Background Information for Gender in Development Practice in NTFP Project in Lao PDR: Gender Sensitive Forest Use

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ABBREVIATIONS:
CAA  Community Aid Abroad
CIDSE  Cooperation pour le Developpement et la Solidarite
DOF  Department of Forestry
EED  Enfants et Developpement
ESF  Ecole sans Frontieres
FT  Field Team
FA  Field Advisor
FM  Field Manager
GD  Gender Development
GiD  Gender in Development
GoL  Government of Lao PDR
GoN  Government of The Netherlands
IUCN  The World Conservation Union
LWU  Loa Women Union
MAF  Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
NPC  National Project Coordinator
NTFP  Non Timber Forest Products
PA  Project Advisor
PAM  Project Area Management
PD  Project Document
PLA  Participatory Learning Approach
PM  Project Manager
PRA  Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA  Rapid Rural Appraisal
SIRAP  Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture Project
SRIDP  Strengthening Irrigation Deparment Project
TNA  Training Needs Assessment
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
WEI  World Education International
1. BACKGROUND

The background information for integrating gender aspects in a development project in Lao PDR compiled in this report is one outcome of a Gender in Development (GiD) Consultancy in the NTFP project. The GiD input was done in the context of the Project Agreement between the GoN and IUCN which stated that:

“During the first half year of the project, you will retain an expert on gender-aspects to set up a plan in which these aspects are worked out. This plan will be submitted together with the first half-yearly report on the project.” (Letter dated 07.02.95 to IUCN from the Minister For Development Cooperation, GoN).

The Project’s Annual Plan for 1995/96 included the following objective:

“To ensure that the methods, information, and solutions used by the Project take account of equity and gender issues, to the fullest extent possible.”

In the Terms of Reference of the Gender in Development Consultancy it is stated that:

“The consultant’s reports are intended to assist the Project to adopt international best practice, to improve the way the Project works in villages in regard to dealing with gender and equity issues, and to ensure that the Project’s methods are appropriate to the specific social and physical characteristics of pilot sites.

The Project requires the services of gender specialists to advise the Project on how to ensure that gender and development issues are considered to the fullest extent possible in all components of Project work”.

Based on the above the objectives for the Gender in Development Input were formulated. Compiling the background information was done in accordance with the first objective which is as follows:

Provide background information and commentary on the nature of rural communities in which the Project is working, specifically related to gender differences and the objectives and activities of this Project. This will include an identification of the gender issues that should be considered by the Project in its work in villages and in Project management generally.

For the full Terms of Reference for the Gender in Development Input see Appendix 7.

The current report ‘Gender Sensitive Forest Use, background information for Gender in Development practice in NTFP Project in Lao PDR’ gives an
overview of the state of affairs of Gender in Development in Lao PDR and of the most important focus points and concerns. It represents the first report of the Gender in Development Input. ‘Gender X-ray, three Field Teams of NTFP Project assessed on integration of Gender in Development practice’ describes findings and recommendations after field visits to the three provinces and is the second report. The third report of the Gender in Development Input, ‘Wearing Gender Spectacles, plan of action for improved integration of Gender in Development practice in NTFP Project’ analyses all project components to assess the need for GiD integration and proposes various activities and their time frame to plan for systematic integration of GiD.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Gender in Development
At present, ‘Gender in Development’ is kind of a buzz word in the development scene all over the world shortly followed by ‘Environmental Concerns’. Some people regard both issues as nothing more than a fashion. For others it is clear that attention need to be paid to those issues in order to provide some degree of sustainability to development efforts. It could be that in development work specific Environmental inputs should be of a more permanent nature whereas Gender in Development inputs should gradually be reduced because gender issues should be increasingly integrated in other development activities. Gender in Development should wear itself out since it is aimed at raising the status of women and empower them in line with principles of equity. In the process, women will gradually participate increasingly in development activities where they were before excluded. Working with women specifically is only part, though an important part, of a Gender in Development strategy. Once participation of women is a normal practice and the inferior status of women is elevated, there is no longer a need for a Gender in Development component in development activities.

Lao PDR is no exception. In many development projects that are currently carried out in Lao PDR, a Gender in Development component is a prerequisite. Often, in the beginning of a project the Gender in Development component is regarded as an unuseful burden and the fact that it could add considerably towards sustainability in development, is overlooked. ‘Gender in Development’ is also very often confused with ‘Women in Development’. In the latter form, the emphasis is on women and it is targeted at women solely. Whereas, ‘Gender in Development’ addresses both men and women in their interdependent relations in society. In chapter 3, the history of the change from ‘Women in Development’ to ‘Gender in Development’ in Lao PDR will be explained further. In many cases it becomes obvious after a while that the Gender in Development component is very helpful in reaching project goals because of its ongoing plea for equity without which many projects will fail in the long term.

2.2 Sources of Information
There are many experiences in Gender in Development work in development activities in Lao PDR from the last three years. Before that time, there was a
long history of many projects targeted at women with the Lao Women Union in the lead. Since most development activities are implemented by projects, documentation of the work is scattered and there is not one specific information centre for Gender in Development. Some locations of resource materials, consisting of project documents, a few studies about the situation of women and some historical accounts of the life in Lao PDR were identified and are listed in Appendix 5. The impression is that much more historical documentation and studies can be found in libraries in France. (See bibliography in Personal Communications, February 1996)

Project reports mostly describe progress, constraints and results and some include the process of the development interventions. But very few reports discuss the actual experience of Gender in Development work and of working on involving women. E.g., no reports were found on methods of working with ethnic minority women although some project documents record some facts in the course of reporting. Because the status of women is dependent very much on the kind of ethnic group women belong to, the customs and traditions of ethnic groups are important factors in analysing the living situation of women and men. Interviews were held with some people who worked specifically with ethnic minorities and it was found that this is a good way of learning about the approach or working style in a certain area. It is recommended that Field Teams talk with NGO staff who worked with ethnic minorities, in particular with the women, and have a wealth of experience which is not documented and very locally valid. The list of people interviewed is in Appendix 3.

The information in this report comes from documentation from scattered locations, from the authors’ own experiences of working in Gender in Development in Lao PDR for the past three years and from interviews. A list of References is in Appendix 6.

2.3 Contents
Chapter 1 relates the current report to the other two reports written during the course of the Gender in Development Consultancy and to the Terms of Reference.

Chapter 2 discusses the term of ‘Gender in Development’ and refers to the various sources of information used to write the report. And, following is an overview of the contents of the report.

Chapter 3 refers to some basic statistics about women in Lao PDR. After that, an overview of other Gender in Development efforts in Lao PDR is given. The overview is not exhaustive but could be of assistance for the Field Teams if they want to exchange experiences with other project staff.

