

South East Asia Community Access Programme (SEACAP)

A New Approach

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Abstract

Dependable access to social and economic opportunities is essential for reducing poverty and accelerating growth. Efficient and affordable transport is a necessary pre-condition for rural communities to access these opportunities. It facilitates trade and integration, is crucial for advances in agriculture, and is fundamental to human development, including the delivery of health and education services to poor women and men. Improved access is directly linked to improved standards of living in rural communities.

DFID's role in the transport sector is to influence regional policy and achieve sustainable poverty reduction, pro-poor growth and contribute to the effectively addressing gender related issues. Within the framework of the Global Transport Knowledge Partnership, DFID is funding SEACAP and working actively with other development partners, including the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, and forging close links with recipient governments.

SEACAP is a poverty-targeted transport initiative, aimed at improving sustainable access focused on the needs of poor women and men in rural communities, with projects currently in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos PDR. The programme's goal is to identify and support the uptake of low cost, sustainable solutions for rural access. Fundamental to the approach is maximising the use of local resources, which include labour, materials and most importantly ingenuity. To do this, the programme provides funding for applied research, its dissemination to implementing agencies and support to help them adopt improved techniques and approaches. This programme has now expanded to twenty-four projects within the three countries. The individual projects demonstrate best practice responses to local demands and in combination create a comprehensive multi-level approach with high expectation of the results being mainstreamed into national practice.

In both man-made and natural disasters, re-establishing access to affected communities is often one of the highest priorities. SEACAP will be carrying out work that will help to provide the knowledge and tools to mitigate dangerous and costly slope failures on roadways in hilly and mountainous terrains. SEACAP's work in appropriate road technologies has influenced work in Afghanistan through the National Emergency Employment Program, where after the man-made disaster of decades of violent conflict, the reconstruction of the rural road network has been the principle means of establishing year round access, productive rural infrastructure, generating employment and kick starting local economies. SEACAP has also influenced work in the Tsunami reconstruction in Sri Lanka, where rubble from the disaster has been used as a roadbase building material in reconstructing access roads.

This paper presents an overview of the programme with its objectives and goals. The paper highlights the progress SEACAP is making pertaining to the fundamentals of rural access, including appropriate road-construction technologies engendering participation and ownership by the communities.

Keywords: rural, access, sustainability, poverty, knowledge, mainstream.

David Salter is a Canadian engineer currently managing the SEACAP program. He has extensive working experience in Canada, Thailand, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Laos. He has worked in both development and humanitarian fields. He was elected a Fellow of the ASEAN Federation of Engineering Organizations, and awarded a Gold Medal for Development by the Prime Minister of Cambodia.