

Lao PDR Country Progress Presentation

Vientiane, November 2008

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Chairman of the SEACAP Steering Committee

Good Morning Excellencies and Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by thanking all of you for coming to this the Third SEACAP Practitioners Meeting here in Vientiane – Thank You!

I am very happy to meet again with the many friends and colleagues who are involved with the SEACAP program.

Rural poverty reduction is the central objective for the Government of the Lao PDR over the next 10 years. A key element in the strategy is to eliminate rural poverty is the cost effective improvement of the rural transport infrastructure. I wish to update you on the progress that we have been making since the last SPM, principally in three key areas:

i) Sustainable and appropriate technologies for local road surfacing and paving and for slope stability management.

The MPWT recognizes that the effective application of up-to date rural road research is necessary to meet the considerable technical and resource challenges posed in meeting Lao's rural road development objectives. The three on-going research projects are:

- **SEACAP 17, ADB/NEC Paving and Surfacing Trials:** Following the completion of the trials, a national Knowledge Exchange workshop was held about one year ago in Bokeo. One round of monitoring of the trials will be done at the end of this year.
- **SEACAP 31, Sida, Samphan Road Paving and Surfacing Trials:** This project will design appropriate paving designs at five critical locations along this mountainous road. The objective is to field test the new local roads standards and specifications and the Engineering Optimized Design (EOD) Manual.
- **SEACAP 21, Slope Stability:** This project successfully completed the field trials and provided input to the Transport Sector Project for the management of slope stability problems. It is now field testing the manuals and handbooks developed as well as integrating the knowledge base into the National University of Laos (NUoL) engineering curricula.

ii) Appropriate standards, specifications and guidelines for developing local roads.

High on the priorities of applied research identified by the MPWT's Department of Roads (DoR) is the need not only to identify suitable rural road pavement and earthwork solutions but to apply them within an effective and appropriate framework of standards and specifications that is adopted for all Low Volume Rural Road (LVRR) Projects in Lao. This latter point is of particular significance given the range of international and regional organisation contributing to the development of rural roads in Lao- many of whom have their own ideas on designs, standard's and specifications.

- **SEACAP 3, LVRR Standards, Specifications and Guidelines:** The standards and specifications are now completed. The project is elaborating a manual for their application through the EOD approach.

iii) International and domestic knowledge, experience and information exchanges.

SEACAP has supported several dissemination activities that have benefited our rural transport program including:

- **DF 63 ADB Transport Forum:** SEACAP sponsored several members of the Laos delegation to attend this conference.
- **DF 69 National Workshop on Rural Transport and Poverty Reduction:** SEACAP co-sponsored this major workshop that was held in September.
- **DF 71: NUoL Study Tour:** SEACAP supported a study tour to the slope stability project for a contingent of 70 NUoL students and faculty.
- **DF 76 Translation of Overseas Road Note (ORN) 18:** SEACAP supported the translation of ORN 18 into Laos language and copying of the translation for DoR distribution, as well as the shipping of 30 sets of the International Road Maintenance Handbooks, ORN7, as well as ORN 18 from the UK.
- **DF 78 Japanese Landslide Hazard Conference:** SEACAP is sponsoring two MPWT staff and a local consultant to attend this conference.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

There is a genuine need for continued support from SEACAP. While we are making good progress the needs of the sector are great. It is essential to have truly home grown solutions based upon proven knowledge and evidence that is specific to our unique environment. We do not have a local research capacity to do this. Such a capacity takes many years to build up but we must achieve the poverty reduction and rural development goals that we are mandated to meet now. There is really no where else that we can get this kind of support.

We have identified the following priority areas where support is needed:

i. Research

- Rural Road Technology Research:
- Slope Stability; and,
- Inland Rural Water Transport:

ii. Dissemination

- Local Roads Standards, Specifications and Guidelines at central, provincial and district levels; and,
- Regional Cooperation.

iii. Mainstreaming

- Support for integrating research outputs into new projects;
- University courses; and,
- In-service training, particularly at the provincial, district and commune levels.

Once again, we appreciate the very useful assistance that is being provided in an effective and sincere manner. In closing I wish to thank DFID for supporting SEACAP and hope this successful program will continue into the future.

Thank you.