



Roads for Development – Cluster Independent Final Evaluation

ILO DC/SYMBOL: **TIM/12/01/AUS; TLS/16/03/AUS; TLS/21/01/AUS; TLS/20/01/RBS**

Type of Evaluation: Clustered

Evaluation timing: Final

Evaluation nature: Independent

Project countries: Timor Leste

P&B Outcome(s):

- 1) Employment Promotion: More women and men have access to productive employment, decent work and income opportunities
- 2) Outcome 1: More and better jobs for inclusive growth and improved youth employment prospects
- 3 & 4) Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all.

SDG(s): **Goal 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. **Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. **Goal 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. **Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

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This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.



**Roads for Development
Cluster evaluation of four projects (R4D and RBSA projects)
in Timor-Leste
2012-2022**

6 February 2023

Evaluation Title	Roads for Development – Cluster Independent Final Evaluation
ILO DC Symbol	<p><u>Project 1</u>: Roads for Development TIM/12/01/AUS (1 March 2012 – 31 March 2017)</p> <p><u>Project 2</u>: The Road for Development Support Program (Phase II) TLS/16/03/AUS (April 2017- 30 June 2021)</p> <p><u>Project 3</u>: Road for Development Support Program Bridging Phase - TLS/21/01/AUS (1 July 2021- 31 December 2022)</p> <p><u>Project 4</u>: Supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through targeted employment-intensive emergency public works for the rural poor and vulnerable in Timor-Leste- RBSA TLS176: TLS/20/01/RBS; August 2020-October 2021 (no-cost extension to 31 December 2022)</p>
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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADN	Agência do Desenvolvimento Nacional (National Development Agency)
AUD	Australian Dollar
BoQ	Bill of Quantity
CDO	Community Development Officer
CO	ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Government of Australia)
DGPW	Director-General of Public Works
DRBFC	Directorate of Roads, Bridges and Flood Control
EIIP	Employment-Intensive Investment Program
EoPO	End of Program Outcome
ERA-AF	Enhancing Rural Access – Agro-forestry (EU-funded with technical assistance from ILO)
ERD	Estrada Rural Ba Dezenvolvimentu
ESTRADA	See IRMIS
EU	European Union
GEDI	Gender and Disability Inclusion
GIS	Geographic Information System
GoA	Government of Australia
GoTL	Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMRF	Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum
IRMIS	Integrated Roads Management Information System
JCTS	Joint Contractor Tracer Study
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MLCR	Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion
MPW	Ministry of Public Works
MSA	Ministry of State Administration
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PARDEV	ILO Partnerships and Field Support
PW	Public Works
ROAP	ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
R4D/R4D-SP	Roads for Development Program (Phase I)
R4D-SP	Roads for Development - Support Program (from Phase II)
RBSA	ILO Regular Budget Supplementary Account
RRMPIS	Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy
SDP	Strategic Development Plan (of the Government of Timor-Leste for 2011-2030)
SISO	Social Inclusion and Safeguards Officer
Suco	Village
ToC	Theory of Change
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDSS	United Nations Department for Safety and Security
USD	United States Dollar

1. Executive Summary

Background

1. This evaluation presents a high-level assessment of four projects delivered in Timor-Leste – Roads for Development (**R4D Phase I** which ran from March 2012 to March 2017); the Roads for Development – Support Program (**R4D-SP Phase II** which ran from April 2017 to June 2021); the **R4D-SP Bridging Phase** (which ran from July 2021 to December 2022); and the “Supporting recovery from the COVID-19 through targeted employment intensive public works” project (or the “**RBSA project**” which ran from December 2020 to December 2022)¹. A partnership between the Government of Timor Leste (GoTL), the Government of Australia (GoA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), these projects supported the country’s capacity to manage the rehabilitation and maintenance of core rural roads to ensure that “*women and men in rural Timor-Leste are deriving social and economic benefits from improved rural road access*”. The evaluation was conducted in November and December 2022 and included a document review, key informant interviews, and site visits to six of the thirteen municipalities.

Overall conclusions of the evaluation

2. The R4D projects “put rural roads on the map” as a development priority in Timor-Leste. Access by rural communities to quality roads infrastructure increases their economic output, creates employment, and facilitates access to education, health and other community services. It improves people’s lives and allows their communities to thrive. By the end of 2022, almost 1000 kilometres of rural roads had been rehabilitated and maintained through the projects and all the communities consulted in the evaluation attested to the profound impact the Program had made on their quality of life.
3. Building on the Program’s significant impact, future work in Timor-Leste requires a more holistic approach to the development of all classes of roads. This will require a more integrated planning approach that involves the cooperation of multiple ministries. Despite the Program’s efforts to encourage such cooperation, significant, long-standing barriers will need to be overcome for it to be achieved.
4. The national institutions the projects were designed to support had very low capacity to manage rural roads in 2012 and the Program applied labour-based methods to demonstrate how these roads could be rehabilitated in a way that maximised benefits to communities. Institutional capacity to manage this work had improved and the Program now leaves behind a legacy of trained personnel, documented systems that are in use, a Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS), and a market of trained rural roads contractors that can participate in competitive tenders and operate as viable businesses. The Program embedded decent work and social justice principles in its delivery and promote these more generally in public works in Timor-Leste. More work is needed to preserve and build on this legacy.
5. From the start, the Program aimed to build the foundations of local capacity by developing strategies, systems and procedures and by training government staff and contractors. Initially, it also involved playing a more hands-on role in rural roads planning and implementation. Subsequent phases were expected to place greater emphasis on “support and guidance” but there were many factors that made it difficult to wean local institutions from more direct operational assistance and to hand over to them all aspects of rural roads management. The Program operated for over ten years and, in that time, had to navigate ongoing political uncertainty, budgetary and civil service recruitment freezes, frequent turnover of key senior officials and

¹ Throughout this report, when reference is made to this cluster of projects as a whole, they will be referred to as “the R4D Program”, “the Program” or “the projects”. The individual projects will be referenced as follows: the first project will be referred to as “R4D” or “Phase I”, the second as “R4D-SP” or “Phase II”, the third as “The Bridging Phase”, and the fourth as “the RBSA project” (referencing the ILO funding source for this project, the Regular Budget Supplementary Account).

ministers, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Alerted to the risk that “capacity substitution” could continue indefinitely if progress in capacity development was slow, the donor became concerned that the project was measuring the value of its work too much terms of kilometres of road laid rather than by how much administrative and policy development capacity had been transferred to government agencies.

6. In practice, making this transition from “doing less and supporting more” was not straightforward. Getting rural roads built was in everyone’s interests, including the GoTL and the donor², and it was always going to be hard for the Program to stand back, draw a line in the sand, and potentially let the whole physical road rehabilitation program grind to a halt while it focused on overcoming longstanding political and administrative obstructions and resourcing constraints that continue to this day. Even deep into Phase II, the Program was still playing a hands-on role in municipalities simply because the capacity was not yet in place and resources had not been made available by the GoTL. In the end, the Program did not get the balance right in making the transition and often did too much, but to suggest that it stubbornly stuck to road building and “capacity substitution” because of its own operational inclinations or an “engineering mindset” would be simplistic and unfair.

Findings against OECD/DAC criteria

Impact

7. The rehabilitation of rural roads through the projects has had a significant positive impact on communities but, because of the importance of road connectivity, similar improvements in the broader road network are needed before the full potential impact can be achieved.
8. Over the life of the Program, some 46,900 households were reported to have access to improved, year-round, motorable rural roads. USD 11 million dollars were paid in wages to local workers for 2 million person-days of work of which 24.9 per cent were paid to women and 2.96 per cent to people with disabilities. 24 per cent of total project costs were paid in labour costs.
9. From a very low base and after ten years of Program support, significant progress has been made in building the capacity of GoTL institutions in rural roads management. Further technical support and guidance would continue to strengthen functions and service delivery.
10. The development of a market of rural roads contractors with the capability to deliver quality results using local resources was an important impact of the projects. Work supporting the enabling environment for these businesses is needed and their investment in skills and quality needs to be recognised in mainstream (i.e., non-R4D) procurement processes to drive continuous improvements in quality and efficiency.
11. The R4D projects influenced the quality and quantity of work in an important sector.

Sustainability

12. The sustainability of many of the Program’s achievements is good overall but depends on the willingness and commitment of key stakeholders to maintain and continuously improve the systems and standards that have been established and to continue to build the capacity of national and municipal staff. The durability of the rural roads that have been rehabilitated through the project will depend on a clear commitment to maintenance including a dedicated annual budget.

Effectiveness

13. The changing emphasis of the projects over ten years makes a collective assessment of their effectiveness difficult. Independent evaluations have generally reported good effectiveness overall in delivering most planned outputs despite many complex operational and institutional

² The donor continued to request the Program to report on kilometres of road laid/rehabilitated even after it was agreed that this should not be a measure of Program success.

challenges. More support is required before the GoTL can effectively manage rural roads at the national and municipal levels independently and in a sustainable way.

14. All phases of the Program addressed gender and disability inclusion in their design and achieved solid results in policy development, institutional awareness-raising and capacity development, support for female-led businesses, and the direct employment of women and people with disability in roads work.
15. Embedding the projects within the MPW was an effective strategy overall. The project's development of the RRMPIS was also an important innovation for Timor-Leste, creating a guiding framework for planning rural roads works and for preparing annual budget submissions, though the GoTL funding allocations did not always adhere to it in practice³.
16. The projects did well to continue project activities despite the disruption caused by the pandemic and took clear action to minimize risk to staff, communities and contractors. The RBSA-funded COVID response project provided a rapid response benefitting those most affected by the crisis.

Coherence

17. Over its different phases, the Program linked well with other related development interventions in Timor-Leste though its later efforts to support the integration of rural roads policy and planning into a more holistic policy approach (led by the ADB) are yet to show results. The mechanisms introduced by the GoTL to improve coherence and collaboration between GoTL agencies have not been activated and this has adversely affected project performance.

Efficiency

18. Previous evaluations found that project efficiency was generally good but noted that a more structured approach to capacity transfer through its "embedded" model of support – defining more clearly the points at which functional autonomy are reached - may have enhanced results and enabled a more efficient re-focusing of Program resources and support. Some planned activities and positions were cancelled in Phase II and some of these left the project in a weaker position to achieve some goals.
19. The consistent and focused approach to rural roads development through a single program implemented for over ten years also had significant efficiency benefits. The consistency of support provided to the GoTL and to the construction sector and the standardisation of approaches and work methods created a much-needed point of stability in an often-volatile context in the development of the capacity of the public and private sector to plan, manage and implement rural road works. In other developing countries, capacity development efforts can be fragmented by multiple agencies working in this space.

Relevance

20. To maintain relevance over time, the Program adapted reasonably well to changing circumstances and priorities. While the Program could clearly demonstrate the relevance of the rural road improvements themselves, it was less able to demonstrate the relevance of its capacity building efforts by accelerating the handover of operational responsibilities. This was made difficult by political, budgetary and administrative barriers and by uncertainty over decentralisation of these responsibilities.
21. The relevance of the Program's efforts in building capacity at the municipal (decentralised) level was constrained by continuing delays within the GoTL in making decentralisation a reality and in clarifying roles and responsibilities. The Program has developed systems, procedures, and

³ In Phase II, following the 2017 elections, there was a period where an impasse over the General State Budget meant that no funds were available to any GoTL ministries and this was also a factor in RRMPIS funding allocations not being made.

technical manuals suitable for use by municipalities, but their institutionalisation at that level is incomplete.

22. Supporting Timor-Leste to improve its rural roads infrastructure has provided a platform to advance decent work and social justice in rural communities.

Key Lessons

23. Constraints in the Program’s enabling environment – identified in multiple evaluations – need to be addressed and having the right balance of skills on the project team to support this is important. Development cooperation projects need support from all stakeholders with similar interests and facing similar obstacles.
24. Inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination is needed to ensure that there is clarity over roles, responsibilities and resources in public works projects, especially in an environment when decentralization is meant to be occurring. Political will needs to be cultivated at higher levels to ensure that planned coordination mechanisms are activated.
25. Clearer measurement of institutional capacity building efforts, including defining points where institutional autonomy is considered achieved, would assist project efficiency and effectiveness.
26. The embedded model of institutional support can be an effective mode of delivery for this capacity building provided there are identified counterparts or units within the Ministry who will ultimately take the reins and there is a clear plan in place for handover.

Recommendations

27. **Recommendation 1:** Invest in the development or adoption of an institutional capacity development framework as a structured process that can support the ILO in the design and implementation of projects and interventions that build capacity at a national or sub-national level.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
ILO (ROAP, PARDEV & EVAL)	Medium	Medium	Medium

28. **Recommendation 2:** Pursue opportunities to continue to add value to the GoTL’s work in rural roads and other infrastructure development by promoting Decent Work and social justice.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
ILO (CO & ROAP)	High	Medium	Medium

29. **Recommendation 3:** As policy contexts and donor priorities evolve, future EIIP projects should use the scoping of new project phases to consider a more comprehensive review of project strategy and staffing. They should also consider the value that might be added by involving other ILO departments and programs.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
ILO (EIIP Branch)	Medium	Low	Low

30. **Recommendation 4:** Ensure ILO tripartite social partners are meaningfully involved in all stages of future EIIP projects’ design, implementation, and review.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
ILO (CO & ROAP)	Low	Low	Low

31. **Recommendation 5:** Ensure that all project resources generated by the project, including technical manuals, guidelines and training materials, are kept safe and accessible within GoTL institutions and are also uploaded to the ILO’s global EIIP literature database.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
GoTL (MPW), ILO (CO)	High	Low	Low

2. About the evaluation

2.1 Background

32. Commencing in March 2012, the R4D Program⁴ has been the primary source of support to GoTL's rural roads development program. With some 70 per cent of the population living in rural areas, the degraded condition of these roads prior to the Program had been a major barrier to local economic and social development and to equitable access to basic human services and to commercial centres. The Government of Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011-2030 recognises these barriers and prioritizes roads infrastructure noting that an "extensive network of quality and well-maintained roads is essential to connect our communities, promote rural development, industry and tourism, and provide access to markets." The SDP further calls for the rehabilitation and maintenance of all rural roads using employment-intensive technologies where appropriate to boost local employment creation.
33. National capacity to address these priorities had been very low. Prior to 2012, the GoTL had no staff or resources allocated to rural roads development and lacked systems, procedures and standards to manage design, planning, procurement, engineering supervision, and maintenance. It also lacked capacity to maximise the social and community economic benefits that can flow from rural roads rehabilitation, including local employment and income generation from roads work, advancing social inclusion and gender equality, ensuring environmental and occupational health and safety measures were in place, and supporting the development of viable and skilled market of local construction contractors which could do the work at a high standard.
34. The ILO had supported infrastructure development in Timor-Leste from the earliest days of the country's independence, incorporating decent work, international labour standards and social justice principles in the process. This work involved institutional capacity building **but** was primarily an emergency employment response and was conceived as a way of addressing a turbulent, post-conflict political situation where unemployment and civil unrest were high and virtually no cash was circulating outside urban areas. Using its expertise in labour-based reconstruction methods, past projects involving rural roads work included Servi Nasuan (Work for the Nation) in 2006, Serbisu Ba Dame (Work for Peace) in 2007, and TIM-Works from 2008-10.
35. These projects achieved good results but were limited by their lack of scale and by the fact that they did not directly support capacity building in the institution responsible for roads, the Ministry of Public Works (MPW). Instead they worked mainly with the ILO's usual development counterpart the employment ministry (SEFOPE⁵). From 2009, ILO began scoping a project concept designed to address these limitations.
36. The ILO approached the donor community and the Australian Government, through AusAID⁶, supported the draft project concept and increased its scope and scale, with funding of AUD 36 million. The project would combine "physical works, including rehabilitation and maintenance of rural roads, institutional support and development, and associated capacity building initiatives both with GoTL and at local contractor level". At this time, the main development concern was the lack or poor quality of infrastructure in rural areas which was seen as major cause of the slow pace of development outside urban areas, especially as this affected individual livelihoods. It was also seen as a contributor to civil unrest as large numbers of internally displaced persons amassed in and around Dili. Longer-term, investments in rural roads would contribute to economic and

⁴ Throughout this report, when reference is made to this cluster of projects as a whole, they will be referred to as "the R4D Program", "the Program" or "the projects". The individual projects will be referenced as follows: the first project will be referred to as "R4D" or "Phase I", the second as "R4D-SP" or "Phase II", the third as "The Bridging Phase", and the fourth as "the RBSA project" (referencing the ILO funding source for this project, the Regular Budget Supplementary Account).