Chapter 4 discusses the official Lao policy regarding the status of women and ethnic minorities. After that, the activities of the Lao Women Union, by mandate the most active organization in working with women in Lao PDR, are reviewed. Finally, the viewpoint of the Department of Forestry regarding gender issues is summarized.
In Chapter 5, characteristics of ethnic groups in Lao PDR that are important indicators for the situation of men and women and for the approach of development projects are described. The aspects include kinship, locality, belief system, language and agricultural system. The Field Teams have to make their own choice which aspect they can use best in their field work, depending on the ethnic groups they choose to work with. As soon as attention is paid to the status and role of women in the villages it is highly likely that it is discovered that all or some of the identified aspects play a role.

The last chapter, 6, points out a few areas where the integration of gender in development is easily forgotten and where actions to improve gender in development integration might have unforeseen implications for the project activities. The areas of concern are benefits of project, training opportunities during project, heterogeneity of groups, isolation of women issues and timing and planning of project activities. Together, chapter 5 and 6 support the identification of gender issues that should be considered by the Project in its work in villages.

3. BASIC DATA FOR GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT IN LAO PDR

Background information for the Project to be able to relate with gender issues in the villages should include some basic data regarding gender issues in Lao PDR and about how the gender issue is dealt with in other development projects in Lao PDR.

This chapter refers to the basic data for Gender in Development in Lao PDR in Appendix 1. Whenever available, the data are by province. However, data about districts were not available in the statistical sources used. The data include populations statistics in the first section and give an overview of work done by several organizations on Women/Gender in Development in the second section.

3.1 Basic Statistics

Some data are gender segregated and therefore tell something about the comparative situation of women and men in Lao PDR. Some data are of a more general nature giving some insight in government spending and income per province which serves as a general background for development activities.

The data focusing on women are about literacy, access to education and the number of women at certain management positions. These data are important to understand the context in which Gender in Development work is implemented. Although women have a strong position among the Lao ethnic group, the dominant ethnic in governance and administration in Lao PDR, their level of education is lower compared to men, they enter higher level education less than men and only hold few management positions in every sector.
In the Party Central Committee of 45 members, there are only 4 women. There are no women in the Politburo. At the Ministerial level there is not one Minister among around 13 Ministers. Although the position of President of LWU is regarded as the same level as a Minister. There are 4 female vice Ministers. There are a few exceptions to the scarcity of management positions filled by women with the Director of the Chamber of Commerce (recently), the former vice-chief of the (former) Central State Planning Committee and the head of the Central Bank, who are all women.

It is against the above background that many local chiefs, district chiefs and provincial chief (all men) are often frowning on the idea of having women participate in planning and decision making. They are not used to women participate in public affairs and, like most human beings, resist changes forced upon them by outsiders. That is the reason that they should be explained by the Field Teams why NTFP wants to involve women. Very often when it is understood why it is important to let women participate, much of the resistance falls away. But not the habit though. The rational resistance might be gone but that does not change behaviour yet. More time is needed to convince men that it is indeed worthwhile to involve women.

Following is a list of the statistics provided in Appendix 1:
- General Gender Statistics for Lao PDR
- Population distributed by age group, sex and marital status (1991-1992)
- Population estimates by region and sex. Numbers and Percentages
- Lao PDR: Comparative Government Revenues & Expenditures by Province, 1992-1993
- Lao PDR: GDP per Capita by Province, 1992-93
- Literacy among women (15-49 yrs), comparison of habitats
- Female and male pupils in different levels of general education between 1985 and 1993
- Female pupils per ethnic group in general education (199-1992)
- Vocational training in selected skills (1992-93)
- Percentage of grade 1 new entrants over 10 years of age by region and province
- Women representation in management level in the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1993

3.2 Other Projects working on Gender in Development

Also in Appendix 1 is a list of ‘Women/Gender in Development’ projects, per province and with location, ministry, sector, agency involved. Most of those projects were implemented in the past but might have left trained and skilled persons among government staff and villagers who are familiar with working with women.

As will be explained in chapter 4, there were hardly any ‘Gender in Development’ activities three to four years ago, and most ‘women project activities’ focused on activities for/with women. Since the list is from that time, it does not have many ‘Gender in Development’ projects. Swedish sponsored
activities were a good exception and focus already on ‘Gender in Development’ for the last five years.

After 1993, more activities were targeted at Gender in Development and gradually Gender Issues gained in importance in many projects during the last three years. The Conference on Women in Beijing, September 1995, helped many people to understand that in ‘women in development’ one should address the issue of empowerment and change the focus to ‘gender in development’. E.g., an important result from Beijing is the agreement in Lao government circles that something should be done about the low number of women at the higher levels

The following is an overview of recent efforts in Gender in Development work by various agencies. Data on Gender in Development activities in individual projects are scattered and not collected for this report. The information comes from ‘Gender in Development from Policy to Practice (Draft)’, (Rodenburg, March 1996):

Ministry of Agriculture:
MAF did a study on roles of men and women in rice cultivation as a start in paying attention to female farmers in 1995. (Chanphengsay, 1995).

ADB:
The ADB gives support to many large projects in Lao PDR. For some of them the following types of gender awareness and action-building modalities for pre-project preparations and ongoing interventions are recommended:  
1. Gender Impact Assessment
2. Gender Sensitivity Training
3. Minimum Gender Participation Target
As much as possible, these activities need to be carried out with the assistance of local women consultants who speak the language of the locals, as many ethnic minority people cannot communicate in the Lao language. (ADB, November 1995)

AusAid:
Besides the equity approach in large projects, specific efforts in gender in development in Lao PDR are made in the following projects and sectors:
1. A community development study in the Lao Upland Development Project, an irrigation project.
2. AusAid will co-fund the Land Titling Project which will have a definite socio-economic component including gender issues in order to promote positive gender and ethnic impacts within the project.
3. A large part of the efforts is given to the provision of training opportunities and scholarships to women.
4. Together with UNICEF, teachers in ethnic minorities, often women, are given training to upgrade their quality.
5. There are projects addressing children issues, health care and nutrition which automatically target women: 
- a CAA project on nutrition with LWU;
- a primary health care project in Houaphan and Phongsali;
- a nutrition programme at a school together with CARE;
- a HIV/AIDS project in cooperation with Australian Red Cross;
- child health care as part of integrated development project (SCFA);
- community development targeted at women and children through a small embassy project.

SIDA (Swedish Development Cooperation):
In Lao PDR, the support for gender issues will concentrate mainly on the sphere of legal issues to make existing women’s rights known to all women. This will be pursued through:
- the support for studies and research on legal issues;
- the set-up of a legal advice office for women;
- the compilation of data and documentation;
- the support to the law school and the department of justice.
- a pilot seminar about land titling and law with the cooperation of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Agriculture, Provincial authorities, the Governor, Central LWU, Provincial LWU and District LWU, with a total of 300 people. It was so successful that a further 6 seminars have been held in the provinces (with participation of 300 people in Savannakhet, 150 in Khammouane and 120 in Borikhamxay) and a further 12 seminars are planned.

