INCEPTION WORKSHOP

TA 7914: Harnessing Climate Change Mitigation Initiatives to Benefit Women

Settha Palace, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Meeting Summary

On 27 March 2013, approximately 40 policymakers, representatives from international organizations, and members of civil society convened an inception workshop for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Regional Technical Assistance 7914 (RETA 7914) (Harnessing Climate Change Mitigation Initiatives to Benefit Women) at Settha Palace in Vientiane, Laos PDR. The meeting consisted of 1) opening remarks; 2) presentations; 3) session on work plans; and 4) moderated discussion (divided into two stages). A summary of the key points raised in those sessions follows.

1. Opening Remarks

Madam Monemany Nhoybouakong, Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) National Coordinator, began the meeting with opening remarks. Madam Monemany said that she was very intrigued by the project and looked forward to seeing how the project will support the delivery of low carbon technologies to benefit women. She stressed that the provision of these benefits is important, in part, because women have been susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change, including recent typhoons in Laos PDR. She then noted that this project can potentially help improve the livelihoods of women not only in Laos PDR but Cambodia and Viet Nam. She therefore looked forward to a project that could help empower women in many countries in the GMS.

Mr. Chong Chi Nai, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Laos PDR Country Director, also provided opening remarks. He noted that the ADB is excited to see the launching of RETA 7914. He underlined that the ADB has emphasized shifting from conventional to clean energy; and the ADB recognizes that this shift often depends upon end users. This is why it is increasingly important to build the capacity of the people who make decisions about energy and resource use. He therefore suggested women are at big part of the climate change solution. He looked forward to creating an enabling environment that made women part of that solution, reaping the benefits of their involvement.

2. Presentations

Eric Zusman, the Institute of Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), presented on international trends and best practices on climate and gender. He noted that women often bear a greater share of the costs of climate change, but acquire a smaller share of the benefits of climate finance. To rectify this imbalance, it will be increasingly important that women are recognized as not victims but agents of change when making decisions over climate finance. While in general mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) have not provided adequate incentives for women to be explicitly recognized, there are some encouraging practices in particular CDM projects. For instance, a few CDM gold standard projects have involved
women’s groups in the planning, monitoring, and distribution of revenue from a project. There have also been some encouraging trends at the international level with growing reference to women and gender in international climate negotiations, official development assistance (ODA), and the climate investment funds (CIFs). These trends could also have implications for nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) (voluntary actions that developing countries are currently pledging to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in accordance with the Bali Action Plan) and the rules governing the Green Climate Fund (GCF). This will nonetheless depend on strengthening linkages between gender and climate within and across different levels of decision making.

Jeanette Gurung, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture & Natural Resource Management, (WOCAN) presented on the relationship between climate and gender. She observed that there exists a disconnect between work on climate and gender. While climate and gender is getting attention from high-level policymakers, there has not been commensurate activity on the ground. She then pointed to several obstacles and underlying reasons for this disconnect. The obstacles included: 1) little documentation of good practices for gender-sensitive mitigation; 2) gender in climate change focuses on adaptation rather than mitigation; and 3) factors constraining women’s participation in decision making. Underlying these obstacles were 1) a tendency to see women as victims; 2) a sense that climate change science and low carbon technologies are “technical” areas and more relevant to men; and 3) a number of factors that constrain women’s participation in decision making. She felt that to change this situation would require 1) creating a new message that started with women as leaders; 2) strengthening and supporting women’s leadership and groups; 3) building men’s support for women in communities and institutions; 4) expanding women’s networks at various levels; 5) assuring women’s access to technologies; 6) developing entrepreneurial capacities of women’s groups to engage in renewable energy; and 7) demonstrating activities that can enhance women’s empowerment and gender equality within mitigation projects. She further pointed to capacity building that will help women build leadership skills. She concluded by discussing a women’s carbon standard that WOCAN will introduce in April. The women’s carbon standard is a voluntary set of gender-sensitive screening criteria that, if met by the project, can earn a premium on the price of carbon credits.

Immala Inthaboualy, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), provided an overview of the mitigation elements in Laos PDR climate change policies. He pointed out that Laos PDR has developed several key climate change documents, ranging from its Initial National Communication (INC) to the UNFCCC (2000) to the more recent Guideline on Development and Consideration for CDM Projects (2012). He then highlighted that an important forum where future climate decisions will be made in Laos PDR is the Technical Working Group on Climate Change (TWGCC). The TWGCC is chaired the director general of MoNRE’s Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change (DDMC). The TWGCC will play an important role in defining actions and coordinating with relevant ministries on Laos PDR Climate Change Action Plan (2013-2020). The Climate Change Action Plan (2013-2020) is also now being prepared by DDMCC with support from ADB TA 7509. One of the four main initiatives in the Climate Change Action Plan is about greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation. Cambodia is focusing on actions in six sectors under this GHG mitigation initiative: agriculture; land and land
use change; energy; industry (energy efficiency); transport; and waste management. Of all the sectors, Mr. Inthaboualy underlined that there might be potential for work with women’s group on biogas projects. Mr. Inthaboualy closed by noting that, though Laos does not have formal obligations to mitigate GHGs under the UNFCCC, it is willing to cooperate with international partners on mitigation projects.