⁵ Specifically, the Short-Term Employment Creation Department of the Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment.

⁶ AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development, was merged into the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in 2014. "Australian Aid" is used as a brand name to identify projects supported by the Australian Government.

social development, generate employment, and reduce civic unrest. To these ends, the project was primarily about “providing rural Timor-Leste with a functioning and appropriate rural road network” and “where appropriate” would apply labour-based approaches and technologies⁷. R4D was the result.

2.2 The R4D Projects

37. This evaluation presents a high-level assessment of four projects that were delivered over the next ten and a half years either under the broad R4D banner or were closely associated with it: Roads for Development (**R4D Phase I** which ran from March 2012 to March 2017); the Roads for Development – Support Program (**R4D-SP Phase II** which ran from April 2017 to June 2021); the **R4D-SP Bridging Phase** (which ran from July 2021 to December 2022); and the “Supporting recovery from the COVID-19 through targeted employment intensive public works” project (or the “**RBSA project**” which ran from December 2020 to December 2022) These projects each had somewhat different rationales reflecting needs as they evolved (see **Impact**

Finding 1: The rehabilitation of rural roads through the R4D Program has had a significant positive impact on communities. Because of the importance of road connectivity, similar improvements in the broader road network are needed before the full potential impact can be achieved.

38. From the outset, the Program had enormous potential for impact on the lives of the 70 percent of Timor-Leste’s population who live in rural areas. Rural roads were in a degraded state before the project with only 13 percent of the country’s 1,975 km of core rural roads considered to be in a good condition. This restricted economic activity, especially access to markets and the transportation of goods, and the ability of community members to access basic social services including medical treatment and education.

39. In the end, 987 kilometres of rural roads – a half of the country’s rural road network – were rehabilitated through the Program. In the process:

- some 46,900 households were given access to improved, year-round, motorable rural roads.
- USD 11 million dollars were paid in wages to local workers for 2 million person-days of work.
- 24.9 per cent of these wages were paid to women and 2.96 per cent to people with disabilities.
- 24 per cent of total project costs were paid in labour costs.

40. The projects conducted several studies designed to measure this impact and their findings are summarised below. The current evaluation visited six of the thirteen municipalities to gather additional information from community stakeholders on project impact and this is also summarised below along with information included in past evaluation reports.

Evidence of impact from project studies and reports

41. In Phase I, impact studies were undertaken to assess changes in people’s livelihoods and access to services after the completion of R4D rehabilitation and maintenance work. They collected information on different socio-economic impacts using a range of tools including focus group discussions with men and women, local business activity surveys and transport surveys. Baseline data were collected in June-August 2013 prior to the commencement of works. End-line surveys were conducted at various stages, focusing on roads where significant improvements had been made. Results illustrate the magnitude and nature of the impacts that have flowed from these improvements including:

- **Impact on travel times, traffic volumes, and transport** – traffic volumes more than doubled; travel times halved; the use of motorised transport increased; the number of people for whom walking was their main means of transport significantly decreased; and that walking was

⁷ ILO, Roads for Development (R4D) - Final Evaluation, March 2017, p.8

replaced by motorised transport to access hospitals and markets. Lack of public transport was still a constraint, but where new services were introduced, travel time savings of up to five hours were made.

- **Economic and business impacts** – income from the sale of agricultural products increased by an average of 100 percent; 30 percent of businesses along the rehabilitated roads were new (including kiosks, local construction companies and agricultural products shops); access to motorised transport enabled product diversification; roadside kiosks reported a 40 percent increase in weekly turnover; and reduced transportation costs led to a reduction in the price of construction materials and food supplies.
- **Impact on health service access** – ambulance access was greatly improved and mobile health services, were better able to reach remote communities.
- **Negative impacts** – there were reported increases in air pollution and in the number of accidents.

42. The project’s documentation of “Stories of Significant Change” included assessments made in specific communities using focus groups, business activity surveys and traffic counts and these are also indicative of these impacts. One examined the impact of a 7km road from Maumeta to Metagou in the Liquica Municipality (which the current evaluation also visited – see below). The report highlighted how the rehabilitated road had halved travel time and greatly reduced the physical burden of transporting goods on foot. One informant said:

“In the past you just walked to the market, but you could only take what you could carry on your head or your back. Carrying things this way made you very tired and you only made a little bit of money.”

43. Another study, Women and Rural Roads, highlighted the positive impact on women’s income and expenditure:

“16 out of the 28 interviewed women had experienced an increase in income since the road rehabilitation works were completed. In all of these cases their income had more than doubled. Income spending generally fell into three main categories: i) children’s schooling (four women); ii) general household consumption (11 women) and, iii) reinvestment in their livelihood activities (five women).” (p.12)

44. While pointing to some modest impacts on women’s social participation (e.g., involvement in groups, politics, social activism), the study found that these require “promotion and facilitation beyond the simple act of improving road access” (p.13).

Current community views on impact

45. The evaluation visited six municipalities (Baucau, Liquica, Ermera, Bobonaro, Viqueque and Ainaro) and met with community representatives to gather information on the impact of the Program’s roads work. All made similar observations about the dramatic impacts the projects had had on their communities but also stressed the need to build on these to maximise impact.

46. **Baucau Municipality** – two Program sites were visited - the Saelari to Chainage road (3.3km) and the Bercoli to Bahamori road (4km). Both communities reported significant improvements in terms of **access to markets and services** and **agricultural income** and benefits flowing from the employment generated. A Bahamori woman said the improved road and access to market created an **incentive to increase production** as previously there was a risk that they could not get goods to market in the rain season. Both communities also stressed the need to continue road works to maximise impact. Bahamori representatives said that it is still hard to get to hospital, especially for pregnant women. The project in Saelari highlighted the **need for an integrated roads policy approach** that would ensure that connecting municipal and national roads were also upgraded (See Case Study 2). This was an issue identified in a 2017 study prepared by the project, *Rural Access Index (RAI) - The Case of Timor-Leste* which said:

“Investments in roads need to be limited to those roads that either directly connect to places that rural people need to have access to (e.g., places of social-economic importance) or roads that connect to all-weather roads.” (p.8)

Case Study 2 – Saelari to Chainage Road in Baucau Municipality

This 3.3km section of road was rehabilitated in 2019 with work allocated through two contracts, including one with a business owned and managed by a woman. The road was in good condition, significantly better than the municipal road that led to it.

Community representatives explained that, prior to the R4D works, it had been extremely difficult for community members to get to local or municipal markets. The situation now was much improved, especially to the local market. This had enabled increases in volume and quality of produce.

Supplies to the community have also improved leading to better quality of life. Car hire costs are cheaper and there was less risk of damage to vehicles. In terms of social benefits, prior to the road, pregnant women or those facing a health emergency had to be carried by hand to the nearest accessible point because ambulances could not reach the community. Access to school also much improved.

The cash that flowed to the community from employment had a very positive effect. People in the community struggled to find regular employment. Beside some agriculture initiatives and small kiosks, there no industries that can provide regular income to the community’s members. The cash earned during the roads works was mainly used for home improvement, purchase of medication, school items, food and some invested in small businesses, like kiosks, husbandry (pigs and chicken).

While the community saw a clear impact from the Program, the very poor quality of the connecting municipal road was a cause for concern. The evaluation team experienced first-hand the degraded state of this road which leads to the road rehabilitated by Program. This longer and quite dangerous stretch of road needs to be navigated if community members wish to access larger markets in Baucau.

To maximize project impact, improved connectivity was needed. The Chefe de Suco said that at the time of the initial consultation over the project, the community argued strongly for another section of road (currently classified as an “E Road”) to be improved as an alternative to the existing municipal road. This road was on flatter ground and would be easier to repair. It was in good condition in colonial days and enabled a viable palm oil industry which the community was keen to revive.

This Program site therefore highlighted both the impact of the work done so far and the need for a more integrated road policy.

47. **Liquica Municipality** – The evaluation included a visit to the Metagou Suco where a 7km stretch of road had been rehabilitated in 2016. This road was quite steep and, according to the Chefe de Suco, only small quantities of goods could be brought to market by foot prior to its rehabilitation. With motorised transport now possible, **more goods can be transported** and the journey time is much improved. **Pregnant women** now had the security of being able to be transported by ambulance to hospital to give birth. The cash injection provided by road works helped fund **education, medicine, and business investment**. A community teacher said that **school attendance** had improved, and children could spend more time studying and playing and less walking to and from school. In summary, as the Chefe de Suco put it:

“There’s no comparison in terms of access. Before, to get to market, we had to walk the whole way, carrying what we could. Now with motorised transport it is just a 30-minute trip. Metagou is the local hub community to access school, medical services etc. and local access has also been greatly improved. Over 200 people got work through the project since the

beginning, rotating in groups of 10 [total population is 850] – this provided a cash injection allowing purchases of medicine, schooling needs, business improvements etc.”

48. **Ermera Municipality** – Stakeholders in the Punilala community said that **transportation of goods** to and from the village was often previously done by foot or using horses – now heavy vehicles can be used, and these have improved access to services. The CDO highlighted good results in **social inclusion** with 30 percent done by women and 10 percent by people with disabilities. The project also helped address **child labour** concerns in the municipality, which has been a concern in Ermera’s coffee industry.
49. **Bobonaro Municipality** – The evaluation included a visit to the Maliana to Saburai road. Prior to rehabilitation, this could not be accessed by trucks and other heavy vehicles and **access to markets and to the Indonesian border** were restricted. This is no longer the case. As **construction materials can be more easily transported** community **housing has improved**. Local **small businesses** have increased in number and are more profitable due to the improved roads. Improved heavy vehicle road access has also enabled the **extension of the electricity supply** to remote communities.
50. **Viqueque Municipality** – The evaluation included a visit to the Ossu to Nahareca road which was rehabilitated earlier in the project. The condition of the road was still good, but preparations were underway for periodic maintenance works. The economic and social impact was described as “big and positive” including **improved access to markets, hospitals, schools and shops**. **Electricity supply** to remote areas was also being extended due to the improved road access.
51. **Ainaro Municipality** – Like the other municipalities, stakeholders referred to the impact of the rehabilitated roads in terms of **access to basic services** for communities that were often completely isolated. Stakeholders also saw a **need for a more integrated roads planning approach**. As an example, they described how several **rehabilitated rural roads come to a dead end** when they reach a river that requires a bridge over 10 meters. As this is national public works responsibility, the bridge is not incorporated in the rural road plan and during the rainy season, access to those communities is not possible because the bridges have not yet been built.
52. Other stakeholders consulted in the evaluation also stressed the significant impact the roads had made. One MPW Director who had been involved in the project since 2012 said:

“There is no doubt that the impact has been obvious and great. Communities have benefitted a lot, especially in their ability to take products to markets. In Same, there was previously no access and the roads have had a huge impact on that community. Similarly, in Viqueque, the benefits of rehabilitating a seriously deteriorated road are obvious, even with some work still incomplete.”

Previous evaluations’ assessment of project impact

53. Project evaluations gave less attention to the Program’s impact in respect of the project’s development goal (“Women and men in rural Timor-Leste are deriving social and economic benefits from improved road access”), focusing instead on “end of program outcomes” relating to capacity building of the GoTL and contractors. This was particularly the case in the 2017 Phase I final evaluation which made only a broad statement about “positive impacts... in terms of enhanced access and higher levels of income for small businesses” (p.26). The 2021 Phase II final evaluation provided more detail, describing how 157,320 men and women had gained access to 552km of improved roads, citing reductions in travel time and transport costs, increased use of motorised vehicles and the positive effect on the engagement of women in community and business events (p.31). The internal mid-term evaluation of the Bridging Phase did not cover project impacts though it recommended that “a book, report or video” be developed to document the impacts of the project.

54. DFAT's 2018 Mid-Term Review set out some key impacts including labour days created and wages paid; the high percentage of women for whom the Program had been their first experience of work in a wage-paying job; increased quality and quantity of rural roads; a 100 percent increase in weekly income; a high percentage of contractor businesses owned and run by women; and increased community income resulting in construction and renovation of houses (p.57).

Finding 2: From a low base and after ten years of Program support, significant progress has been made in building the capacity of GoTL institutions in rural roads management, but further technical support and guidance would continue to strengthen functions and service delivery.

55. R4D was introduced at a time when there were **no GoTL resources or personnel dedicated to rural roads** and **no established systems for planning and implementing works**. Such limitations were well known to the ILO from its earlier EIIP projects including significant capacity gaps in setting and applying technical standards, selection criteria, conditions of employment, training of contractors, procurement, roads maintenance methods. The project therefore started from a low base and the task of elevating institutional capacity to an autonomous level was never going to be completed quickly, especially in a context of political and institutional instability. ILO policy specialists involved at different stages of the Program who were interviewed as part of the evaluation acknowledged this:

“Previously, rural roads weren’t on the government agenda at all. In terms of capacity building, we started from scratch. Good progress has been made, but can the GoTL do this without assistance now? No.”