UNDP:
All UNDP programmes have the intention to be gender sensitive. UNDP tries to concentrate on the macro level and long term development. Besides, specific attention was given to gender issues during the last and present year through (amongst others):
- Support in cooperation with UNIFEM to strengthen LWU in policy making and management. A strategy plan for LWU activities is prepared and is waiting for approval from higher levels.
- Coordination of the Gender and Development (GAD) Working Group which brings together gender in development programmers from UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, SIDA, AusAid and NGO Forum. The objective is to approach gender issues at the policy level and to support LWU at that level.

UNICEF:
The UNICEF - Lao Government’s women’s development programme has two integrative programme components:
1. Staff Capacity Building of the LWU separated into:
   - enhancement of operational skills for project management;
- enhancement of advocacy/social mobilization skills for mainstreaming of gender concerns into the national/subnational development framework.

2. Development of Women-Focused Community Development Field Projects. 256 Field projects focusing on women centered development at community level have been developed. More than 500 village voluntary health workers are trained. More than half of the selected village health workers are women.

(From: UNICEF, Empowering Women, 1995)

The following issues and activities regarding women are addressed in the programme aimed at empowering village women:
- incorporation of village women’s concern in project formulation;
- reduction of women’s labour;
- improvement of household food security;
- income generation;
- training in life skills for improvement of family welfare;
- health education;
- sanitation;
- promoting linkages with other child survival and development activities;
- promotion of self-reliance and mobilisation of communal resources;
- increasing women’s visibility.


**WorldBank:**
Paying specific attention to gender in development in Lao PDR is done through:
- In the future, the Levis Preston fund, which supports training for young women to help them to have their own income;
- The Land Titling project will have a socio-economic component which includes the gender issue. The latter component will be based on the ‘Gender and Culture’ study preceding the project (see AusAid).

**NGO Forum:**
The NGOs pay ample attention to Women and Gender in Development, especially, after the Beijing Conference. Many NGOs carry Gender/Women activities in their programme. The current activities are not documented in one place and therefore only the more general efforts in the field of Women/Gender in Development are reported below:
- Strengthening and improving of WID group was planned and is currently implemented. In the process
the name changed to Gender Development Group (GDG).

- A ‘Gender Research’ training and implementation has been conducted by various NGOs in order to learn about conducting gender sensitive research and in order to collect and analyse gender sensitive data in their project areas. One such NGO is World Education who is strongly focusing its project activities on Gender in Development and implements many of the activities in Saravane among the Kataang ethnic group.

From the efforts in Gender in Development described above, it might be clear that project activities focused on Women or Gender aspects can not be seen in isolation. More and more government staff working with development projects have heard about Gender in Development although they might not know precisely what it means. The Field Teams should therefore, ask the staff involved in their project activities if they had worked on Gender in Development activities before.

From the information above and in Appendix 1 it can also be seen where and which agency worked on Women/Gender in Development before. The Field Teams could ask the involved staff and villagers about their experiences which could be useful for the implementation of their own work.

4. POLICY

The discussion on the Lao policy on Gender in Development is in four sections. The first section looks at the general policy starting from the Constitution. The second section describes the role of LWU in the implementation of the policy. Because the role and status of women is different in different minority ethnic groups, the third section gives some background on the situation of ethnic minorities in Lao PDR also starting from the Constitution. The last section reviews the policy of the Department of Forestry, being the main counterpart to the NTFP project, regarding Gender in Development.

4.1 General Policy
The Lao official policy is to promote the equality of men and women based on the Constitution of 1991. In this First Constitution of the Lao PDR gender equality in politics, in the socio-economic and cultural sphere, and in the family were guaranteed. (Country Report, 1995)

In the Constitution of 1991 it is stated that:

“Men and women are equal in all aspects, namely politics, economy, culture and social and family affairs” (Chapter 3, art. 22 of 1990 Constitution).

“Lao Population, women and men, have equal rights with respect to politics, economy, culture, society and family”. (Art. 24, 1990 Constitution)
The Constitution formed the basis for the formulation of specific laws and regulations for true gender equity under the law. After the Second Lao Women’s Congress in 1988, efforts were made by the LWU to encourage the formulation of laws and regulations aimed at effectively protecting equal rights and benefits of women and children. (Country Report, 1995)

Legal codes and decrees concerning women and children increased substantially after 1990. Among others there are:

- **1990** Family Law concerning the protection of children and women setting down regulations on marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and other family subjects.
- Family Registration Law concerning registration and marriage certificates.
- Lao Nationality Law saying that one parent with residency in Lao (and with Lao nationality) gives right to Lao nationality for a child.

- **1993** Establishment of the National Commission for Mothers and Children in Education and Health chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to promote education and health for women and children.

- **1994** Labour Law and Penal Code setting standards for minimum wages, minimum employment age and maximum working hours. These regulations are especially important for women in the burgeoning garment industry. (ADB, November 1995)

Lao PDR also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women which protects the rights of the girl child and women. UNICEF (October 1996)

The new Land Law is still under study and will be presented to the Supreme Assembly for adoption soon.

“Customarily, the inheritance pattern in many villages is matrilinear, and most farmers cultivate the land of the parents of their wives. Currently, large scale land surveys are in the process of being implemented to determine individual land ownership in order to upgrade the pre-war cadastral surveys and allotment of land titles. During this process, the land is mostly registered in the name of the ‘head of household’, mainly men. This is supposedly a temporary arrangement before putting land in the name of husband and wife. However, there is a risk that women may lose their customary rights to land”. (Schenk-Sandbergen, 1995)

Many legal codes might have been set up but the enforcement is still weak.

“The law lacks enforcement mechanisms and penalties, and so remains largely ineffective. Another factor in the slow adoption of laws on equality of men and women in many fields in society is lack of knowledge and understanding of those laws. A major concern is how to inform women about their rights and possible actions for recourse. With low media and communications outreach, high rates of illiteracy among women, and with no legal infrastructure in the rural areas, as well as few female enforcement officers, lawyers, paralegal assistants, and judges at the central level and almost none at province and district levels, the issue becomes especially
complex. The LWU has received assistance to conduct district and village seminars, which have proven to be popular and somewhat effective. Coupled with legal education problems is the establishment of gender-sensitive enforcement and adjudication mechanisms within the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts”.

