

Integrated Rural Development in Poverty Regions of Laos (NU-IRDP)

Small Scale Infrastructure

1. Content and Goal

Infrastructure is one key element for improving and ensuring access to services, markets, schools etc. It is an essential contribution to reduce poverty in the poorest areas. However, infrastructure development does not yet reach the poorest regions in the Northern uplands.

Building additional small-scale access tracks, providing clean water supplies, and constructing or rehabilitating small irrigation systems, as well as small bridges therefore is the aim. Based on locally identified priorities a total number of 64 community schemes were supported in Houaphan, Luang Prabang and Phongsaly.

2. Approach, method, scale

During the Food Facility Action 2010/11 a total number of 36 small scale infrastructure schemes were pre-selected from district plans and proposals and then were agreed with the local communities and implemented by districts and villagers.

The purchase or the provision of locally available materials and the mobilisation of locally available skilled and villager's labour as well as the management of the budget were fully with the responsibility of the districts. Trainings on finance management and several on-the-job trainings were organized and conducted. Women were involved at all stages and their interest and benefits were systematically considered. A total of 1398 villagers were trained to maintain the new infrastructure (46% of the participants were women). 68.6% of projects have been implemented in villages with the highest poverty rates.

In 2012, an additional 26 small-scale rural infrastructure projects were funded by the BMZ, implemented and completed. These projects were selected on the basis of district development plans and tallied against village development priorities from the Village Development Plans.

3. Impacts

Most of the schemes sustainably provide improved road or track access for villagers to central market and service locations as well as clean drinking and irrigation water. Some schemes were damaged by severe weather during the rainy season. Rehabilitation and even maintenance after the investment by the project still seem to warrant improvement and more district and villagers' initiative as well as resources.

Trainings on management of expenditures and proper book-keeping and several technical on-the-job trainings strengthened the knowledge of the concerned district staff about finance management, accountability and reporting. The involvement of village women equally in the planning, organizing and maintaining of the infrastructure not only ensured that the built tracks and systems are beneficial for the *whole* community, but also provided new organizational and technical skills for use in similar projects in the future.