“This kind of capacity takes longer to build than 10 years. The ILO had the same situation in Cambodia, but it is now much more advanced, maybe 10 years ahead of Timor-Leste. Capacity in the municipalities is still nowhere near what it is in developed countries.”

“10 years might seem a long time but if you look at the starting point, it’s not. The project’s ambitions about what could be achieved were perhaps too high. It was a big achievement even putting rural roads on the agenda.”

56. The lead time required for this capacity building was also noted in the DFAT's “investment concept note” written to support the scoping of Phase II: “The experience of the Australian aid program in other sectors... has been that **10-15 years of concerted effort** is required to drive institutional change and for government to build its capacity to take on service delivery.” (pp.3-4) In this context, the project's final December 2022 report makes the important point that the Program “**was not designed as a 10-year project**” and that planning, and budget allocations have necessarily been focused on “shorter-term achievements, as opposed to long-term reforms” (p.vi).

Knowledge management capacity and the RRMPIS

57. Building capacity in knowledge management was a foundation for much of the subsequent work – “What is very important – as observed by R4D – is to establish and institutionalize technical and managerial **capacities within the Road Agency for collecting, storing, processing, analyzing and presenting data** (including the presentation of data on maps).” (ILO, 2015: 21) In Phase I, the project was instrumental in filling the initial data void in these areas and has progressively developed in subsequent phases the capacity of national counterparts to maintain and update key data and to use these to advocate for investments in rural roads.
58. The RRMPIS embodied much of this work and had the important impact of **driving a data-driven approach to rural roads management**. Many national and municipal stakeholders consulted in the evaluation saw this as a key achievement of the Program. As senior MPW official said:

“Prior to R4D, we lacked information on rural roads, and this restricted planning. The project provided the information needed, set up a planning process, and built local capacity to develop

better roads. The RRMPIS was very helpful, setting priorities, allowing budgeting over a five-year period.”

59. Endorsed by GoTL, the RRMPIS became a **key document for annual planning and budgeting** and has been used as an **advocacy tool for securing budget allocations**. While some municipal staff noted that sometimes political pressures can result in contracts being awarded that were not contemplated in the Master Plan, overall, it was described as “one of the great achievements” of the Program. The impact of this data-driven approach on GoTL capacity was best captured in a quote in a project report from a MPW official included:

*“Without the RRMPIS, we **were just fumbling or guessing** when we wanted to do a plan. If someone said, ‘let’s do this road’, we’d just follow, but we didn’t have clear information about how many people use the road or what its final outcome and benefit would be. But, with RRMPIS, we know how many people will get benefits or access to the roads.”*

60. **Annual updates** of the RRMPIS investment plans have involved both national and municipal staff and some expressed in interviews a confidence in their **capacity to do this work independently**. A new RRMPIS for the period 2023-27 has been completed following a series of workshops involving national and municipal staff.
61. GoTL commitment to the integration of rural roads planning into the big picture of a National Roads Policy has not yet been demonstrated. The Rural Access Index paper, cited earlier, pointed out how the project’s RRMPIS could lead to **greater impact if it were developed as part of a broader master plan or National Roads Policy**.

*“Another lesson learned from the R4D experience is that it would have been more effective if the Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS) was **developed as part of an overall Roads Master Plan for all classes of roads**. This would have further increased its quality as it would have looked at the overall road network in the country – including road connectivity considerations.” p.21*

62. The development of such a broader plan by the ADB was something that the Bridging Phase had intended to support but due to factors outside the Program’s control, it did not proceed. Connectivity issues are highlighted in the RRMPIS but action on these is needed. As one Municipal Director said:

*“Commitment to rural roads is good but **integration of roads planning** is needed to achieve connectivity. We need to look at rural, municipal and urban roads together.”*

Capacity in key rural roads management functions

63. The capacity of GoTL agencies in **procurement and contracting** was noted in the 2021 final independent evaluation of Phase II as having received “consistent and in-depth support over a number of years” and was highlighted as an area where Program impact was strong. It noted how the project had embedded a procurement advisor to work alongside MPW staff to guide and support their work and build capacity. By the end of Phase II, the procurement department “had a high degree of capacity” aided by the fact that many of its staff had been in their roles for extended periods. This provided a more enduring return on the project’s investment in their development. The DFAT mid-term review of Phase II also identified the solid progress made in developing capacity in this area, noting that it was more likely to be able to function independently before other functional areas (p.45) – a level that had been reached by 2020, as measured by the project’s ACDIA tool. The evaluation interviewed a senior official in the Procurement Directorate who said that the unit was now “fully prepared and confident” in their role and has reached a stage where it is leading capacity development of GoTL staff itself, with only minimal support from the Program.

64. Capacity in **social and environmental safeguards** is another functional area where project impact has been assessed as strong (again this was noted in the DFAT mid-term review as approaching an autonomous level and via the 2020 ACDIA). Training of CDOs based in the 12 municipalities and five MPW Environmental Officers as well as the development of frameworks for social and environmental safeguards have helped reinforce this capacity with GoTL agencies. Some interviews noted that there was **still a reluctance to address social safeguards and inclusion** among some MPW staff and that continued reinforcement is necessary.
65. Other functional areas are at different stages of development, but the Phase II evaluation expressed concerns that **capacity substitution was still an issue**, particularly at the municipal level where Program Regional Coordinators were still performing tasks that should have been led more by municipal staff. The HR and budgetary resourcing issues described earlier that hampered decentralization were clearly a factor in this as was the lack of commitment by the GoTL to address these constraints.
66. Some progress was noted in interviews with municipalities in performing some rural roads functions with less Program support. Municipal Directors and supervisors were increasingly performing tasks such as **contract supervision** and **road surveys** with Program support only provided for more complex cases; MPW laboratory technicians based in municipalities were doing much of the **materials testing** work; and **social and environmental safeguards** work was less dependent on Program support.

Capacity embedded in GoTL agencies in the form of systems, procedures and tools

67. As described earlier, the Program aimed to leave behind technical manuals and other documented procedures, tools and systems that would help to institutionalise practices established under the Program and provide a basis for their autonomous use and staff training. These included 13 technical manuals and an Operations Manual.
68. As at the end of December 2022, these documents had not received final approval for release as endorsed MPW documents, but they received interim approval for continued use in the field and as a basis for staff training. Through its interviews, the evaluation found that GoTL **staff highly valued these resources** and saw them as providing a solid foundation for their future work. Municipal staff saw them as important tools that would support decentralisation over time and asked that future work (post-Program) retain them. Their impact may not yet be evident in this respect but, with continued capacity development of staff, they offer **a solid and enduring procedural base for rural roads management**. As the Phase II evaluation said: “The ultimate success of the program will revolve around its ability to embed manuals and systems and support MPW through structured and planned work that works alongside counterparts” (p.58).
69. The non-completion of Integrated Roads Management Information System (**IRMIS**) was a **missed opportunity for the Program**. Commenced in Phase II, there were clearly procedural deficiencies in the system’s development. As there was no functioning paper-based system in use, it was a big leap to implement a sophisticated computer-based system. The operational needs of end users seem not to have been fully considered (e.g., poor internet connectivity meant that real-time data entry was not always possible). It should also be noted that the development of IRMIS was included at the request of MPW and DFAT and was outside the scope of the Program up to that point and of its existing skills base. The contracting company’s reluctance to transfer the hosting of the system proved to be unhelpful and frustrating. The project team believed that despite these things, the system could have been salvaged with additional time and money.

Finding 3: The development of a market of rural roads contractors with the capability to deliver quality results using local resources was an important impact of the Program. Work supporting the enabling environment for these businesses is needed and their investment in skills and quality needs to be

recognised in mainstream (non-Program) procurement processes to drive continuous improvements in quality and efficiency.

70. The R4D Program has had a significant impact on the development of a market of rural roads contractors with both the technical skills to deliver quality results and the managerial and business management skills to bid for work, meet contractual requirements and be profitable and efficient. Prior to the Program, securing government contracts and running an effective engineering contracting business could be somewhat ad hoc and unregulated. Prior to the project, contractors secured work mainly through their contacts rather than through formal tender processes and pricing and scoping works was not done methodically.
71. Formal training of contractors was prominent in Phases I and II, but this was scaled back in the Bridging Phase with contractors receiving more support on site. The Program conducted several **contractor tracer studies** over the life of the project, the most recent of which covered the period from 2012 to 2020 and was done jointly with the ERA-AF project. Key impact findings from this study included:
- The **capacity of contractors increased** in bidding, implementation of road works and compliance with contractual standards.
 - **Virtually none of the contractors (1 out of 73) had ceased trading** despite challenging economic circumstances and concerns of a saturated market. Some had diversified their activities to survive.
 - Despite this, at the time of the study, **37 percent of contractors had no current contracts**, noting the effects of the pandemic and reduced government road sector investments.
 - 86 percent of contractors confirmed that the training and coaching provided by the projects had prepared them to meet their contractual **social inclusion** obligations in terms of female participation and inclusion of people with disability.
72. In interviews with contractors during the evaluation’s site visits, all agreed that the Program had a **positive impact** on their business, though some indicated that **more training was needed** (e.g. in business management and financing) and that some were still too slow in fully adopting social safeguard measures. One R4D-trained contractor in Viqueque reported the business had won a national competition run by UNDP that recognised excellence in tendering and has since won contracts for the UNDP and the EU. Others gave details of how their businesses had increased their staff and had acquired new equipment. As one female business owner in Baucau said:
- “Support was and is very important for local companies – previously I had very little knowledge. Before R4D, nobody knew about my company but now we are on the MPW map. Thanks to R4D (and ERA) training, I improved the company’s financial management and efficiency. We’ve grown from 2 to 8 employees and diversified and are confident in tendering for more work”.*
73. Moving forward, to ensure that the contractor market continues to mature and contribute to the development of quality rural roads in an efficient way, the **enabling environment needs to be improved**. The problem with **late payments** of contractors by government agencies has bedevilled the project ever since the ILO stop handling these payments directly itself. Not enough progress seems to have been made, leading to problems with business cashflow (requiring debt financing with high interest rates), delayed or non-payment of workers, and under-staffing of work (to minimise risk). There was even an incident reported where a community had seized trucks from two contractors because local workers had not been paid for five months. The projects have continuously worked on this problem with the GoTL, including by engaging with the MPW and the National Development Agency, both of which have acknowledged the problem. ILO informants indicated that the situation was now better than it was but further improvement is needed.

74. Mechanisms to ensure that contractors are not **exceeding their capacity to deliver** are also needed. The evaluation learned that there are some contractors operating in several projects (not necessarily Program-related) across different municipalities that have presented the same details about available resources, engineers, supervisors and equipment to each but cannot simultaneously deliver all of these projects. Deadlines are then not met and quality of the work suffers as they rotate the limited resources that they across these multiple projects. This may be an issue that can be addressed through an effective IRMIS or through some other cross-jurisdictional coordination, but, until it is, there will be a negative impact on the contractor market and on rural roads management overall.
75. **Lack of transparency in awarding some (non-Program) contracts** also threatens the continuing development of the contractor market that the Program has helped to cultivate. The evaluation was surprised how often in the field interviews the issue arose of lack of transparency in the allocation of (non-Program) contracts. Municipalities saw decentralisation as a potential mechanism to address the problem which they saw as being more of a problem where decisions are centralised. Investigating this issue fell outside the evaluation’s terms of reference, but its prevalence has the potential to weaken the impact of the project’s work in developing contractor capacity if demonstrated skills and quality are less important in decision making than “who you know.”

Finding 4: The R4D projects provided a major platform for influencing the quality and quantity of work in an important sector.

76. Decent work, international labour standards and social justice principles underpinned the Program. The projects closely monitored the **employment generated** in communities, recording total workdays and wages paid as outputs, as well as **employment quality** and the extent to which project benefits were **equitably shared** (see EFFECTIVENESS). Improved rural road infrastructure also created **long-term employment and economic development benefits** to communities and their people and businesses. In terms of wages, the ILO took the lead in ensuring that workers be paid the legislated **minimum wage**. The cash put into workers’ hands through the project undoubtedly had an impact on their lives at the time. In the evaluation’s field visits many examples were given of how these wages were used to **enhance quality of life** (e.g., housing, education, medicine) and **livelihoods** (e.g., investing in agriculture and small businesses).
77. For some, this may have been a temporary supplement to their regular income, but the project’s **investment in skills** development of contractors seems also to have had a positive impact on the longer-term employment prospects of some trainees. The Joint Contractor Tracer Study finding that 62 percent of the people it surveyed were still employed in the road construction sector.
78. The ILO’s RBSA-funded COVID-19 sub-project in a sense brought the ILO’s work in the country full circle back to its early “crisis response” work in supporting vulnerable communities. In response to the crisis, funds were used as a **social protection** mechanism, supplementing government Program funds and creating additional rural roads maintenance work to ensure that affected communities and vulnerable populations were supported. Speedy payments are essential in these situations, so bypassing the slow payment system and paying contractors directly enhanced the impact of the project for the selected communities.
79. More broadly, the Program has been a key project contributing to the Decent Work Country Program for Timor-Leste and its actions had an impact of the Decent Work principles it set out, including promoting compliance with **workplace safety standards** (e.g., via the Social Safeguards Framework, training GoTL staff in OSH, training contractors, and the development of a tool for “joint inspections” during the Bridging Phase), promoting **fair and inclusive labour practices** (e.g., gender equality and disability inclusion were strongly emphasised throughout), requiring contractors to provide **accident insurance** for workers, contributing to the elimination of **child labour** (e.g., compliance monitoring of child protection provisions of the Social Safeguards

Framework), and implementing safeguard for **environmental protection** (e.g., using bio-engineering techniques to improve outcomes).

80. In terms of **social dialogue and tripartism**, the evaluation **found the level of engagement of ILO social partners in the projects was relatively low overall**. Project staff pointed to examples of involvement, such as negotiations over minimum wages, occupational safety and health, accident insurance, and contractor capacity building, but this was episodic. The relatively low level of existing capacity of some social partners was a factor in this as was the fact that the workers involved in the project were from the informal sector (though the KSTL indicated a strong desire to engage with them and their communities despite this). The RBSA-funded COVID-19 response initiative attempted to lift social partner involvement, including a specific output (2.2) aimed at strengthening “capacities among, and dialogues between, the tripartite constituents regarding the design, implementation and monitoring of targeted emergency employment-intensive public works programs”. This mainly took the form of **joint monitoring visits** to the project sites by the Trade Union Confederation of Timor-Leste (KSTL) and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Timor-Leste (CCI-TL), something that had not occurred in other project phases. While this gave social partners access to workers and contractors and the opportunity to better understand the project’s operational environment, impact on their capacity to help design and implement such programs was unclear. SEFOPE, the government agency responsible for employment program design and implementation, was not actively involved in this project.