(ADB, November 1995)

Lao Government policy concerning the status of women is based on the 1991 Constitution and the Laws and decrees resulting from the Constitution. In the UNDP Draft Country Strategy Note it is stated about the Lao Government policy concerning the status of women that:

“Lao government is in consent with the UN system to tackle poverty elimination. This should be reached by focusing among others on ‘women advancement’. Lao government has requested the UN system to incorporate ‘gender awareness’: to meet women’s issues in development head-on, with women at all levels of administration and management and in participating communities making key decisions, in all programmes of support”; and, “ensuring improvements in the status of women is a supporting aim for rural development”.


The Lao government recognizes the need to encourage women as important actors in development:

“There is a need to raise the initiatives of women and the villagers, promote the solidarity in working together, solve the problems by themselves, seek the potential advantage and well promote the tradition of each place”.

(Speech Prime Minister Siphandone, LWU, 1993).

The Lao Women’s Union, the voice of Lao women in the Government, continuously refines its working policy adapting it to the newest Government policies. The Second Lao Women’s Congress, 1988, extended the meaning of their guiding slogan in their work with Lao women, the slogan of ‘Three Goods and Two Duties’ (three goods: to be good citizen, to have a good new type of family and achieve good unity; two duties: duty in national defense and duty for socio-economic development) towards training of women in basic vocational skills and the implementation of income-generating activities. The Third National Women’s Congress, 1993, made new adaptations to its slogan mobilising women to be good citizens, to achieve good participation in development and to build good families of the new culture. (Country Report, 1995).

Despite efforts to improve the position of women by law and policy guidelines, “the status and role of women within the state system, mainly as child care nurses, kindergarten tutors, primary, secondary and high school teachers or nurses have not yet been properly upheld or reflected in their social position or in actual renumeration. This has affected their morale and performance”.

(Country Report, 1995).
The Sixth Party Congress of the Lao PDR’s, in 1996, added to shaping favourable conditions for increasing the status of women by expressing an urgency in addressing the issue of minority women’s education and in promoting women to more prominent leadership and government roles at all levels. UNICEF (October 1996)

4.2 **Lao Women’s Union**
The pursuing of the well-being and advancement of women activities are officially under the responsibility of and carried out by the Lao Women Union (LWU). The LWU is one of the three mass organizations with approximately 650,000 members, roughly one quarter of the female population. The organizational structure is unique in the sense that there are LWU village volunteers at every village unequaled by any other organization. At district, provincial and central level the LWU resembles the line departments. At the inception of LWU (1955 under the name Lao Women’s Patriotic Association and renamed in 1984) the role of Lao women in the security of the Lao nation, as holders of the Lao culture and as caretakers of the family was emphasized. The concept of ‘women and development’, meaning the role women play in the socio-economic development of the country, was introduced for the first time during the second LWU congress (1989). This concept implies targeting of women and children through health, nutrition, birth-spacing, income-generating and other community development programmes with the objectives to:
- strengthen the role and contribution of women in national, socio-economic and cultural development;
- upgrade scientific and technical knowledge of agriculture/health/education for a better standard of living;
- reduce heavy workload of women with the use of appropriate technology and to increase family income by reinforcing women’s skills;
- promote women’s initiatives in development efforts.

During the last three years, the idea of targeting women directly in order to address their situation, is changing into the direction of focusing more at the broader context which influences the situation of women which means that the interrelated roles of men and women are taken into account as a means to address the situation of women. In this approach the participation of women in all development activities in accordance with their role becomes important. At present, LWU discusses the position of women at decision-making levels and empowerment of women and they planned Gender Awareness raising workshops for men and women at all levels in order to gain the understanding of everybody currently holding positions. Increasingly, arguments of equity and equal human rights for women are heard as well in the plea for better access to the higher echelons for women in Lao PDR.

4.3 **Ethnic Minorities**
Lao PDR is inhabited by many ethnic groups. In popular language the ethnic groups are usually refered to as either ‘Lao Lum’ (lowlander), ‘Lao Theung’
(mid/uplander) and ‘Lao Soung’ (highlander). However, ethnolinguistically this is not correct and the Lao Constitution 1991 does not follow this popular reference. Ethnolinguistically, the ethnic groups can be classified into four major superstocks. These four superstocks are Tai-Kadai, Hmong-Mien, Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burmese. The so called ‘Lao Lum’ people are in the first category, ‘Lao Soung’ in the second and fourth category, ‘Lao Theung’ in the third category. (Personal Communication, March 1996)

In the Constitution of 1991, article 8, it is stated:

“The State will carry out a policy of unity and equality between the various ethnic groups. All ethnic groups have the right to preserve and improve their own traditions and culture and those of the nation. Discrimination between ethnic groups is forbidden. The State will carry out every means in order to continue to improve and raise the economic and social level of all ethnic groups.”

(From: Personal Communication, February 1996)

The constitution does not use the common terminology of ‘Lao Lum’, ‘Lao Theung’ and ‘Lao Soung’ which gives all ethnics an equal identity on paper.

“Throughout the constitution the terms ‘xon phau’ and ‘banda phau’ to refer to ‘ethnic groups’ or ‘ethnic citizens’, are utilized more or less interchangeably.”

(Personal Communication, February 1996)

Because the Tai-Kadai group includes the dominant ethnic group of ‘Lao’ ethnic, the ethnic groups in the other three superstocks are referred to as ‘ethnic minorities’. As can be seen from the constitution, all ethnic groups are treated as equal by the law.

4.4 Gender in Development Policy in Department of Forestry

The following information is based on an interview with the Vice Director of the Forestry Department. The Department received questions beforehand to prepare the answers. For the questions and answers see Appendix 2.

Regarding the policy of DoF on Gender in Development:

The Department of Forestry (DoF) mentioned the importance of Gender in Development in cooperation with the Institutional Strengthening project of Lao-Sida. Presently, the Department is studying ways how to implement Gender in Development. The objectives are to promote and improve the role of women in forestry work and specifically to have women involve in forest conservation.

Regarding the role of the NTFP Project in addressing gender issues:

According to the Party and Government policies, NTFP Project should study the potential of women in rural areas in depth and develop ways of improving all steps in managing NTFPs such as planting, conserving, processing and marketing. Women should be stimulated to learn about the importance of the forest, the importance of the conservation of the forest, the ways to protect and conserve food resources by themselves and to use the forest as a source of medicine.
The NTFPs Project could support studies of marketing, of the methods of processing and could exchange information with the neighbor countries.

About DoF’s policy regarding its female staff:
The percentage of female staff in DoF is 25 to 30%. DoF always has the policy to promote female staff. They do not differentiate between sexes of students who apply to continue their studies at the Forestry school and put the same conditions for men and women. Beside that, DoF has the policy to promote and welcome ethnic female staff in the Forestry work.

Women have a lot of constraints and limitations and therefore, men should learn and understand gender issues in order to promote and upgrade women. DoF promoted female staff also, by giving them more chance to continue studying abroad.

5. GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT AND ETHNICITY

In this chapter, the focus is on characteristics of ethnic groups which distinguish ethnic groups. These differences have implications for women and for the approach towards integrating Gender issues in project activities. In the existing project documentation and literature on Gender in Development in Lao PDR not many references to differences encountered in working with ethnic minorities or guidelines for development activities with ethnic groups, were found. The aspects covered in this chapter are helpful indicators for assessing the social situation of ethnic groups and the interdependent positions of men and women within that situation. These aspects are therefore thought of interest as background for the integration of gender issues in project activities especially in working with ethnic minorities.

5.1 Ethnic Groups

Different ethnic groups, have different traditional world views and resulting customs. The world views and customs have an impact on the status and role of women in the groups. Ethnic groups can be typified by certain traits or characteristics. A few traits of ethnic groups could be used to predict the status of women. Based on an expectation about the status of women, the Field Teams could anticipate certain patterns of behavior in communication with women and men. Below are a few of those traits and their implications for women. Often traits are not so strictly adhered to as the definitions may suggest. Especially, where ethnic groups are intermarrying, traits can become mixed.

These traits of ethnic groups are documented in ‘summary sheets’ for every ethnic group living in the provinces where the three Field Teams work. They can be found in Appendix 4 and come from Personal Communication (February 1996).

5.1.1 Kinship
Kinship refers to the line of heritage through the male or female line, respectively patrilineal or matrilineal. The line of heritage could have implications for the name of children (usually this is not the case in Lao PDR), land rights and inheritance of house and goods. Matrilineal cultures are favourable for women because they have the right to inherit. Usually, women in these cultures have a strong economic and therefore, also strong social position. Often a brideprice needs to be paid to the parents of the bride whereas in a patrilineal tradition a dowry is paid to parents of the groom upon marriage.

The ethnics from the Tai-Kadai category are mostly matrilineal whereas the other three superstocks mostly are patrilineal. Because the Tai-Kadai group is politically, social and economic dominant there is a tendency to think that the majority of Lao villages is matrilineal but in fact there are many more villages, especially in the mountainous and remote areas where patrilineality is the main feature.

5.1.2 Locality
This trait refers to the locality of a couple after marriage either in the house of the parents of the man or in the house of the parents of the woman, respectively patrilocality or matrilocaliity. If the man comes to live with the family of his wife it is obvious that this is more favourable for the woman. In some traditions a woman gets well treated when she has to stay with the parents of her husband, whereas in other traditions she will be treated as a servant and will be suppressed. Often there are taboes for a woman who moves in with her parents in law. E.g., there are certain rooms in the house where she is not permitted to go. Or a woman once married and moving in with her parents in law is not permitted to ever go back to her own parents home. That means that if she has a fight with her husband or her husband abandons her, she has nowhere to go.

Among the Tai-Kadai groups matrilocality is prevalent, whereas among the other groups patrilocality dominates. As said before, in many cases the practice is not very strict especially with mixed marriages. The population itself, often, is not aware of the existence of patterns in their behavior which can be classified as patri- or matrilocal. When asked ‘where they live after marrying’ villagers will say that it does not matter much where they live but in studying the actual situation often a dominant trait is found. People should be asked about their personal situation and not in general if one wants to get an insight in the actual state of affairs.

5.1.3 Religion/belief system
Religion and belief system have a profound impact on tradition, customs and behavior of people. The main religion to be found in Lao PDR is Buddhism mainly following the Theravaddin style that is practiced in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Birma and Vietnam. A small portion of Buddhists follow a more Mahayana style coming from China, Birma and India. For customs and behavior there is not much difference between the two styles. The Tai-Kadai group is predominantly Buddhist. Many aspects of Buddhism are nowadays also practiced by ethnic groups from the other three superstocks. The more remote the ethnic group, the less Buddhist features are found. Austroasiatic groups tend
to be animist and the other two superstocks have belief systems ranging from animism to ancestor worship with every possible belief system in between. Missionaries and Christian development aid groups baptized many of the ethnic minorities of the Austroasiatic superstock who are now registered as Christians. But still traditional practices exist side by side with the new religion.

The Buddhist groups tend to be less suppressive for their female members than the other groups. However, this might also be the case because Buddhism coincides with being matrilineal and matrilocal. But some practices which are very harmful for women come from the animist belief system and not from patrilineality or patrilocality. E.g., the requirement for a mother of twins to kill herself or to live alone in the forest (besides the requirement to kill the twins by suffocation or putting hot ashes on it). Animism also knows many customs that might not be suppressive for women in a direct way but indirectly. E.g., the practice of not washing dishes after using them for eating might effect the health of children who are more susceptible to disease than adults. In turn, this will have an impact on the workload and concern of the mothers who traditionally take care of sick childs.

It must be noticed that customary practices are changeable. E.g., recently an educated father, village head, in a village where the killing of twins is still the custom, refused to kill his babies, changing the custom in this way. This is a good example that customs do not have to be followed blindly. An incoming Field Team will sometimes have to decide if it wants to go along with a custom out of respect, or to try to give a twist to harmful practices.

5.1.4 Language
The Lao language as taught in all schools and as used by the administrative system is the language of the Lao ethnic of the Tai-Kadai superstock. All official paperwork of the government is in this language. Most ethnic groups of the Tai-Kadai will speak this language but not all of them. However, in many ethnic minority groups from the other superstocks, the people speak another language. In that case, the village chiefs and members of the village board of local authorities will mostly be able to speak, read and write the official Lao language but not always. The official Lao language is spreading more and more to all ethnic groups with increased contact and communication. But still, many groups can be found of which only a very small percentage of the people speak the official Lao language.

The higher the percentage of people who can not speak that language, the more the Field Teams should try to work with translators. There is a high probability that a low percentage of people who can speak the Lao language correlates with a high level of illiteracy. Simply, because schools where reading and writing is taught mostly teach in the Lao language. Therefore, in case of a high percentage of non-Lao speakers, the Field Teams should probably look more to methods for illiterates. But this is not to say that 100 percent Lao speakers from the Tai-Kadai ethnicities are literate. Far from that, especially when looked at the illiteracy rate among women in this superstock which is around 30%. However,
compared to a rate of around 70% in the combined other superstocks the literacy among women of Tai-Kadai superstock is much higher.

For all ethnic groups the literacy among women is lower than among men because women are sooner excluded from access to education. They might enter primary education at the same rate as men but drop out much sooner. This results both from traditional views on women and from the expectation that girls should stay at home to help the mother with the household. This tendency is reduced where education is more accessible and is even reversed around Vientiane city. The higher percentage of total number of women over men in Lao PDR starts to show in secondary schools around the capital where the majority are now girls.

