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Dushanbe-Kyrgyz border rehabilitation project

The Dushanbe-Kyrgyz Border Rehabilitation Project, initiated by the Asian Development Bank, aimed to boost regional trade and economic growth in Tajikistan, the poorest of the Central Asian republics. To this end, the project rehabilitated an integral part of a regional road network in Central Asia that directly links Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, to the Kyrgyz Republic.

The need for addressing the gender-related aspects of the border rehabilitation project emerged during the request for technical assistance phase. Consultations were carried out with female and male community members from different socioeconomic groups:¹

- Focus group discussions identified that women had particular expectations as to what the impact of the rehabilitation of the regional road network would be: women expected the project to give them better access to hospitals, maternity homes and other social infrastructure.
- Household interviews revealed significant differences between female-headed and male-headed households on issues related to project information and policies. For example, female-headed households indicated they knew little or nothing about the project, while male-headed households were well aware of the project. Moreover, female-headed households knew generally less than male-headed ones about land acquisition and relocation policies, as well as the grievance redress process. The information gained from these interviews was important for correcting biases in the design of the project, and for adequately taking gender considerations into account during the project's implementation phase.²
- The household survey further indicated that while men had a wide range of employment opportunities, women were predominantly engaged in cropping and tending animals. Women living in the project area, as a result of ever-worsening gender equality and social services in the country, expressed an interest in: a) increasing the level of education for girls; b) income generating opportunities for both men and women; c) capacity-building/acquisition of new skills for women; d) better health care services; e) job opportunities for educated women; f) active participation in public activities; and g) refresher training of teachers and medical workers.

The project was then conceived and shaped to partly, if not fully, address the needs and concerns of both men and women. Follow-up consultations during and after project implementation were conducted.

Indirect benefits of the border rehabilitation were mostly related to enhanced connectivity, including increased access to educational and health facilities, increased travel to towns, increased marketability of women's products (fruit and small animals), increased access to employment that had been created or stimulated by the project, increased interaction with development organisations operating gender development projects in the area and increased access to information. In terms of direct benefits, the project provided employment opportunities for women through the implementation of the Social Development Action Plan. This aspect of the project enhanced the impacts of nine international and local NGOs that were targeting women for gender and development activities, including education/capacity-building, health care, micro-credit and self-employment.

A second phase of the border rehabilitation project included an HIV/AIDS and migration component, aimed at developing an integrated, community-based, gender-responsive approach to the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted infections linked to the seasonal migration of men. This also had direct benefits for local women by reducing their

1 Asian Development Bank, Technical Assistance (financed by the Japan Special Fund) to the Republic of Tajikistan for preparing the Dushanbe-Kyrgyz Border Road Rehabilitation Project, August 2004, <http://www.adb.org/Documents/TARs/TAJ/tar-taj-36396.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2009).

2 Tajikistan Ministry of Transportation, Resettlement Planning Document: TAJ, Dushanbe-Kyrgyz Border Road Rehabilitation Project (Phase II), July 2005, http://www.adb.org/Documents/Resettlement_Plans/taj/38236/38236-TAJ-RP.pdf (accessed October 7, 2009).

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risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.³

The project was concluded in 2007. Its legacy has included an explicit commitment from the Ministry of Transport, local government, women's associations and NGOs to continue monitoring the project's impact on women.

- The importance of integrating gender into border management is discussed in section 3 of the *Border Management and Gender Tool*.
- The importance of local ownership is discussed in section 3.4 of the *Border Management and Gender Tool*.
- Challenges to integrating gender into border management in transitional countries are discussed in section 5.2 of the *Border Management and Gender Tool*.

³ Asian Development Bank, Republic of Tajikistan: Dushanbe-Kyrgyz Border Road Rehabilitation Project (Phase III), Final report, July 2007, <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Consultant/37373-TAJ/37373-TAJ-TACR.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2009).