81. Field interviews suggested that there is still more work required to maximise the impact in these areas. In terms of **social partner involvement**, the KSTL believes more should be done to involve workers’ representatives in project design and at all stages of implementation. This needs to go beyond involvement in committees and attending launches:

“With labour intensive projects we really need opportunities to go to the field and observe working conditions and to speak with workers. We can also play a productive role in engaging with communities to resolve their concerns. Our role in the project has been mainly ceremonial.”

82. The Bridging Phase R4D-SP team saw good progress in advancing Decent Work and social justice, but recognised that more is needed to increase impact:

*“Social inclusion and safeguards were a focus through the CDOs, one in each municipality. These would check compliance, impact on community and reach out to community organizations. Checklists were developed to check compliance and process corrective action requests. **You need years to create a culture around this** – there was no real understanding of OSH, traffic management, responding to community concerns.”*

*“Social safeguards and safety are an increasing focus. Traffic management is poor – R4D promotes it but **compliance still poor**. In terms of OSH, the project has provided PPE but workers sometimes don’t wear them as they are new and want to keep them that way.”*

2.3 Sustainability

Finding 5: *The sustainability of many of the Program’s achievements is good overall but depend on the willingness and commitment of key stakeholders to maintain and continuously improve the systems and standards that have been established and to continue to build the capacity of national and municipal staff. The durability of the rural roads that have been rehabilitated through the project will depend on a clear commitment to maintenance including a dedicated annual budget.*

Will the roads and their benefits be sustained?

83. The rural road works delivered under the Program were reported to be of a good standard using materials that are likely to have a reasonable lifespan. Regardless, they will **all require ongoing maintenance** particularly given the challenges posed by Timor-Leste's regular flooding and its mountainous terrain.
84. Routine and periodic maintenance are covered in the RRMPIIS but there were some concerns expressed by team members, municipal staff, and other stakeholders that, despite maintenance priorities being set out in the RRMPIIS, **not enough dedicated maintenance funding is in practice made available** by the GoTL. Municipalities do not yet have the autonomy and resources to do what is required to keep the Program's rehabilitated roads in good condition. Community Maintenance Groups set up through the Program may or may not continue to be funded and community leaders interviewed by the evaluation indicated that they would do all they could to maintain the roads, but there are limits to these approaches.
85. Although overall budgets theoretically include maintenance, **lack of specific budget line items for maintenance** means that the function can end up with too few funds. This is an issue in roads management generally – as one informant said, it is a “systemic issue that doesn't just affect R4D-SP roads”. As a representative of another donor said:
- “Government keeps saying that there is a budget for maintenance, but there is no budget line item that would guarantee an investment. This is a major lesson of the road projects.”*
86. Maintenance took place during the projects, and funds were secured for this purpose even when there was no budget for new works (e.g., in 2017-18 when the project secured USD 1 million for maintenance). But the issue needs continuous attention – a failure to address it systematically could mean that over ten years of Program investment in rural roads will be wasted.

Will the capacity that has been developed be sustained?

87. **Within the GoTL**, some of the systems and procedures introduced by the project are still new and need more time to be fully absorbed at an institutional level. Individual GoTL staff trained by the project remain key to sustainability as the systems, however well documented they may be, need to be implemented by people with a base level of experience. Not all systems have yet been sufficiently embedded in the institutions to ensure the retention of capability that is independent of individuals who have been developed to work in key roles (i.e., to a point where the institution can train its staff without external support or manage succession planning).
88. Some functional areas, such as procurement and contracting, may have reached a more advanced level of sustainability (i.e., by virtue of having staff who have been working in the unit for a long time and an in-house capacity to train other staff in systems), but others are probably more **vulnerable to the loss of key staff**. Municipal staffing levels in rural roads are still low and the risk of losing key people there may therefore have a greater effect on capacity. There is also the risk that changes at a political and senior administrative level (which the project had to often navigate all too frequently) might also lead to decisions which lead to loss of capacity.
89. Some functional capacities were identified by the current project team as being at risk of not being sustained. Social Safeguards were a particular concern with some aspects of this work yet fully embedded in procedures (e.g., in contract documentation and administration.)
90. At a more practical level, some municipal staff were worried that the **end of R4D-SP will mean they no longer have access to resources** that the project has provided that are necessary to continue effective supervision and site visits. These included access to R4D-SP vehicles.
91. The sustainability of the project's work developing contractors is similarly dependent on the continued operation of the individual firms that were developed. There is no clarity about **if and how the contractor market will be supported in the future**. The Phase II evaluation suggested that contractors should pay for this training in future, though whether they would be willing to

pay for some of the elements offered under the Program is yet to be tested (e.g., disability inclusion). MPW is now confident in its capacity to deliver training to contractors in bid preparation, but nothing is proposed to cover other skills and business development. One of the existing training providers, Don Bosco, is contemplating becoming a contractor itself, suggesting that it sees limited market opportunity in continuing the training role it has so far played.

92. **Ensuring that contractors that invest in capacity building are recognised** in mainstream tender assessments (i.e., outside the Program and its successor) would also contribute to sustainability by establishing a **market incentive**. As a representative of Don Bosco explained:

“To support the sustainability of industry capacity building developed through R4D, procurement processes need to recognise and reward the efforts/investments made by contractors in quality, accredited training provided by the likes of Don Bosco (e.g. rate such providers higher in the selection process, give more points). Otherwise, there will be no incentive to improve capacity and quality in industry.”

93. EU and CCI-TL representatives made similar observations about the need for improvements in mainstream (non-project) processes:

“Our projects have trained contractors, but the procurement process is not really transparent and fair. Often they know who they want. Small contractors not recognised for their investment in training and accreditation and quality of the roads may be affected.” (EU)

“There are concerns that businesses that make the effort to be trained and accredited aren’t given any advantage in the tendering process – so what’s the point? Companies should meet standards at different thresholds of construction. Also, any work over \$1m is now open to international competitive bidding – CCI-TL is pushing for this to be increased to \$7.5m to maximise local economic development. Training of local engineers needs to continue – it is critical if Timor-Leste is to one day join ASEAN.” (CCI-TL)

2.4 Effectiveness

Finding 6: *The changing emphasis of the projects over ten years makes a collective assessment of their effectiveness difficult. Independent evaluations have generally reported good effectiveness overall in delivering most planned outputs despite many complex operational and institutional challenges. More support is required before the GoTL can effectively manage rural roads at the national and municipal levels independently and in a sustainable way.*

94. Although R4D’s program logic and associated activities remained consistent throughout the project’s life, each phase had its own emphasis and faced its own challenges. The following section reviews the effectiveness of each phase. (Note that the fourth RBSA-funded COVID-19 recovery project is discussed later under Finding 9.)

Phase I

95. Recognising that the responsible government agencies had little or no capacity to rehabilitate rural roads themselves at this time, Phase I rural roads work was led and implemented directly by the ILO’s project staff. The donor funded the capital works in the first **phase** and the ILO administered these funds. An ILO specialist involved in the early stages explained that “in Phase I, the idea was that the ILO would first lead and build” while gradually building local capacity”. The Chief Technical Officer (CTA) at that time said the idea was “to demonstrate to MPW that a labour-intensive approach would work” as they were more familiar with approaches that used heavy machinery. The project started from scratch:

“We had to lay the foundations first – lobbying, assessing what systems were in place for planning, procurement, contracting, supervision, workforce organisation and quality control. Many of these proved to be missing altogether.”

96. The project embraced this hands-on role, laying the foundations for capacity building, achieving good physical outputs in the form of improved roads, as well as a high community profile. As a former ILO senior manager said “the project was highly visible across Timor-Leste and, in the eyes of the community, R4D was doing fantastic work” with long-neglected rural roads improved and community members employed. Local civil works contractors received training and mentoring in bid preparation, labour-based approaches, and business management, which tracer studies showed had built their capacity in some key performance areas.
97. Progress in improving the level of resources allocated by government to rural roads (Outcome 3) was also advanced. With the R4D team embedded in the MPW and in a position to influence decisions from within, the GoTL progressively increased its share of the capital investment in the project after the first year – something that an ILO representative said was “not often seen in such development projects”. Though these finances and rural roads funding generally were noted in the Phase I evaluation as still being “too fragmented”, the project’s ground-breaking work in developing a RRMPIS was seen as having the potential to solve this problem. The project also introduced social and environmental safeguards that were largely missing from existing processes. These included a commitment to gender equity that led to good results.
98. These things were achieved despite many constraints and challenges. The project operated in an environment where funding from the GoTL was uncertain, there were major problems in the timeliness of contractor payments made by GoTL, there were not enough qualified national and municipal MPW staff, and there was no high-level coordination body that could review strategy and solve operational problems.
99. While the project was a success in demonstrating what could be done in rural roads work, it did not make as much progress in preparing GoTL agencies to do this work themselves. Despite the existence of a capacity development strategy, the transfer of skills to GoTL staff was described in the final evaluation of Phase I as having been somewhat “ad hoc”. DFAT’s Mid-Term Review Report pointed out that this was not entirely the project’s fault, citing the “low capacity and capability of existing [government] staff” and the GoTL’s unwillingness “to fulfil its commitments in providing all the required program staff and operational funds” (p14).

Phase II

100. Progress had been made in building institutional capacity in some areas (e.g., design, surveying, contract management and procurement) but concerns began to arise about “capacity substitution” and of the Program being seen as too much a “road-building project” and not enough as “a project to develop capacity to build roads”. The concerns were more about the GoTL not showing enough commitment to capacity transfer than about the project strategy and implementation to this point. In a telling comment, the DFAT Mid-Term Review Report said that GoTL informants acknowledged that:

“The GoTL placed less priority on rural roads assuming that it was being taken care of by R4D under the ILO’s management”. (p.14)

101. To address these concerns, the intervention model was redesigned, and the project was renamed the “R4D Support Program (R4D-SP)” to emphasise to the GoTL that the intention was to provide policy advice and operational guidance rather than to act as a type of outsourced road building service. Reinforcing this shift in emphasis, a new Subsidiary Agreement committed the GoTL to funding all capital works and to making sure staff were available to be trained. The Australian Government would contribute up to AUD 26 million for technical assistance over four

years (with a provision that allowed support to be terminated after two years if progress was unsatisfactory) and the GoTL would provide USD 13 million for capital works in the first two years.

102. The Phase II project faced major challenges from the start:
- A **budget impasse** in the first two years meant that there was no new capital funding for road works, requiring the project to rely initially on funds carried over from the previous financial year.
 - A **new CTA** with an engineering focus had commenced at a challenging juncture for the project when the skills and approach needed to re-set the project's focus required not only strong technical skills but also skills in relationship-building. This mismatch of skills and approach adversely may have affected the project's working relationship with DFAT.
 - There was a **high turnover of government ministers and key senior officials** who were reported to "have their own agenda and priorities". Maintaining continuity in the project strategy and implementation was difficult.
 - GoTL **administrative and financial processes** were now more central to project delivery, but these were **slow and inefficient** (in Phase I, the ILO's own procurement system was used).
 - **Decentralisation** was suspended in a state of administrative limbo, where processes, staff roles and responsibilities remained unclear (complicating the project's capacity building plans), budgets were still controlled centrally, and there were tensions between central and municipal authorities.
 - Later, the project also had to deal with the major disrupting effects of the **COVID-19** pandemic.
103. At the time of DFAT's independent mid-term review of Phase II, there were concerns that the project was about to be terminated. However, this review found that "discontinuing R4D-SP will lead to significant loss of investment in capacity development and a deterioration in rural road access". It also noted how the project had "managed to progress technical capacity-building during a period of political instability in Timor-Leste and with limited ability to influence the enabling environment" (p.52).
104. In fact, the independent review did not paint a bleak picture of the Program at all. Its recommendations focused on strengthening cooperation between DFAT and R4D-SP on policy and enabling environment issues including enhanced stakeholder engagement and communication to inform DFAT's policy dialogue with the GoTL, establishing a donor coordination committee, and an inter-ministerial committee and technical working group, and support for decentralisation. At a more operational level, recommendations also included strengthening capacity-building through a clearer framework and ensuring documents driving implementation were focused on the right outcomes.
105. Over the course of Phase II, the project achieved most of its planned outputs including the adjustments made in response to DFAT's mid-term review:
- The project drafted a Rural Roads Policy but a decision was made to incorporate this as an input for an envisaged **National Roads Policy** being prepared by the Asian Development Bank. This current status of this ADB work is not known. Not having it in place was "a major missed opportunity" according to the R4D-SP team as it would have given the project the clarity it needed by enshrining agency responsibilities into law and giving greater certainty to planned investment budgets.
 - The **RRPMIS** (2015-2020) investment plan developed in Phase I was updated annually in Phase II in consultation with the municipalities, though the continuing funding issues and ambiguity about roles associated with decentralisation meant it has not completely fulfilled its potential to guide decisions and planning. Because of this, according to a former project staff member, the project was often "pulled in different directions" by MPW.

- **Manuals and guidelines** (most of which did not exist in any form prior to the R4D Program) continued to be developed and were being implemented and used in training, though were not yet fully embedded in agency procedures.
- **Capacity development in procurement and contracting** was singled out in the Phase II final evaluation as being a particular success due to the “consistent and in-depth support” provided by the project. The DFAT mid-term review described these among areas “developing to the point where they **require minimal assistance or oversight** to perform routine functions” (p.23). These included:
 - IT
 - GIS (via a GIS Unit established and operationalized within the MPW with R4D support and guidance)
 - Basic construction supervision
 - Material testing (including via regional laboratories established and operationalised with R4D support and guidance)
 - Gender equality
 - Social inclusion
 - Environmental safeguards
- More broadly, **training of GoTL staff** involved 498 staff and 8,835 person-days over the duration of Phase II.
- At the **municipal level**, where human and financial resources remained limited due to the still incomplete devolution process, the Phase II final evaluation found that there was still some **capacity substitution**, with R4D-SP staff “fulfilling roles and responsibilities that contradict their advisory nature” (p.9) due to lack of municipal staff with the capacity to do the job.
- **Training of contractors** continued in Phase II with another 56 involved (107 across Phase I and II). This included training delivered by an external provider, Don Bosco Training Institute, and training delivered by MPW and R4D-SP in pre-bidding. Concerns were raised about market saturation and the need for a broader approach to their business development (i.e., beyond R4D-SP projects) and to enhancing the pre-qualification arrangements.
- A **social safeguards framework** and guidelines developed in Phase I were applied which helped raise awareness and supported implementation though non-compliance remained a continuing challenge. The project also supported the MPW Community Development Officers (CDOs) through training.