5.1.5 Agricultural System
The agricultural system of an ethnic group tells much about their lifestyle and resulting social structure. The main division of the agricultural system in Lao PDR is in paddy growing in the lowlands, for some part irrigated, where the people have permanent farmland and a swidden system where people move from plot to plot in the process of which they slash-and-burn to form new plots. The swidden system is mainly practiced in the upland areas.

From their popular names it can be seen where the four main superstocks come from: the Tai-Kadai groups live in the lowlands and practice (irrigated) paddy growing, the other three groups live in up- and highlands and practice swidden agriculture. Although more and more ethnic groups from the latter three superstocks can be found in the lowlands due to the policy of the Lao government to resettle people in the lowlands where they are assumed to have better access to water, fertile soils and services, still many ethnic minorities live in mountainous areas. But the Tai-Kadai groups still inhabit the lowlands and plains.

The life upland is considerably harder than in the lowlands in many ways. Villages often have no easy access to services that are available to villages in the lowlands because there are no roads. Schools, local clinics and government services are very basic or practically non-existent. This means that the chances for those people living upland to catch up in terms of education, health and basic information are very low which perpetuates the hardship of life in remote areas. In terms of water supply, the water sources are often much further away than in lowlands and whereas many villages in the lowlands have dugwells, in the upland there are considerably less villages provided with wells. This results in a higher, and heavier, workload for women who, in most ethnic groups, carry water and walk to a water source to wash clothes. In many villages in the lowlands, rice mills are introduced and although they are on the rise in the upland villages too, many women of ethnic minorities in the uplands wake up early in the morning to pound rice, a laborious task. Possibly, only fetching firewood is more of a burden in the lowlands because the wood has to be sought much further away from the villages. However, this is not a certainty because even in the upland areas the forests providing firewood are retiring at alarming rates due to the slash-and-burn practices. Firewood collection is often a task of
men and women or children and women, depending on the custom. The distance to collect the firewood from will influence the workload of the collectors.

Besides the lower conditions for infrastructure and public services and the heavier reproductive activities, it is hard to compare which has the heavier work, the system of swidden agriculture or paddy growing in the lowlands. Some trends can be observed in terms of labor but the real situation has to be studied for each ethnic group separately. The clearing and breaking of new upland grounds is one of those tasks typically done by men, sometimes with help of the women. This is comparable to ploughing in the lowlands which is also mostly done by men. Weeding might be more difficult in the uplands due to hard soils but the soil in irrigated land can be just as hard with very persistent weeds after a few years of irrigation. Both in uplands and lowlands, weeding is mostly done by women and children. It might seem that carrying the rice harvest to the rice storage is easier and more convenient in the lowlands than on mountain slopes but what about standing for many days with a bended back to transplant rice? Those tasks are mainly done by male and female farmers together.

Since irrigation is increasingly introduced to the lowlands, the workload in agriculture is increasing too. Before, there was a break to growing rice during the dry season but with irrigation, rice cultivation just continues with breaks of only one or two months in between growing seasons. Before, women used to have time to do weaving during the dry season but nowadays they grow paddy during the day and often weave during the night. Besides, irrigation brings more work in terms of maintaining and operating the water system, battling increased pests and diseases,

A new phenomenon is labor migration especially by men but also by boys and girls. Men will still do ploughing for the wet rice season (and for the dry season when the land is irrigated) but after that go to town as laborers. Near Vientiane City female farmers are seen doing ploughing and driving two-wheel tractors, the domain of male farmers before. This means that female farmers do participate in all agricultural labor which might be viewed as a positive sign but also that the workload of female farmers is increasing which might become problematic in the near future.

The comparison between life in the lowlands and in the uplands shows that life in the uplands is probably harder in terms of reproductive activities, of access to services and maybe in terms of agricultural workload. But for agricultural production it might be that the workload for paddy growing in the lowlands is gradually increasing due to the introduction of irrigation. Near the towns in the lowlands there is a growing tendency for labor migration by men which leaves more work for female farmers.

5.2 Vulnerability Index
For all ethnic groups the summary sheets give a vulnerability index. This index is not really a characteristic to typify the group but a prognosis for the chances to survive in the way the ethnic group existed until now, under increasing development interventions and outside influence.
The index might serve as a guideline for the Field Teams for the degree of care to take while undertaking interventions. The vulnerability index could indicate how aware of their own image and impact in the villages the Field Teams need to be.

6. CONCERNS AND IMPLICATIONS

Because many projects in Lao PDR have either a ‘Women in Development’ or a ‘Gender in Development’ component, experience in working with gender issues is available. Some aspects are known to have been neglected recurrently and therefore need specific attention in the course of Gender in Development efforts. These aspects are briefly described below. Mostly, it is not possible to pay attention to all issues at the same time and the Field Teams have to make a strategic choice depending on their own analysis in the different villages.

6.1 Benefits

Project activities are undertaken in order to produce benefits for a selected group of people. Very often a project proposal does not state clearly who will be the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are mentioned in a neutral sense as ‘people’, ‘villagers’ and ‘farmers’. The use of these neutral words does not highlight any particular group, nor does it distinguish between men and women. This could mean that every member belonging to the mentioned group will benefit equally but mostly this is not the case. Even if the project intends to benefit everyone equally it will most often not be able to do so in practice. In order to benefit everyone, from all different subgroups and men and women, equally, a plan of action needs to be made to systematically involve everyone of the intended beneficiaries from planning to implementation and evaluation.

It is often believed that benefits for a village, or for a group of men, will automatically benefit women and families. But this is not a certainty and should be studied beforehand. Analysis of who will have the control over end products (e.g., NTFPs), who will keep profits from selling and who will use the profits, is important in finding out about the real beneficiaries. This is only referring to financial benefits but analysis should also be made for other kind of benefits indirectly and directly brought by the project. E.g., a project will bring information to the village and the village will become more known to the outside world which in turn could be beneficial for the villagers.

6.2 Training

Much attention is paid to the contents and methodology in training courses. Much less attention is paid to selection and targeting of participants. Too often, training topics are taught to people who are not in a situation to implement the learning in practice. There are some reasons for this mismatch of training contents and participants. One reason is that development workers have to start working with local authorities when entering a village. It is not always easy to convince the local authorities that they might be the leaders of the village but
that they are not meant to be the specific beneficiaries for the project. Development workers might feel required to include the local authorities as participants to training events. If the quota of training events is filled up with local authorities who are not the actual target group, the project can not achieve its goal. But if the local authorities are left out completely, it might also backfire on the project activities because the authorities like to know what is going on. And in order to know what is going on, they should be included in project activities. However, it could also be tried to include authorities as advisors and give them other kind of side benefits (like status, food that the project takes to the village, construction of a latrine at the chief’s house, bringing a accu or generator when the project team would stay very often in the chief’s house). And, it might also be that after joining a few times in training events, the local authorities find it takes too much of their time and start to send other people.

