sub-project cycle.

Outcomes of the capacity building activities

- Level of community members awareness of and participation in the different stages of sub-project cycle;
- Change in capacity of the local communities to plan, implement, monitor and sustain their own sub-projects;
- Capacity of the project stakeholders to resolve conflicts through the Feedback and Resolution Mechanism
- Village / Kum ban plan facilitated by the PRF used by the Government or other Development actors;
- Use of the PRF participatory approach by the local authorities / concerned sectors to design, develop and implement other development activities;

- Improved capacity of the local authorities to assist and supervise the communities effectively and efficiently.

- Ability of the local institutions to better coordinate and harmonize the intervention of the different sector in the planning and implementation of the activities related to rural development and poverty alleviation
- PRF staff capacity to evaluate the outcomes of the capacity building activities and to review the capacity building plan, methodology, approach and tools accordingly;

Consultants should feel free to suggest other dimensions to be assessed in their proposal.

VI. Deliverables

A final report in English will provide an overall view of the accomplishments and challenges, as well as recommendations for improvement. After validation of the draft report in English during a meeting to be held with PRF Program Management team, the final report in English will be submitted together with an Executive Summary Report (5 pages maximum) in English and in Lao.

In addition, the consultants are also expected to prepare a presentation on the findings.

Datasets collected during the study should be made available to the PRF (with adequate safeguarding of interviewee confidentiality as appropriate.)

VII. Qualifications

The consulting firm will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- At least five years of experiences in the evaluation of capacity-building activities of local governments and civil society organizations under local government and/or Community-Driven Development (CDD) programs in Laos or in the region;
- Proven experience in establishing and managing a team of field researcher.

The consulting team will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

A Coordinator with the following experience and skills:

- An advanced degree in social science such as sociology, anthropology, human geography or socio-economic development and a minimum of 10 years experience in the field of the evaluation of community development projects, including participation, complaints handling

and capacity-building aspects;

- Experience in managing similar evaluation of community development projects is required;
- Fluent in speaking, reading and writing in English;
- Proven experience in establishing and managing a team of field researcher.

The field team researchers should include at least two Community Development specialists with the following experiences:

- An advanced degree in social science such as sociology, anthropology, human geography or socio-economic development;
- A minimum of 5 years experience in the field of the evaluation of community development projects, including participation, complaints handling and capacity-building aspects;
- Sound communication skills in dealing with local authorities/agencies/actors;
- Capability of working as a team;
- Familiar with Lao Government policies and local Government systems;
- Fluency in Lao is required. Fluency in other languages of ethnic groups in Laos is desirable;
- Working experiences in remote areas is essential.

VIII. Background documents

The following documents can be forwarded upon request sent by email to PRF's PMT: pmt@prflaos.org:

- PRF Manual of Operations
- Recent PRF semi-annual reports
- For more information visit: www.prflaos.org