106. In the second half of Phase II, the project also implemented the recommendations of DFAT’s mid-term review, though the outcome of some of the actions designed to improve the project’s enabling environment were poor. The project:

- Participated in a **donor coordination committee, convened by ADB**, which met regularly in Phase II (though it became inactive during the COVID-19 crisis and has not been reactivated – this was outside the project’s control).
- Engaged in a **decentralisation working group** established by DFAT in 2019, the **results of which were unclear**. The evaluation learned that the group only met twice and, importantly, did not include representatives of MSA.
- Developed and implemented a new **stakeholder engagement and communication plan** to help inform DFAT’s policy dialogue though the extent to which DFAT made use of this is not known.
- Reviewed its **Capacity Development Implementation Plan** and consulted with the MPW and municipal government to develop an “integrated capacity development program” but this was never implemented by MPW.
- Developed a **Theory of Change** in conjunction with DFAT and M&E House as a “document driving implementation”, though this was seen by the Phase II final evaluation as very time-consuming and offering marginal benefits. (Previously, there was no formal Theory of Change and the Program relied on a logframe.)

- Progressed work on an **Integrated Road Management Information System (IRMIS)** though this has since had **significant problems** (see Bridging Phase below).
- An **Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Group** was formally established in 2019 but **has never met**.

Bridging Phase

107. Covering an 18-month period from July 2021 to December 2022, the R4D-SP Bridging Phase was conceived as a transitional program during which DFAT planned to review its approach to investment in Timor-Leste's road sector. Given the logistics involved in setting up this final phase and in winding up a project office that had been operating for over ten years (e.g., disposal of assets, handover of materials, finalising employment contracts etc.) the effective time available to achieve planned results was closer to 12 months. Other factors affecting implementation and results during this phase included COVID-19 restrictions, the need to support flood response work following Cyclone Seroja in April 2021, and the political uncertainty leading up to the 2023 elections.
108. During the final stages of Phase II, the project scoped a funding proposal for the Bridging Phase which focused on laying the foundation for future work supporting rural roads development. The project started recruitment of key technical staff including a new CTA, a Training Advisor and a new Social Protection and Safeguards Officer. COVID-19 travel restrictions delayed their arrival in Timor-Leste but they commenced work remotely.
109. The key results against planned outputs and outcomes in this phase were:
- Supporting the **finalisation of a National Roads Policy** - This was intended to include the provision of inputs on rural roads to the work being done by the ADB on a National Roads Policy, an activity that commenced during Phase II and would require coordination across GoTL ministries and agencies via an Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum (IMRF). This work by ADB was not advanced so DFAT and the project **agreed not to proceed** with this element. Some other policy related work was done in cooperation with the EU's Enhancing Rural Access – Agroforestry (ERA-AF) project (see **COHERENCE** for more detail).
 - **Updating the RRMPIIS** – Delayed by funding cuts in Phase II, the project ran a participatory process involving MPW and 13 municipalities to update the investment prioritization list for the period 2023-27. This was endorsed by the MPW's Advisory Committee in October 2022.
 - **Completing and deploying the IRMIS** - Commenced in Phase II under the guidance of a working group established by the MPW, the ESTRADA system was intended to consolidate road asset and contract management data for planning physical works on rural roads (with the potential for adaptation for other road classes). **Major system functionality issues** were identified at the beginning of the Bridging Phase. There were negotiations with contractors to resolve these issues but these did not lead to a solution and the system has not been implemented. Deficiencies in the formal testing phase, such as the non-involvement of the intended end-users (as opposed to more senior officials) seem to have been a primary cause of the problems. The system and all associated data have now been transferred to GoTL servers but will either need to be updated or scrapped and redeveloped.
 - **Completing and institutionalizing manuals, technical resources and training materials** - In keeping with the project's focus on laying a foundation for future rural roads development, 13 technical manuals and an Operations Manual, were finalized and endorsed by the MPW for use in the training of national and municipal staff.
 - **Training and capacity development support for national and municipal staff** - The project conducted training for 297 GoTL national and municipal staff (28% women) covering social and environmental safeguards, gender and disability inclusion, rural roads network planning, child protection, PSEAH, GIS, and basic IT skills. Developing the capacity of GoTL to continue training beyond the project is a future challenge for project sustainability. Senior municipal

and national staff indicated to the evaluation team that the manuals and resources produced by the project provided a good basis for this.

- **Training and mentoring of contractors** - The project delivered less formal training during the Bridging Phase, concentrating instead on providing on-the-job training through R4D-SP Field Engineering Trainers. Contract compliance was strengthened by applying the **joint inspection tool** developed in Phase II. Significantly, the MPW conducted pre-bid training for 370 contractor staff between June and October 2021 with R4D-SP providing only operational support (unlike earlier phases where the project led this training.)
- **Strengthening social and environmental safeguards** – The Bridging Phase sought to strengthen its capacity building in this area, including by continuing to develop the skills and knowledge of Community Development Officers (CDOs) commenced in earlier project phases. One CDO told the evaluation that this built his capacity to “effectively resolve social and environmental concerns about public works” and gave the example of successfully mediating community concerns about dust from works (the contractor was found to have not complied with contract requirements).
- **Supporting the Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum (IMRF)** - This body, intended to improve whole-of-government coordination on roads policies and programs, has still not met due to a lack of political will. An internal MPW Advisory Committee was set up, but this serves a different role (i.e. addressing R4D-SP implementation matters).
- R4D-SP also supported the capacity of the “**Ad Hoc Design Unit**” established within the MPW to respond to the flood damage cause by Tropical Cyclone Seroja – including the construction of prefabricated offices and the supply of equipment.

Finding 7: All phases of the Program addressed gender and disability inclusion in their design and achieved solid results in policy development, institutional awareness raising and capacity development, support for female-led businesses, and the direct employment of women and people with disability in roads work.

110. In the projects’ results frameworks, gender and disability inclusion were incorporated into a broader group of outputs related to “social and environmental safeguards”. These cover a range of Decent Work priorities (e.g., OSH, child labour, environmental issues etc.) According to project documents, no GoTL mechanisms were in place to implement these safeguards before the project commenced in 2012 and there was “no evidence for systems or procedures addressing the inclusion of women or persons with disabilities”

111. The Program addressed gender issues and disability inclusion and good results have been achieved over time building on a low base of capability and systems within the responsible ministry.

- **A Social Safeguards Framework (SSF)** was developed which was built into roads rehabilitation and maintenance projects delivered supported by the project. This was updated over the life of the project (e.g. including a zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment). Formal training and mentoring was provided to MPW and municipal staff to support their implementation of the SSF and gender-inclusive employment practices. Contractor training also included modules on gender, including on women’s participation and sexual harassment.
- **Community Development Officers (CDOs)** were appointed by municipalities (four in 2013 and another eight in 2016) to drive compliance with the SSF, to facilitate inclusive labour practices and to support the achievement of project targets. The project provided training and support to these staff and has driven a stronger awareness overall – as one Municipal Director said:

“Women and PWD have benefitted from the project. Whenever new works begin and at every visit, we reinforce with the Chefe de Suco the importance of inclusiveness and non-discrimination. R4D provided training to our staff in this. We always make an effort in this and the experience with R4D has been pleasing.”

- R4D-SP contracts stipulated that **30% of labourers must be women** and inspections checked that women were working on projects as indicated by contractors, that they were being paid the same wages as men, and whether there were any incidents of sexual harassment or violence. By the end of the project 24.9% of people employed as labourers were women – equating to about a half a million person-days of work. The RBSA project, which set a target of 50% female participation, achieved a result of just under 40%.

112. The evaluation considers these to be **very strong results**, despite being below the target. This was especially so, given that cultural norms and stereotypes can discourage the participation of women in these roles and their overall share of employment in the construction sector when the project commenced was just 3%. Project reports indicated that for many women, R4D was the first time they had worked outside their homes and was their first wage-paying job. **Project** staff reported that these good results followed a tradition of emphasising gender equality in projects in Timor-Leste. Its good results in achieving outcomes for women in the construction sector (through R4D-SP and ERA-AF) helped the ILO champion gender equality more broadly with national stakeholders and the development community.

113. The project facilitated the participation of women at different levels, including as owners of contracting businesses (see **Case Study 1**). The final independent evaluation of Phase II highlighted how female leadership of Community Maintenance Groups (CMGs) increased from 8% (7 women) in 2016 to 21% (23 women) in 2020. It found that this result had promoted female engagement and leadership more broadly at the community level (p.54.) As documented by the project, one female CMG leader said:

“I am proud of myself. Even though I am an older woman, I can work and get money and help my husband to sustain our life. My husband had a stroke and he could not work anymore, so I feel lucky because I can work and get money to support my family - particularly my children.”

114. **Monitoring and Evaluation** activities gave attention to the projects’ impacts on women including via, for example, contractor and labourer tracer studies and a Women and Rural Roads impact assessment completed in 2015. A Joint Contractor Tracer Study covering both R4D-SP and the ERA-AF project and R4D-SP was also completed in 2021.

115. For **disability inclusion**, the project developed an R4D-SP Guidance Note for Disability Inclusive M&E which reinforced the message that staff needed to ensure the project “supports the equal right of all persons to access the benefits created by the rehabilitation and maintenance projects implemented by the R4D program” including not only employment but also “access to decision making processes that affect implementation” and “equal opportunity to enjoy social and economic benefits” created.

116. R4D-SP set a **2% employment participation target for people with disability** and, by the end of the project, had **achieved 2.96%**, equating to just under 60,000 person days of work. This was also a strong result, though more granular data on the participation of different disability groups may have helped future project design and implementation.

117. Project reports indicated that difficulties in recruiting and retaining a full-time international Social Inclusion and Safeguards Officer (SISO) in the Bridging Phase had an adverse effect on social inclusion support and results. Support provided through this role focused on capacity building of Community Development Officers.

Case Study 1 – Support for Female Contractors

The Program gave significant attention to supporting the development of female-run contracting businesses. Of the 172 persons trained who were at the company director level, 30% were women. A 2021 joint contractor tracer study of contractors found that this was high by international standards.

The study found that the project played a facilitatory role in ensuring women participated at this level, including through its support to their firms technical capacity and tender preparation. While ERA-AF had even higher rate of 44%, unlike this project, R4D-SP used government procurement systems which gave no preferential points in the tender process to female owned firms.

Female contractors may also have been better positioned to recruit more women in R4D-SP projects. The tracer study quoted one as saying: “I do prefer to recruit more women because they are more diligent in their work and they listen much better compared to men.” (p.54)

The evaluation interviewed a female contractor in Baucau who highly valued the training provided by the Program. She had no engineering background and her project engineer was a recent graduate. The Program (and ERA-AF) gave her the skills, knowledge and confidence to successfully tender for the work and to deliver against her contract. She said her business had grown as a direct result – engineering staff have increased from one to four, supervisors from one to four and, in terms of equipment, the firm now has six trucks and one excavator when previously it had just a single truck.

Significant barriers remain however. As one woman was quoted in the tracer study, “due to the patriarchal society, many people put a label on women engaged in business – in their view women who are not at home are ‘bad’ women.” Gender stereotyping and sexual harassment, violence and even extortion (i.e., government officials asking female contractors for sex to win contracts) were all raised by women in the tracer study.

The construction sector remains male dominated in Timor-Leste and there is a need to continue the work the ILO has done through the Program and ERA in supporting female contractors, including through business training and mentoring, and by training government officials at the national and municipal levels to improve female participation at this level and to ensure a safe and equitable work environment.

***Finding 8:** Embedding the project within the MPW was an effective strategy. The project’s development of the Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS) was also an important innovation for Timor-Leste, creating a guiding framework for planning rural roads works and for preparing annual budget submissions, though the GoTL did not always adhere to it in practice.*

Embedding the Program in the MPW

118. Embedding the project team within the MPW has been an effective strategy overall. As the evaluation learned from senior ILO staff, this approach was not new in Timor-Leste and goes back to the earliest days of independence when there were few effective government institutions in place and those that were had poor structures and few skilled staff. Early ILO employment programs in the country adopted the approach of embedding project staff within government, for example in SEFOPE, so that they could work side-by-side with their staff to build their capacities.

119. The experience in Phase I highlighted the potential drawback of this approach – that is, that the embedded team can be seen by some in government as being a de facto operational unit of government. As mentioned earlier, DFAT sought to strengthen GoTL commitment to a taking more direct responsibility for doing the work. Where there are tensions between different Ministries (such as those reported to exist between MPW and MSA) being embedded in one of these might also make it more difficult to influence effective coordination between the two ministries.

120. Overall, however, the strategy has worked well. Despite the concerns about continuing capacity substitution, DFAT’s independent mid-term review saw it as a project strength, both in terms of the GoTL’s commitment to the program (“the embedded nature of the program has supported close collaboration” p.35) and compared to the arrangements in place with other donors (highlighting the difficulties faced by the ADB in its road program because it was not embedded p.33). The Phase II independent final evaluation, found the embedded model to be an example of good practice that could be replicated in other ILO programs, as it “provides

opportunities to fully engage with direct counterparts and stakeholders” and for “potential influence and direct capacity support” (p.102)

121. Interviews with senior GoTL officials revealed a high level of appreciation of the value of the embedded approach. As one senior MPW official put it:

“Working with the ILO so closely was a good experience. The main challenges were from our side. Political issues are difficult for engineers to manage.”

122. This was echoed by another senior official in the Ministry:

“ILO were very cooperative and responded well to changing government priorities. Whatever we asked for they provided.”

Developing the Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS)

123. At the start of the Program’s work in Timor-Leste in 2012, there was **virtually no information on rural roads and no rational basis for planning and budgeting** works. For example, there was no information about the condition of the rural road network, no design standards or uniform technical specifications, no information about typical unit costs for maintenance, rehabilitation and reconstruction of different classes of roads, conflicting data about the populations of individual Sucos, no platform for spatial data entry, processing and analysis, and no clear system or approach for prioritizing investments in roads. The project’s development of the RRMPIS in 2014 and 2015 researched these and other information gaps and, after an extensive consultation process at the national and municipal levels, identified 1,975 kilometres of core rural roads and established a prioritization index, considering economic benefits and engineering costs.

124. The GoTL approved the RRMPIS in 2016. Over time it has proved to be **an effective mechanism** for the MPW for annual planning and budgeting and as an advocacy tool for budget submissions, although **political challenges** affected the funding that was ultimately allocated. Early in its life, due to political instability, the GoTL invested only 30% of what was detailed in the RRMPIS in rural roads and the final evaluation of Phase II also indicated a problem with the overuse of “emergency contracts” as hindering planning and expenditure management (p.27). These contracts were created outside the R4D Program but reduced the funds available to it. Overall, the RRMPIS has been an effective strategy, is being implemented (though not as fully as intended) and has been a force for continuity of planning when faced with high turnover of Ministers and senior officials. One project document quoted a municipal MPW official:

“Before we had the RRMPIS, everyone could just do what they wanted to do. A lot of things were unorganized and it wasn’t clear how to achieve objectives. After implementing RRMPIS, the works are systematic, including the target that we want to achieve and who is benefitting from the roads.”