Another reason is that many development workers do not have a community development background. They are not aware of the existence of subgroups in a village, of steps in development and responses of communities to development interventions. Sometimes, they have the naive view that topics taught and support given to some villagers will spread automatically whereas in reality the benefits will mainly stay with the people who were involved in practice. Attention should be paid to targeting the right group of people. This attention should start with knowing the villages where the project activities will take place. Data of villages can be collected from secondary sources at the district offices and by RRA/PRA exercises with the villagers. From these data it can be learned who inhabits a village, what different groups need and how a project can support in finding solutions to remove constraints in working towards those needs.

A third reason is that even when a project targeted and selected the right people for training events, the wrong people are invited. This can happen when the project gives only an invitation letter to a chief or ask that chief verbally to invite a certain number of participants. In this way, the chief or local authorities have to decide on the participants. Even when they have been given criteria for the type of participants, they might forget or interpret it differently. Especially, when they are not used to work with criteria, they will not understand the purpose of it.

The above reasons for wrong targeting and selection apply specifically to women. This is because local authorities will not think about women as target group except for the chief of LWU in the village or when it is a ‘women’ project dealing with reproductive related activities like nutrition, children or making clothes (and so, weaving). And if women are invited, they might just been told to come at a certain time, a certain place, without further explanation of objectives and programme. The latter way of invitation is not very encouraging and women who have a lot of other things to do, might not feel inspired to come at all.

6.3 Heterogeneity
In community development it is important to identify subgroups to target the project activities more precise and to give groups that otherwise would not have the opportunity a chance. But there is a risk in the identification of subgroups. The larger an identified subgroup, the larger the risk that differences between members of the subgroup are overlooked. This does not sound logical at first. But the sheer recognition of the existence of a subgroup, gives rise to a tendency to deal with the subgroup as a whole. If a subgroup is small, it means that a small number of people is treated the same way. If a subgroup is larger, it means that a large number of people is treated the same way and the injustice done to individual differences is greater.

One of the easiest recognition of subgroups is the division between men and women. However, these groups are quite large which means the risk described above is large. And indeed, this risk is manifesting itself in dealing with ‘the women of a village’ in many projects. Targeting women is a priority in many projects and therefore, it is required to work with ‘the women’. But in reality, one can not speak about ‘the women’ because there are many differences between women. The failure to acknowledge this difference results in targeting and selecting the wrong women. E.g. agricultural training is often given to intelligent, fast learning women who, however, are not farmers but traders or school teachers. This shows the phenomenon that in working with village women, suddenly the employment of the women is not regarded as important anymore. But the background and lifestyle of female farmers and traders or teachers can be quite different. Another difference to be taken into account is a difference in ethnic. Ethnic groups influences behaviour, world view and customs which manifest in the position of women as described elsewhere in this report. There can also be a difference in position in the village. The head of LWU or female member of the local body of authorities, although there are very few women, has a different status than other women. Also women who are the relative of someone who is a local authority are in a different position than other women of the village. The division between richer and poorer persons does not apply in most villages in Lao PDR because everyone in one village is relatively equal because nobody owns land, at least according to the law.

6.4 Isolation of Women Issues

As mentioned before, in many projects women become a specific target group for project activities. As soon as there are specific women activities, there is a tendency among Lao male and female staff at all levels to isolate those activities from other project activities. This means that only the staff involved in the women activities should think about impact of the project for and development of female villagers. The other staff are relieved from the burden to think about women concerns because ‘another division of the project takes care already’. Clearly, this is not the way a project should work. But to have women concerns integrated in all project activities is still very difficult to achieve in practice despite of all the rhetoric in project documents.

This tendency is reinforced by a heavy reliance on the LWU to do all activities involving women, regardless of the contents of the activities. LWU has the mandate to take care of the well-being of women and therefore, issues
concerning women are handed over to LWU without a second thought. Departments do not feel responsible to think about concerns of women in their projects because they attribute that responsibility to the LWU. Already in 1993, the prime minister warned against this phenomenon:

“Local party units, administrations in several places have not paid enough attention to women and children problems, thinking that women works have been a specific duty of only the Women’s Union”.

(Speech Siphandone, LWU, 1993).

Projects should be aware of this tendency and take counteractive measures by putting effort into the integration of women issues and explaining all staff what this integration means. Separate women activities are very important for building confidence among women and giving their families an increased income which in turn will give the women a higher status in the community. But these separate activities should be placed in a context of an integrative approach.

6.5 Slowing Down

Throughout ‘Gender in Development’ guidelines it is recommended to involve women in all project activities from the beginning to the end. However, it must be understood by projects that this has implications for planning, implementation and budget.

In Lao PDR, and especially in remote and mountaneous areas, the majority of the women is illiterate and can not even speak the official Lao language. Besides, many women have a very low education which makes them learn new things slowly. If a project dedicates itself to the integration of women concerns into all activities, this means the staff will have to work with the less educated and illiterate people.

Firstly, staff will need more than the usual time to prepare themselves to work with less educated and illiterate persons. For training, for exercises like used in RRA and for planning by villagers, different methods are required for literate persons than for illiterate persons. Most staff is more trained to work with literate people than with illiterate. They will have to study appropriate methodologies and find or develop appropriate training materials. Secondly, working with uneducated people, regardless if the work consists of interviews, meetings, collecting data in the field or explaining something, will take longer than with more educated people. The staff has to take an attitude of patience and find out what the people know already from their own experience and start from there instead of starting from an assumed level of knowledge which is available when people have had basic education.

The consequence of the above is that the planning of project activities should take into account that field work will go slower with uneducated and illiterate people and that staff need more time to prepare. The budget will reflect this longer preparation and field work time and the need for different, often more expensive than for literate people, training materials.
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Human Resources Operations Division, Country Department I, East Asia and Pacific Region.
According to the ToR of the NTFP project and based on the objectives, the GD Team notices that this project is under the responsibility of DOF. Therefore, we would like to know DOF’s stand on the NTFP project as a basis for our work and to help the NTFP project’s work. The following is according to an interview with Mr. Bounthong Xaisida Vice-Director of DoF:

1. **Does the DoF have specific regulations for NTFPs?**
   Now, DoF is still on the process to write some proposal for DoF policies to present to the Ministry of Forestry for approval. Even DoF does not have the specific policy on NTFPs but every year we have guidelines and rules on NTFPs and we try to propagate widely to the concerned people to know and understand it.

2. **Does the DoF have a policy on GiD?**
   If yes, how does it relate to the policy on NTFPs?
   Under the Institutional Strengthening Project of Lao-Sida Cooperation, DoF used to mention the importance of Gender in Development. Now, we are in process of studying and finding out ways to implement it. The objectives are to promote and improve the role of women in involving in forestry work and specifically, to involve in the forest conservation.