Linda Adams, ADB, provided an Overview of RETA 7914. She stressed that this RETA is about identifying a “pathway” through which women can more actively engage in decisions over climate change. She then remarked that we have already seen that this pathway will vary across different sectors. It will further be important that there is coordination across the multiple actors in these sectors. This is evident by the diversity of actors who attending today’s meeting. For women to engage effectively on climate change they therefore need not only opportunities for participation but greater capacity to appreciate linkages between key sectors and climate change. She then noted that project participants are still in discussions about the location of a pilot project in Laos PDR; however, the project will be located in an urban or peri-urban area and be related to the delivery of services that have discernible effect on women’s livelihoods (for instance, in Viet Nam the pilot project will be waste and wastewater management in Dong Hoi). This is very much in line with a more socially inclusive approach to urban development.

3. Session on Work Plans

Eric Zusman presented the work plan for IGES serving as the regional knowledge hub. He stated that the IGES work plan will be divided into three complementary phases. The first phase will focus on scoping of international trends and best practices, an initial round of interviews, and small group consultations. This will help determine where the project fits in the international and national policy landscapes of participating countries. A second phase will focus on quantifying the GHG mitigated and other co-benefits from one of the pilot projects. It will also look at the non-quantifiable benefits, barriers to realizing those benefits, and countermeasures that can help overcome those barriers. A third phase will look to integrate the lessons learned from the scoping studies and the case studies into a series of recommendations that can strengthen stakeholder engagement mechanisms and benefit sharing rules for climate finance in the GMS. The three phases will also help support the generation of knowledge products that will be disseminated to wider audiences and help raise the profile of the project.

Jeannette Gurung presented WOCAN’s work plan for the project. She noted that the work plan began with a scoping of the status of climate policy/finance (attention to gender within national/sub national climate policies, strategies and institutions) in Laos PDR, Cambodia, and Viet Nam. This will be complemented by a capacity building assessment that aims to identify need areas for training sessions. The second phase will then focus on delivering three tailored courses on carbon financing, gender mainstreaming, and gender analysis. A third phase will focus on refresher training (reinforcing leadership, technical and business skills) and participating in concluding workshops and setting up a pipeline of additional projects that could help sustain outcomes through the project’s conclusion.

4. Discussion
The meeting concluded with two moderated discussion sessions. The first discussion session allowed participants to reflect on the presentations and raise questions about the project. The key points raised during this discussion were as follows.

- At this point, it is still difficult to envision what the project aims to achieve (expected outcomes). If it is going to focus on cookstoves, then there needs to be more discussion of cookstoves.
- It would be helpful to identify where the project hopes to be after three years—in other words, “what success looks like.” Similarly, it would be useful to provide a more concrete description of terms such as “stakeholder engagement mechanism.” It further would be useful to know what types of capacity building is needed.
- In terms of scaling up success, the project may draw upon the recent experience with electrification in Laos PDR.

Based upon these comments, a second discussion was held using the following questions for guidance:

1. What are existing ways for women to participate in climate change policy making and how can they be strengthened?

2. How can this project and your agency (MoNRE, LWU, MEM, MPI, producers, retailers, end users) increase women’s ability to respond to climate change mitigation challenges?

3. What technologies that reduce energy use and waste (DEWATS, composting, improved cook stoves) can increase livelihood benefits for women?

- At the broadest level, it will be important to focus on awareness raising as there is a limited understanding of climate change among women. In more specific terms, it would be to target greater participation in aforementioned Technical Working Group on Climate Change.
- The Lao Women’s Union (LWU) is eager to participate in the project but needs to have a greater understanding of how climate change finance works. The LWU has participated in several other projects where there has been a similar emphasis on improving livelihoods for women. For instance, it participated in a United Nations Development Programme project that providing funding to move women farmers away from chemical to organic fertilizers. There have also been projects on mainstreaming gender into education policy with some possibly transferable lessons.
- When designing the project, it will be important to work within existing social networks and structures. This will be particularly important because there are not necessarily women’s organizations at the local level in Laos PDR. There might instead be organizations where there a large proportion of the membership is women.
- In selecting pilot projects, understanding the background of the target groups will be essential. If the target groups are not motivated to participate in the project, then it will be difficult for the project to move forward. There is a bit of fine line between encouraging and imposing participation.
• One of the important steps for assessing the Laos PDR pilot project will be setting a baseline on current activity. Identifying what kinds of benefits need to be measured will also be critical for monitoring and evaluating the project.

• Another critical element during the training will be Laotion facilitators who are familiar with the issue area and community needs. This will be essential to build the trust and confidence needed to move the project forward.

• A consideration related to benefit sharing involves the distribution of carbon revenue. Frequently in the case of cookstove projects revenue is not distributed directly to the stove users; rather it is redistributed through the project for other purposes related to the stove manufacture and maintenance. The problem with providing the revenue back to the users is that if the stoves are given away or sold at very low cost, they are often not valued or used properly.