Finding 9: *The project did well to continue activities despite the disruption caused by the pandemic and took clear action to minimize risk to staff, communities and contractors. The RBSA-funded COVID response project provided a rapid response benefitting those most affected by the crisis.*

COVID-19 response

125. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the GoTL declared a three-month State of Emergency (SoE) from April to June 2020. This affected project implementation and engagement with stakeholders including through restrictions on gatherings, travel between municipalities, the use of public transport and international travel. Despite these restrictions, the Program continued as implementation of rural roads projects required staff to support supervision on-site. As a team member explained:

“While other projects shut down and their staff were evacuated, R4D staff all stayed and continued to work. There were no flights and a hard border was imposed. For 3 months

Dili was closed down. Road works were affected by access and supply issues but still continued.”

126. ILO/UN protocols were put in place for project staff, but as they were embedded in MPW offices, the project had no control over the conditions in place around them (e.g. no mask wearing or social distancing). According to the final report of the Bridging Phase, following a UNDSS risk assessment and recommendations, the Program sought to relocate but this was not approved. Staff morale was adversely affected by periods of mandatory home confinement and the inability to take leave to see families.
127. Despite these obstacles, the project’s response to COVID-19 was effective and appropriate and active steps were taken to minimize risk to staff, communities and contractors. These included:
- supporting COVID-19 related occupational safety and health measures on site, including development of COVID-19 specific guidelines that were designed in a simple, easy-to-understand way, specific to the local context.
 - supporting training of contractors and their workers in COVID-19 measures, including health assessments, social distancing, hand washing, use of personal protective equipment.
 - Incorporating COVID-19 measures into the Program’s Social Safeguards Framework (SSF)
 - Modifying activities in line with UNCT and GoTL directives
 - Supporting necessary contract adjustments (e.g. extending completion times)
 - Providing Program staff with guidance on COVID-19 procedures and with personal protective equipment and encouraging vaccination.
 - Ongoing monitoring and coordination with UNCT and the Australian Government
128. Recognising that planned R4D-SP and ERA-AF infrastructure projects did “not explicitly target the most affected rural communities” in the context of COVID, the ILO’s Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste in Jakarta successfully applied for USD 550,000 of additional funding from the ILO’s Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) earmarked for COVID-19 response work. Like the ILO’s early infrastructure-related work in Timor-Leste, the project reflected the need for “**emergency employment support**” that offered “**quick delivery, a high labour intensity and low delivery costs**”. To get cash into the hands of the neediest, the project had to bypass the payment delays that persisted under GoTL systems under R4D-SP and instead made payments directly to contractors. The project engaged more with SEFOPE (as well as MPW and municipalities) and involved the tripartite social partners in its delivery.
129. The project was implemented effectively and, according to the progress report provided to the evaluation (dated February 2022) achieved most of its planned outputs and targets including:
- **Decent employment and income support** – By February 2022, 97% of total contract funds had been disbursed resulting in the short-term employment of 2,800 workers (target was 1,850) completing 44,800 workdays. An earlier report indicated that 39.8% of this work went to women (target was 50%) and 0.7% went to people with disability (target was 2%).
 - **Strengthened ILO social partner capacities in designing and implementing employment-intensive public works programs for the most affected rural poor and vulnerable people** – The Trade Union Confederation of Timor-Leste (KSTL) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Timor-Leste (CCI-TL) conducted joint site monitoring with the KSTL informing the evaluation that this helped identify some irregularities in workers’ pay and conditions. KSTL indicated that their involvement in the RBSA project demonstrated the importance of involving the social partners more fully in the implementation of ILO’s rural roads projects “and not just be invited to events and ceremonies”.

2.5 Coherence

***Finding 10:** Over its different phases, the Program linked well with other related development interventions in Timor-Leste though its later efforts to integrate rural roads policy and planning into a more holistic approach (led by ADB) are yet to show results. Mechanisms introduced by the GoTL to improve coherence and collaboration between GoTL agencies have not been activated and this has adversely affected project performance.*

130. The Program has worked closely with the EU-funded ILO project, Enhancing Rural Access–Agroforestry (**ERA-AF**) and its predecessors, achieving good levels of coherence. These projects ran in parallel to R4D throughout (from September 2011 to June 2022) and shared many characteristics in terms of stakeholders, the focus on rural roads, the capacity development of contractors, and the development and use of private training providers. By extension, this relationship created connections with a GIZ project designed to support the Ministry of Agriculture's efforts to foster a conducive environment for agro-forestry activities, and with other development agencies. As an EU representative explained:

“ERA and R4D had a common interest in training contractors but with different focus communities. ERA roads were about facilitating GIZ agro-forestry work while R4D road selection was not so constrained. The R4D-produced RRMPIS was also a factor in ERA road choices. The projects did plan some complementary stretches (i.e., some kilometres done through R4D, then more through ERA). We used same contractors like Don Bosco. Other donors with interest in national roads like ADB and WB invited to project meetings.”

131. Evaluating the Program's engagement with other DFAT investments in Timor-Leste over the last ten years fell outside the scope of this evaluation, but previous evaluations found that this was minimal. DFAT's mid-term review noted that R4D-SP had limited coordination with its other investments in Timor-Leste including To'os ba Moris Di'ak (or Farming for Prosperity), Programa Nasional Dezenvolvimentu Suku (National Program for Village Development Support Program) and projects related to public financial management, women in business, and disability inclusion (p.42). The Phase II final evaluation found that little progress had been made in connecting with these initiatives other than through ad hoc contact, citing the pressures faced by these projects that restricted such engagement as well as the effects of COVID-19. (The Phase I final evaluation included no findings on coherence.) It should be noted that DFAT itself was not proactive in connecting the R4D Program with its other initiatives.

132. Recent examples of collaborative initiatives and coherence with other programs and projects include:

- Working with ADB to support the design of MPW's ten-year roads infrastructure investment program.
- Promotion of gender equality issues working with Care International and UN Women.
- Participation in EU-funded joint UN Spotlight project addressing violence against women.
- Engaging with advocacy organisations supporting women and people with disability.

133. Despite the clear need for improved coherence between different levels of government to resolve many strategic and operational issues affecting the project, the **Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum (IMRF)** established by the GoTL in 2019 has never met. In its absence, the project did its best to solve issues through personal contacts and behind-the-scenes advocacy, but a higher-level systemic solution was needed. This finding was reinforced in the Phase II final evaluation:

“It is difficult to expect one individual or one program to have the leverage to fully influence and change government policies, regulations and approaches. It requires a coordinated and multi-faceted approach.” (p.44)

2.6 Efficiency

***Finding 11:** Previous evaluations found that project efficiency has been generally good but noted that a more structured approach to capacity transfer through its “embedded” model of support – defining more clearly the points at which functional autonomy are reached - may have enhanced results and enabled a more efficient re-focusing of Program resources and support. Some planned activities and positions were cancelled due to DFAT funding cuts or instructions in Phase II and some of these left the project in a weaker position to achieve some goals.*

134. The evaluation was not tasked to undertake a detailed analysis of efficiency over the life of the project but some key points can be drawn from previous evaluations and project documents and from interviews.

Previous evaluations and project documents on efficiency

135. The **Phase I** final evaluation found that overall the project’s **resources were allocated strategically and effectively** to achieve the defined outcomes. The relative efficiency of labour-based approaches to road works compared with more technologically-driven methods was raised by some informants, but this was counter-balanced against the development benefits in the form of cash transfers to vulnerable rural communities and those flowing from improved road access.

136. The **Phase II final project report** detailed the effect on the project’s efficiency and effectiveness brought about by the unexpected reduction in the project’s budget. This was reduced in 2019 from AUD 26 million to AUD 21.5 million and affected both the project’s planned scope of works and its staffing profile. **Planned activities in the scope of works that were cancelled** including:

- **Additional impacts studies** – these prevented the project from gathering more data on progress towards its development objective.
- **Support for the application of the IRMIS system** – presumably not needed given the system’s development status.
- **Updating the RRMPIS during 2020** – potentially leaving a gap in planning capacity building until this task was completed (in 2022 during the Bridging Phase)

137. Staffing profile changes included leaving unfilled the position of international Capacity Development Specialist (which on the surface seems a curious decision given the strengthened importance of capacity development to achieving Phase II goals) as well as a Social Protection and Safeguards Officer. The project also cancelled planned recruitment of a Team Leader/Chief Engineering Officer.

138. The **Phase II independent final evaluation** found that the “embedded model” of institutional capacity building was efficient and effective but suggested that an **increased focus on a structured transfer of capacities** may have enhanced results further. The appointment of a National Policy Adviser in November 2018 was also presented as equipping the project with a new and efficient mechanism to engage with senior Ministry staff. Interviews with key informants revealed that they believed this role greatly enhanced the project’s access to decision makers and helped resolve some operational problems “behind the scenes” rather than through the formal mechanisms that had proven to be difficult to activate (such as the IMRF). By the time of the final Bridging Phase report, this person had been promoted to Deputy Team Leader, allowing greater autonomy and efficiency in engaging with government at senior levels.

139. The **Bridging Phase internal mid-term evaluation** noted the **efficient transition from Phase II**, including the appointment of a new CTA, and the two positions that were left unfilled in the Phase II (international Training Advisor and Social Protection and Safeguards Officer), though COVID-19 travel restrictions meant that they initially worked remotely. It also criticised the **slow**

use of available funds to hire consultants who could have accelerated the delivery of key project outputs such as technical manuals.

140. The **RBSA-funded project reports** contained little information to enable an assessment of efficiency other than **disbursement of funds**, with 97% having been paid by 14 February 2022.

Observations on efficiency from the interviews

141. **Time to recruit** was raised as an efficiency issue by a number of evaluation informants. The project team indicated that in some cases this was due to factors outside the project's control such as COVID-19 travel restrictions.

142. Some questioned whether the ILO had fully made a **transition in its staffing profile and role descriptions** from one designed primarily to support rural roads work implementation to one that would best support work at a policy level and in institutional capacity development. Informants referred to the staffing profile in Phase II as still being biased towards "engineers who just wanted to build roads" or as preserving an "engineering mentality". Of course, this is a question of balance of skills within the team - it does not mean that engineering expertise was not needed. The project could not operate without it.

143. The **budget freeze in Phase II** affected the project's efficient delivery. One ILO informant explained that during this time the project could only maintain work because of funds rolling over from previous financial years and it was difficult to plan given the continuing uncertainty over what the government might do. Even when budgets were available, the cycle for procurement and works execution was generally too short leading to an inability to spend allocated budgets before the end of each financial fiscal year. As a senior MPW official explained:

"The tender process can take quite a long time and road works are often time critical. TL needs to better align its budget processes with its needs – for example by having a multi-annual budget with a specific allocation to maintenance."

144. Though not under the control of the project, the slow **payment of contractors had a flow-on effect in terms of efficiency**. The processes to approve payments were reported to need streamlining and there was also a need for improved systems to monitor and address late payments. This flowed on to affect the efficient completion of rural roads work – for example, contractors minimized their exposure to risk by engaging fewer workers and taking longer to complete projects. All phases of the project grappled with this problem and, although some progress was made, it is far from resolved.

145. The lack of clarity about **decentralization and responsibilities, complex reporting lines, staffing and resource constraints, and lack of administrative support** at municipal level all affected the efficiency of the project's capacity development efforts. In some cases and municipalities, staff were recruited to positions but could not get to the R4D Program training because they had no transport or travel allowance.

146. Developing the capacity of institutions and staff was reported to be especially challenging when there were **high levels of turnover** of Ministers and staff. As an ILO staff member said: "With instability and turnover at the Ministry level, project found itself having to start all over again in building relationships and commitment."

147. The consistent and focused approach to rural roads development through a **single program implemented for over ten years also** had significant efficiency benefits. The consistency of support provided to the GoTL and to the construction sector and the standardisation of approaches and work methods created a much-needed point of stability in an often-volatile context in the development of the capacity of the public and private sector to plan, manage and implement rural road works. In other developing countries, capacity development efforts can be fragmented by multiple agencies working in this space.

148. Relevance) but broadly aimed to build national capacities (government institutions and staff and private contractors) to effectively rehabilitate and maintain rural roads. Each project built on its predecessor, but the Program was not conceived as a ten-year intervention but as a sequence of individual projects, each with its own outcomes. This meant that there was uncertainty in moving from one funding cycle to the next, limiting long-term planning and the Program's capacity to adjust strategy and staffing. There were also no longer-term performance benchmarks against which progress towards key objectives could be progressively assessed.
149. Operating as a partnership between GoTL, the Government of Australia (GoA – as represented by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Program aimed to ensure that *“women and men in rural Timor-Leste are deriving social and economic benefits from improved rural road access”*. The Programme ended on 31 December 2022 with DFAT now pursuing a new approach with a new implementation partner in its support of road network development in the country.
150. Various studies and impact assessments of R4D-SP have been conducted over the last ten years and there have been independent and internal evaluations. Detailed results frameworks and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans were also developed and these guided the collection of data on each project's outputs and outcomes. These data were documented in six-monthly progress reports.

2.7 Purpose, objectives, clients and scope of the evaluation

151. Noting the uniqueness of this 10-year plus partnership between the GoTL, GoA and ILO in supporting the development and implementation of the R4D program, the evaluation would focus on the significant changes and impact it brought about in Timor Leste. The broad purpose of this cluster evaluation is to promote accountability and also to enhance learning among ILO, Government of Timor Leste, social partners, donor and other key stakeholders.
152. The relevant tripartite constituents and key stakeholders and beneficiaries would be consulted, and their inputs taken into consideration throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation would cover the project's collective results focusing not only on what has been achieved but especially how and why.
153. The evaluation would apply OECD/DAC criteria with a focus on impact. Evaluation objectives:
- Identify and assess the significant, long-term contributions and potential transformative effects (social, economic, and environment) of the 4 cluster projects over the 10 years period as per the Theory of Change and its results framework. The following areas of achievements and impact should be assessed but not be limited to
 - Employment generation for women and men (improved livelihood)
 - Improved accessibility of rural communities (school, health care, markets and other economic activities) due to better quality of roads and more rural roads
 - Improved decent work dimension (i.e. occupational safety and health, rights and social dialogue)
 - Capacity building within concerned government institutions and the private construction industry to manage continued improvements to and maintenance of the rural road network.
 - Assess what worked well and what worked less well in building the GoTL's capacity to implement its R4D program and national private sector capacity to rehabilitate/maintain rural roads

- Provide forward-looking recommendations and identify good practice aimed at informing future road programs and projects, and in particular ILO’s Employment Intensive Infrastructure Program (EIIP) approach.

154. The clients of the evaluation are:

- The GoTL, ILO constituents and key stakeholders involved in the Program
- ILO backstopping units and other relevant entities at ILO; and the donor (DFAT)
- Staff, including R4D-SP project staff and management and staff in the ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor Leste.