3. **Does the DoF have a policy to improve and build up female officers in the forestry field or not?**
   **What do the female officers do in the forestry field?**
   DoF always has the policy to promote female staff. We do not differentiate between sexes of the students who applied to continue their studies in the forestry school; there are the same conditions for men and women. Beside that, we have the policy to promote and welcome ethnic female staff to work in forestry work.

   We know that women have a lot of constraints and limitations so, men should learn and understand gender issues in order to promote and improve women. DoF promoted female staff too, like giving them more chance to continue studying abroad. The percentage of female staff in DoF is 25 to 30%. Nowadays, JVC and CUSO help DoF in building volunteer staff at village level to broaden the work of forestry.

4. **What do you think, in future to develop GiD in the NTFPs project activities?**
   According to the Party and Government policies, NTFPs project activities should deeply study the potential of women in rural areas and find out ways to develop the strategy of the complete cycle of improving NTFPs like planting, conserving, processing, and marketing. Women should be stimulated to learn about the importance of forest, the importance of conservation the forest, to protect and conserve by themselves the food resources and use the medicinal sources from the forest. The NTFPs Project could support marketing study, study on the methods of processing and exchange information data with our neighbor countries.
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

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Deputy Director Vientiane International Consultants, Vientiane, Lao PDR
APPENDIX 5

LOCATION OF RESOURCES
(In Lao P.D.R.)

Community Aid Abroad (CAA)
That Luang Road, Vientiane.

Enfants et Developpement (EED)
Ban Naxay, Vientiane.

Ecole Sans Frontieres (ESF)
Ban Naxay, Vientiane

National Library
Sethathirath Road, Vientiane.

Quaker Service Laos (QSL)
Ban Thong Kang, Vientiane.

Strengthening Irrigation Department Project (SRIDP)
Department of Irrigation
Anou Road, Vientiane.

The World Conservation Union (IUCN)
15 Fa Ngum Road, Vientiane.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Library
Phon Kheng Road, Vientiane.

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Ban BeungKhaNgong, Tha Deua Road, Vientiane.
Gender and Development Consultancy, 1/96

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background
The Project Agreement between the GoN and IUCN prescribed that specialist advice on gender issues be obtained in the first half year of the Project. Specifically, the Agreement stated that:

“During the first half year of the project, you will retain an expert on gender-aspects to set up a plan in which these aspects are worked out. This plan will be submitted together with the first half-yearly report on the project.” (Letter dated 07.02.95 to IUCN from the Minister For Development Cooperation, GoN).

The Project’s Annual Plan for 1995/96 included the following objective:

“To ensure that the methods, information, and solutions used by the Project take account of equity and gender issues, to the fullest extent possible.”

The Annual Plan also prescribed the engagement of specialist consultants to:

“develop and/or refine RRA and PRA guidelines used by field teams for investigation and participatory planning at pilot sites; and

advise the Project how best to address gender and equity issues in all stages of Project planning, implementation and monitoring.”

The consultant’s reports are intended to assist the Project to adopt international best practice, to improve the way the Project works in villages in regard to dealing with gender and equity issues, and to ensure that the Project’s methods are appropriate to the specific social and physical characteristics of pilot sites.

The Project requires the services of gender specialists to advise the Project on how to ensure that gender and development issues are considered to the fullest extent possible in all components of Project work.

Objectives
The objectives of this consultancy are to:

1. Provide background information and commentary on the nature of rural communities in which the Project is working, specifically related to gender differences and the objectives and activities of this Project. This will include an identification of the gender issues that should be considered by the Project in its work in villages and in Project management generally.

2. Review the Project’s current capacity and methods for undertaking participatory planning and action in villages and provide comments, advice, guidelines and recommendations for improving this capacity and methods to better take account of the gender issues identified above.

3. Review the Project’s current capacity and methods for considering gender issues in all Project components and provide comments, advice, guidelines and recommendations for improving the way the Project addresses relevant issues that are identified above. These inputs from the consultant can be presented in the form of a plan of action for the Project, which includes a strategy, activities,
timetable and costs for how the improvements are to be realised over a specific time period.

**Tasks and Outputs**

In order to achieve objective 1, it is envisaged that the consultant’s team will:

1.1 Study Project documents and discuss the Project’s strategy, objectives and activities with Project staff.

1.2 Obtain information about the types of social and physical environments in which the Project is working.

1.3 Undertake a review of the literature relevant to the Project’s aims and context and identify key gender and development issues related to these aims and context.

1.4 Consult and discuss these issues with appropriate organisations and resource persons.

1.5 Write a brief background paper to inform the Project about the relevant existing knowledge and views concerning gender and development and to identify clearly the key issues for the Project’s village-level work and for Project Management generally. Three copies of this background paper are to be submitted with the computer file or files on an IBM compatible diskette, using the Word for Windows version 6.0 software.

In order to achieve objective 2, it is envisaged that the consultant’s team will:

2.1 Jointly, plan field trips to visit each of the project’s three Field Teams, for approximately five days each.

For each field trip:

2.2 Undertake a one day workshop with Field Team members to introduce the consultants and the purposes of the consultancy and to engage the Field Team in the process itself.

2.3 Spend at least two days (must include at least one overnight stay) in one or more villages to accompany the Field Team in their normal participatory planning work so as to observe the Field Team’s interactions with local people.

2.4 Facilitate a debriefing session for the Field Team, following the village stay.

2.5 Review the field report written by the Field Team about the village stay, after it becomes available.

Following the completion of all field visits:

2.6 Prepare a written summary of the main findings from field trips (including workshops, village stays, debriefing sessions, reports by field teams) and prepare a detailed report containing comments, advice, guidelines and recommendations for improving the Field Team’s capacity and methods for undertaking participatory planning and action in villages, relevant to the issues identified through tasks 1.1 to 1.5 above.

In order to achieve objective 3, it is envisaged that the consultant’s team will:

3.1 Study Project documents and discuss the Project’s structure, planning cycle, strategy, objectives and activities with Project staff.
3.2 Obtain information about current and past implementation of the Project and determine the skills, level of understanding, support, and motivational factors of Project staff related to the key gender issues.

3.3 Summarise in writing, the current situation of how gender issues are integrated into Project management.

3.4 Prepare a draft plan of action describing the preferred situation of gender integration for the Project and how the Project can get there.

3.5 Present the draft findings and outputs of the consultancy to senior Project staff and participate in discussions to obtain feedback and advice from Project staff for consideration in finalising outputs.

3.6 Prepare and submit three copies of the final plan and accompanying documents, plus the computer files on an IBM compatible diskette, using the Word for Windows version 6.0 software.