155. The scope of the evaluation covers the entire period of the four projects (2012 to end-December 2022) and considers the relevant findings and recommendations of previous project evaluations, studies on impact assessment and tracer studies.

156. The evaluation integrates gender equality and disability inclusion as a crosscutting concern throughout its deliverables and processes, with special attention to women and people living with disabilities.

2.8 Evaluation Questions

IMPACT	How well did the projects result in “women and men in rural Timor-Leste... deriving social and economic benefits from improved road access”?
	What are the longer term/broader impacts - social, environmental and economic – including indirect, secondary/potential effects?
	What legal/policy/procedural reforms have resulted from the projects’ capacity development work with government and the private sector?
	To what extent have the projects’ capacity building activities had an impact on the private construction industry’s ability and capacity to effectively build and maintain rural roads?
	What impact did the projects have on government and industry resilience and capacity to respond to crises ?

	To what extent did the projects promote and have an impact on decent work ? What helped or hindered these results?
SUSTAINABILITY	Have project benefits been sustained so far and are these likely to continue? What financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities are needed to sustain benefits over time?
	What sustainable local training capacity has been put in place for future new entrants from industry that can expand capacity and respond to new opportunities and challenges?
	What factors have contributed most to mobilizing stakeholders to own and sustain R4D ? Have these had an enduring effect on other government policies and programmes?
EFFECTIVENESS	To what extent did the projects achieve their objectives ?
	What innovative approaches proved to be especially effective?
	What factors helped or hindered project effectiveness ? How should future related projects take these into account?
	How well did the projects mainstream gender and disability inclusion?
	How effective were the projects' COVID-19 response/adaptations and guidance to stakeholders?
COHERENCE	How well did the projects leverage the specific capabilities/position of GoTL, GoA and ILO to support implementation? What can be learnt from this experience?
	How well did the cluster of projects complement and fit with other ongoing development initiatives in Timor-Leste?
EFFICIENCY	Were allocated resources adequate to achieve planned results? What resource issues helped or hindered implementation?
	Was enough administrative, operational, technical, and political support provided through the DFAT, GoTL, ILO partnership?
RELEVANCE	As the cluster of projects evolved, did they remain relevant to government priorities and the needs of the people of Timor Leste?
	How well did capacity building efforts adapt to changing management arrangements (in particular, decentralisation to municipal level)?

2.9 Methodology

157. Key elements of the methodology were:

- **Approach:** The cluster evaluation applied a mix of methods and analysed both quantitative and qualitative data, combining an analysis of previous evaluations, impact and tracer studies and other relevant project documents (see [Annex B](#)) with face-to-face and remote interviews with key informants (see [Annex A](#)). It aims to “tell the story” of R4D since it began and to bring into focus its key achievement and the lessons learnt.
- **Document review:** The document review included a wide range of documents/reports related to the project’s context, design, ongoing development and modification, technical and financial progress, monitoring and evaluation systems; documented project outputs

(e.g., guidelines, tools and other resources supporting R4D implementation and capacity building); and media coverage.

- **Field visits, observation and interviews:** An evaluation field mission took place from November 14-18, 2022, which included interviews and R4D site visits in two municipalities to enable direct observation of project results. 93 people were interviewed in total including 15 women. Additional information from four communities on local impact was collected by the National Consultant from 21 November to 2 December. Data collection tools and interview running sheets were developed to guide this work.
- **Gender equality and inclusion:** The evaluation gave attention to gender equality and inclusion related concerns in the data collection and analysis and followed ILO evaluation guidance note 3.1 on integrating gender. This included analysis of program documents and gender and inclusion strategy and performance data; ensuring women were included in evaluation interviews; assessing project results and impact for women and people with disability; and seeking feedback from key stakeholders and partners gender and inclusion related aspects.
- **Case studies:** Two brief project case studies were completed examining in more detail some themes to emerge in the evaluation (i.e., road connectivity and the need for integrated roads planning and support for female-owned contracting businesses).
- **Validation:** A workshop with project staff was held in December 2022 to discuss preliminary findings and a stakeholder workshop was held January 2023 to discuss and to get feedback on a draft report. Additional feedback was received subsequently which informed the final report.

158. **Limitations:**

- Some of the people interviewed in Timor Leste (including some donor and ILO social partner representatives) were not directly involved in the Program prior to the Bridging Phase.
- Only 16 per cent of people interviewed in the evaluation were women – contributing factors included the low representation of women in senior positions within key GoTL ministries and among community leaders.

159. **Potential conflicts of interest:**

- The National Consultant on the project team had a previous involvement in the R4D program, working for 14 days in monitoring child labour compliance. This person was primarily engaged in an administrative capacity in organizing meetings and acting as an interpreter but was also involved in collecting feedback (using a template) from community members on project impact. He had no input to the evaluation exercise in interpreting the data collected or in determining the evaluation’s findings.

3. Findings

3.1 Impact

Finding 1: The rehabilitation of rural roads through the R4D Program has had a significant positive impact on communities. Because of the importance of road connectivity, similar improvements in the broader road network are needed before the full potential impact can be achieved.

160. From the outset, the Program had enormous potential for impact on the lives of the 70 percent of Timor-Leste’s population who live in rural areas. Rural roads were in a degraded state before the project with only 13 percent of the country’s 1,975 km of core rural roads considered to be in

a good condition. This restricted economic activity, especially access to markets and the transportation of goods, and the ability of community members to access basic social services including medical treatment and education.

161. In the end, 987 kilometres of rural roads – a half of the country’s rural road network – were rehabilitated through the Program. In the process:

- some 46,900 households were given access to improved, year-round, motorable rural roads.
- USD 11 million dollars were paid in wages to local workers for 2 million person-days of work.
- 24.9 per cent of these wages were paid to women and 2.96 per cent to people with disabilities.
- 24 per cent of total project costs were paid in labour costs.

162. The projects conducted several studies designed to measure this impact and their findings are summarised below. The current evaluation visited six of the thirteen municipalities to gather additional information from community stakeholders on project impact and this is also summarised below along with information included in past evaluation reports.

Evidence of impact from project studies and reports

163. In Phase I, impact studies were undertaken to assess changes in people’s livelihoods and access to services after the completion of R4D rehabilitation and maintenance work. They collected information on different socio-economic impacts using a range of tools including focus group discussions with men and women, local business activity surveys and transport surveys. Baseline data were collected in June-August 2013 prior to the commencement of works. End-line surveys were conducted at various stages, focusing on roads where significant improvements had been made. Results⁸ illustrate the magnitude and nature of the impacts that have flowed from these improvements including:

- **Impact on travel times, traffic volumes, and transport** – traffic volumes more than doubled; travel times halved; the use of motorised transport increased; the number of people for whom walking was their main means of transport significantly decreased; and that walking was replaced by motorised transport to access hospitals and markets. Lack of public transport was still a constraint, but where new services were introduced, travel time savings of up to five hours were made.
- **Economic and business impacts** – income from the sale of agricultural products increased by an average of 100 percent; 30 percent of businesses along the rehabilitated roads were new (including kiosks, local construction companies and agricultural products shops); access to motorised transport enabled product diversification; roadside kiosks reported a 40 percent increase in weekly turnover; and reduced transportation costs led to a reduction in the price of construction materials and food supplies.
- **Impact on health service access** – ambulance access was greatly improved and mobile health services, were better able to reach remote communities.
- **Negative impacts** – there were reported increases in air pollution and in the number of accidents.

164. The project’s documentation of “Stories of Significant Change” included assessments made in specific communities using focus groups, business activity surveys and traffic counts and these are also indicative of these impacts. One examined the impact of a 7km road from Maumeta to Metagou in the Liquica Municipality (which the current evaluation also visited – see below). The report highlighted how the rehabilitated road had halved travel time and greatly reduced the physical burden of transporting goods on foot. One informant said:

⁸ Sources: Roads for Development Program, Impact Monitoring Report, October 2015; Project Report (uncredited), Second Follow-up Traffic Counts R4D Rehabilitation Roads, 2019

“In the past you just walked to the market, but you could only take what you could carry on your head or your back. Carrying things this way made you very tired and you only made a little bit of money.”

165. Another study, Women and Rural Roads⁹, highlighted the positive impact on women’s income and expenditure:

“16 out of the 28 interviewed women had experienced an increase in income since the road rehabilitation works were completed. In all of these cases their income had more than doubled. Income spending generally fell into three main categories: i) children’s schooling (four women); ii) general household consumption (11 women) and, iii) reinvestment in their livelihood activities (five women).” (p.12)

166. While pointing to some modest impacts on women’s social participation (e.g., involvement in groups, politics, social activism), the study found that these require “promotion and facilitation beyond the simple act of improving road access” (p.13).

Current community views on impact

167. The evaluation visited six municipalities (Baucau, Liquica, Ermera, Bobonaro, Viqueque and Ainaro) and met with community representatives to gather information on the impact of the Program’s roads work. All made similar observations about the dramatic impacts the projects had had on their communities but also stressed the need to build on these to maximise impact.

168. **Baucau Municipality** – two Program sites were visited - the Saelari to Chainage road (3.3km) and the Bercoli to Bahamori road (4km). Both communities reported significant improvements in terms of **access to markets and services** and **agricultural income** and benefits flowing from the employment generated. A Bahamori woman said the improved road and access to market created an **incentive to increase production** as previously there was a risk that they could not get goods to market in the rain season. Both communities also stressed the need to continue road works to maximise impact. Bahamori representatives said that it is still hard to get to hospital, especially for pregnant women. The project in Saelari highlighted the **need for an integrated roads policy approach** that would ensure that connecting municipal and national roads were also upgraded (See Case Study 2). This was an issue identified in a 2017 study prepared by the project, *Rural Access Index (RAI) - The Case of Timor-Leste* which said:

“Investments in roads need to be limited to those roads that either directly connect to places that rural people need to have access to (e.g., places of social-economic importance) or roads that connect to all-weather roads.” (p.8)

Case Study 2 – Saelari to Chainage Road in Baucau Municipality

This 3.3km section of road was rehabilitated in 2019 with work allocated through two contracts, including one with a business owned and managed by a woman. The road was in good condition, significantly better than the municipal road that led to it.

Community representatives explained that, prior to the R4D works, it had been extremely difficult for community members to get to local or municipal markets. The situation now was much improved, especially to the local market. This had enabled increases in volume and quality of produce.

Supplies to the community have also improved leading to better quality of life. Car hire costs are cheaper and there was less risk of damage to vehicles. In terms of social benefits, prior to the road, pregnant women or those facing a health emergency had to be carried by hand to the nearest

⁹ Roads for Development Program, Women and Rural Roads, July 2015

accessible point because ambulances could not reach the community. Access to school also much improved.

The cash that flowed to the community from employment had a very positive effect. People in the community struggled to find regular employment. Beside some agriculture initiatives and small kiosks, there no industries that can provide regular income to the community's members. The cash earned during the roads works was mainly used for home improvement, purchase of medication, school items, food and some invested in small businesses, like kiosks, husbandry (pigs and chicken).

While the community saw a clear impact from the Program, the very poor quality of the connecting municipal road was a cause for concern. The evaluation team experienced first-hand the degraded state of this road which leads to the road rehabilitated by Program. This longer and quite dangerous stretch of road needs to be navigated if community members wish to access larger markets in Baucau.

To maximize project impact, improved connectivity was needed. The Chefe de Suco said that at the time of the initial consultation over the project, the community argued strongly for another section of road (currently classified as an "E Road") to be improved as an alternative to the existing municipal road. This road was on flatter ground and would be easier to repair. It was in good condition in colonial days and enabled a viable palm oil industry which the community was keen to revive.

This Program site therefore highlighted both the impact of the work done so far and the need for a more integrated road policy.

169. **Liquica Municipality** – The evaluation included a visit to the Metagou Suco where a 7km stretch of road had been rehabilitated in 2016. This road was quite steep and, according the the Chefe de Suco, only small quantities of goods could be brought to market by foot prior to its rehabilitation. With motorised transport now possible, **more goods can be transported** and the journey time is much improved. **Pregnant women** now had the security of being able to be transported by ambulance to hospital to give birth. The cash injection provided by road works helped fund **education, medicine, and business investment**. A community teacher said that **school attendance** had improved, and children could spend more time studying and playing and less walking to and from school. In summary, as the Chefe de Suco put it:

“There’s no comparison in terms of access. Before, to get to market, we had to walk the whole way, carrying what we could. Now with motorised transport it is just a 30-minute trip. Metagou is the local hub community to access school, medical services etc. and local access has also been greatly improved. Over 200 people got work through the project since the beginning, rotating in groups of 10 [total population is 850] – this provided a cash injection allowing purchases of medicine, schooling needs, business improvements etc.”

170. **Ermera Municipality** – Stakeholders in the Punilala community said that **transportation of goods** to and from the village was often previously done by foot or using horses – now heavy vehicles can be used, and these have improved access to services. The CDO highlighted good results in **social inclusion** with 30 percent done by women and 10 percent by people with disabilities. The project also helped address **child labour** concerns in the municipality, which has been a concern in Ermera’s coffee industry.

171. **Bobonaro Municipality** – The evaluation included a visit to the Maliana to Saburai road. Prior to rehabilitation, this could not be accessed by trucks and other heavy vehicles and **access to markets and to the Indonesian border** were restricted. This is no longer the case. As **construction materials can be more easily transported** community **housing has improved**. Local **small businesses** have increased in number and are more profitable due to the improved roads. Improved heavy vehicle road access has also enabled the **extension of the electricity supply** to remote communities.

172. **Viqueque Municipality** – The evaluation included a visit to the Ossu to Nahareca road which was rehabilitated earlier in the project. The condition of the road was still good, but preparations were

underway for periodic maintenance works. The economic and social impact was described as “big and positive” including **improved access to markets, hospitals, schools and shops. Electricity supply** to remote areas was also being extended due to the improved road access.

173. **Ainaro Municipality** – Like the other municipalities, stakeholders referred to the impact of the rehabilitated roads in terms of **access to basic services** for communities that were often completely isolated. Stakeholders also saw a **need for a more integrated roads planning approach**. As an example, they described how several **rehabilitated rural roads come to a dead end** when they reach a river that requires a bridge over 10 meters. As this is national public works responsibility, the bridge is not incorporated in the rural road plan and during the rainy season, access to those communities is not possible because the bridges have not yet been built.

174. Other stakeholders consulted in the evaluation also stressed the significant impact the roads had made. One MPW Director who had been involved in the project since 2012 said:

“There is no doubt that the impact has been obvious and great. Communities have benefitted a lot, especially in their ability to take products to markets. In Same, there was previously no access and the roads have had a huge impact on that community. Similarly, in Viqueque, the benefits of rehabilitating a seriously deteriorated road are obvious, even with some work still incomplete.”

Previous evaluations’ assessment of project impact

175. Project evaluations gave less attention to the Program’s impact in respect of the project’s development goal (“Women and men in rural Timor-Leste are deriving social and economic benefits from improved road access”), focusing instead on “end of program outcomes” relating to capacity building of the GoTL and contractors. This was particularly the case in the 2017 Phase I final evaluation which made only a broad statement about “positive impacts... in terms of enhanced access and higher levels of income for small businesses” (p.26). The 2021 Phase II final evaluation provided more detail, describing how 157,320 men and women had gained access to 552km of improved roads, citing reductions in travel time and transport costs, increased use of motorised vehicles and the positive effect on the engagement of women in community and business events (p.31). The internal mid-term evaluation of the Bridging Phase did not cover project impacts though it recommended that “a book, report or video” be developed to document the impacts of the project.

176. DFAT’s 2018 Mid-Term Review set out some key impacts including labour days created and wages paid; the high percentage of women for whom the Program had been their first experience of work in a wage-paying job; increased quality and quantity of rural roads; a 100 percent increase in weekly income; a high percentage of contractor businesses owned and run by women; and increased community income resulting in construction and renovation of houses (p.57).

Finding 2: *From a low base and after ten years of Program support, significant progress has been made in building the capacity of GoTL institutions in rural roads management, but further technical support and guidance would continue to strengthen functions and service delivery.*

177. R4D was introduced at a time when there were **no GoTL resources or personnel dedicated to rural roads** and **no established systems for planning and implementing works**. Such limitations were well known to the ILO from its earlier EIIP projects including significant capacity gaps in setting and applying technical standards, selection criteria, conditions of employment, training of contractors, procurement, roads maintenance methods. The project therefore started from a low base and the task of elevating institutional capacity to an autonomous level was never going to be completed quickly, especially in a context of political and institutional instability. ILO policy specialists involved at different stages of the Program who were interviewed as part of the evaluation acknowledged this:

“Previously, rural roads weren’t on the government agenda at all. In terms of capacity building, we started from scratch. Good progress has been made, but can the GoTL do this without assistance now? No.”

“This kind of capacity takes longer to build than 10 years. The ILO had the same situation in Cambodia, but it is now much more advanced, maybe 10 years ahead of Timor-Leste. Capacity in the municipalities is still nowhere near what it is in developed countries.”

“10 years might seem a long time but if you look at the starting point, it’s not. The project’s ambitions about what could be achieved were perhaps too high. It was a big achievement even putting rural roads on the agenda.”

178. The lead time required for this capacity building was also noted in the DFAT’s “investment concept note”¹⁰ written to support the scoping of Phase II: “The experience of the Australian aid program in other sectors... has been that **10-15 years of concerted effort** is required to drive institutional change and for government to build its capacity to take on service delivery.” (pp.3-4) In this context, the project’s final December 2022 report makes the important point that the Program “**was not designed as a 10-year project**” and that planning, and budget allocations have necessarily been focused on “shorter-term achievements, as opposed to long-term reforms” (p.vi).

Knowledge management capacity and the RRMPIS

179. Building capacity in knowledge management was a foundation for much of the subsequent work – “What is very important – as observed by R4D – is to establish and institutionalize technical and managerial **capacities within the Road Agency for collecting, storing, processing, analyzing and presenting data** (including the presentation of data on maps).” (ILO, 2015: 21) In Phase I, the project was instrumental in filling the initial data void in these areas and has progressively developed in subsequent phases the capacity of national counterparts to maintain and update key data and to use these to advocate for investments in rural roads.

180. The RRMPIS embodied much of this work and had the important impact of **driving a data-driven approach to rural roads management**. Many national and municipal stakeholders consulted in the evaluation saw this as a key achievement of the Program. As senior MPW official said:

“Prior to R4D, we lacked information on rural roads, and this restricted planning. The project provided the information needed, set up a planning process, and built local capacity to develop better roads. The RRMPIS was very helpful, setting priorities, allowing budgeting over a five-year period.”

181. Endorsed by GoTL, the RRMPIS became a **key document for annual planning and budgeting** and has been used as an **advocacy tool for securing budget allocations**. While some municipal staff noted that sometimes political pressures can result in contracts being awarded that were not contemplated in the Master Plan, overall, it was described as “one of the great achievements” of the Program. The impact of this data-driven approach on GoTL capacity was best captured in a quote in a project report¹¹ from a MPW official included:

*“Without the RRMPIS, we **were just fumbling or guessing** when we wanted to do a plan. If someone said, ‘let’s do this road’, we’d just follow, but we didn’t have clear information about how many people use the road or what its final outcome and benefit would be. But, with RRMPIS, we know how many people will get benefits or access to the roads.”*

182. **Annual updates** of the RRMPIS investment plans have involved both national and municipal staff and some expressed in interviews a confidence in their **capacity to do this work independently**.

¹⁰ DFAT, Roads for Development (R4D) Phase 2 Investment Concept Note, 19 August 2015.

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/timor-leste-r4d-phase-ii-investment-concept-note>

¹¹ Stories of Significant Change, PAF Indicator 20, 2020

A new RRMPIS for the period 2023-27 has been completed following a series of workshops involving national and municipal staff.

183. GoTL commitment to the integration of rural roads planning into the big picture of a National Roads Policy has not yet been demonstrated. The Rural Access Index paper, cited earlier, pointed out how the project's RRMPIS could lead to **greater impact if it were developed as part of a broader master plan or National Roads Policy**.

*“Another lesson learned from the R4D experience is that it would have been more effective if the Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS) was **developed as part of an overall Roads Master Plan for all classes of roads**. This would have further increased its quality as it would have looked at the overall road network in the country – including road connectivity considerations.” p.21*

184. The development of such a broader plan by the ADB was something that the Bridging Phase had intended to support but due to factors outside the Program's control, it did not proceed. Connectivity issues are highlighted in the RRMPIS but action on these is needed. As one Municipal Director said:

*“Commitment to rural roads is good but **integration of roads planning** is needed to achieve connectivity. We need to look at rural, municipal and urban roads together.”*

Capacity in key rural roads management functions

185. The capacity of GoTL agencies in **procurement and contracting** was noted in the 2021 final independent evaluation of Phase II as having received “consistent and in-depth support over a number of years” and was highlighted as an area where Program impact was strong. It noted how the project had embedded a procurement advisor to work alongside MPW staff to guide and support their work and build capacity. By the end of Phase II, the procurement department “had a high degree of capacity” aided by the fact that many of its staff had been in their roles for extended periods. This provided a more enduring return on the project's investment in their development. The DFAT mid-term review of Phase II also identified the solid progress made in developing capacity in this area, noting that it was more likely to be able to function independently before other functional areas (p.45) – a level that had been reached by 2020, as measured by the project's ACDIA tool¹². The evaluation interviewed a senior official in the Procurement Directorate who said that the unit was now “fully prepared and confident” in their role and has reached a stage where it is leading capacity development of GoTL staff itself, with only minimal support from the Program.

186. Capacity in **social and environmental safeguards** is another functional area where project impact has been assessed as strong (again this was noted in the DFAT mid-term review as approaching an autonomous level and via the 2020 ACDIA). Training of CDOs based in the 12 municipalities and five MPW Environmental Officers as well as the development of frameworks for social and environmental safeguards have helped reinforce this capacity with GoTL agencies. Some interviews noted that there was **still a reluctance to address social safeguards and inclusion** among some MPW staff and that continued reinforcement is necessary.

187. Other functional areas are at different stages of development, but the Phase II evaluation expressed concerns that **capacity substitution was still an issue**, particularly at the municipal level where Program Regional Coordinators were still performing tasks that should have been led more by municipal staff. The HR and budgetary resourcing issues described earlier that hampered

¹² The ACDIA (Annual Capacity Development Implementation Assessment) was a tool designed and implemented during Phase II by the Capacity Development Specialist who was part of the R4D-SP team at the time. The tool was reported to be somewhat difficult to administer and does not appear to have been used after Phase II.

decentralization were clearly a factor in this as was the lack of commitment by the GoTL to address these constraints.

188. Some progress was noted in interviews with municipalities in performing some rural roads functions with less Program support. Municipal Directors and supervisors were increasingly performing tasks such as **contract supervision** and **road surveys** with Program support only provided for more complex cases; MPW laboratory technicians based in municipalities were doing much of the **materials testing** work; and **social and environmental safeguards** work was less dependent on Program support.

Capacity embedded in GoTL agencies in the form of systems, procedures and tools

189. As described earlier, the Program aimed to leave behind technical manuals and other documented procedures, tools and systems that would help to institutionalise practices established under the Program and provide a basis for their autonomous use and staff training. These included 13 technical manuals¹³ and an Operations Manual.

190. As at the end of December 2022, these documents had not received final approval for release as endorsed MPW documents, but they received interim approval for continued use in the field and as a basis for staff training. Through its interviews, the evaluation found that GoTL **staff highly valued these resources** and saw them as providing a solid foundation for their future work. Municipal staff saw them as important tools that would support decentralisation over time and asked that future work (post-Program) retain them. Their impact may not yet be evident in this respect but, with continued capacity development of staff, they offer **a solid and enduring procedural base for rural roads management**. As the Phase II evaluation said: “The ultimate success of the program will revolve around its ability to embed manuals and systems and support MPW through structured and planned work that works alongside counterparts” (p.58).

191. The non-completion of Integrated Roads Management Information System (**IRMIS**) was a **missed opportunity for the Program**. Commenced in Phase II, there were clearly procedural deficiencies in the system’s development. As there was no functioning paper-based system in use, it was a big leap to implement a sophisticated computer-based system. The operational needs of end users seem not to have been fully considered (e.g., poor internet connectivity meant that real-time data entry was not always possible). It should also be noted that the development of IRMIS was included at the request of MPW and DFAT and was outside the scope of the Program up to that point and of its existing skills base. The contracting company’s reluctance to transfer the hosting of the system proved to be unhelpful and frustrating. The project team believed that despite these things, the system could have been salvaged with additional time and money.

***Finding 3:** The development of a market of rural roads contractors with the capability to deliver quality results using local resources was an important impact of the Program. Work supporting the enabling environment for these businesses is needed and their investment in skills and quality needs to be recognised in mainstream (non-Program) procurement processes to drive continuous improvements in quality and efficiency.*

192. The R4D Program has had a significant impact on the development of a market of rural roads contractors with both the technical skills to deliver quality results and the managerial and business management skills to bid for work, meet contractual requirements and be profitable and efficient. Prior to the Program, securing government contracts and running an effective engineering contracting business could be somewhat ad hoc and unregulated. Prior to the project, contractors

¹³ Technical manuals for rural roads: (1) Design Guidelines; (2) Participant Handbook on Pre-Bid Training s; (3) Methods of Materials Sampling and Testing in the Laboratory and in the Field; (4) Bio-Engineering Guidelines; (5) Standard Technical Drawings; (6) Basic Safety and Health Guidelines; (7) Guidelines for Pavement Structural Design; (8) Design Guidelines for Box Culverts; (9) Social Safeguards Framework; (10) Environmental Safeguards Framework; (11) Unit Rate Analysis; (12) Quality Assurance and Quality Control Guidelines; (13) COVID-19 Guidelines.

secured work mainly through their contacts rather than through formal tender processes and pricing and scoping works was not done methodically.

193. Formal training of contractors was prominent in Phases I and II, but this was scaled back in the Bridging Phase with contractors receiving more support on site. The Program conducted several **contractor tracer studies** over the life of the project, the most recent of which covered the period from 2012 to 2020 and was done jointly with the ERA-AF project. Key impact findings from this study included:

- The **capacity of contractors increased** in bidding, implementation of road works and compliance with contractual standards.
- **Virtually none of the contractors (1 out of 73) had ceased trading** despite challenging economic circumstances and concerns of a saturated market. Some had diversified their activities to survive.
- Despite this, at the time of the study, **37 percent of contractors had no current contracts**, noting the effects of the pandemic and reduced government road sector investments.
- 86 percent of contractors confirmed that the training and coaching provided by the projects had prepared them to meet their contractual **social inclusion** obligations in terms of female participation and inclusion of people with disability.

194. In interviews with contractors during the evaluation's site visits, all agreed that the Program had a **positive impact** on their business, though some indicated that **more training was needed** (e.g. in business management and financing) and that some were still too slow in fully adopting social safeguard measures. One R4D-trained contractor in Viqueque reported the business had won a national competition run by UNDP that recognised excellence in tendering and has since won contracts for the UNDP and the EU. Others gave details of how their businesses had increased their staff and had acquired new equipment. As one female business owner in Baucau said:

“Support was and is very important for local companies – previously I had very little knowledge. Before R4D, nobody knew about my company but now we are on the MPW map. Thanks to R4D (and ERA) training, I improved the company's financial management and efficiency. We've grown from 2 to 8 employees and diversified and are confident in tendering for more work”.

195. Moving forward, to ensure that the contractor market continues to mature and contribute to the development of quality rural roads in an efficient way, the **enabling environment needs to be improved**. The problem with **late payments** of contractors by government agencies has bedevilled the project ever since the ILO stop handling these payments directly itself. Not enough progress seems to have been made, leading to problems with business cashflow (requiring debt financing with high interest rates), delayed or non-payment of workers, and under-staffing of work (to minimise risk). There was even an incident reported where a community had seized trucks from two contractors because local workers had not been paid for five months. The projects have continuously worked on this problem with the GoTL, including by engaging with the MPW and the National Development Agency, both of which have acknowledged the problem. ILO informants indicated that the situation was now better than it was but further improvement is needed.

196. Mechanisms to ensure that contractors are not **exceeding their capacity to deliver** are also needed. The evaluation learned that there are some contractors operating in several projects (not necessarily Program-related) across different municipalities that have presented the same details about available resources, engineers, supervisors and equipment to each but cannot simultaneously deliver all of these projects. Deadlines are then not met and quality of the work suffers as they rotate the limited resources that they across these multiple projects. This may be an issue that can be addressed through an effective IRMIS or through some other cross-jurisdictional coordination, but, until it is, there will be a negative impact on the contractor market and on rural roads management overall.

197. **Lack of transparency in awarding some (non-Program) contracts** also threatens the continuing development of the contractor market that the Program has helped to cultivate. The evaluation was surprised how often in the field interviews the issue arose of lack of transparency in the allocation of (non-Program) contracts. Municipalities saw decentralisation as a potential mechanism to address the problem which they saw as being more of a problem where decisions are centralised. Investigating this issue fell outside the evaluation's terms of reference, but its prevalence has the potential to weaken the impact of the project's work in developing contractor capacity if demonstrated skills and quality are less important in decision making than "who you know."

Finding 4: The R4D projects provided a major platform for influencing the quality and quantity of work in an important sector.

198. Decent work, international labour standards and social justice principles underpinned the Program. The projects closely monitored the **employment generated** in communities, recording total workdays and wages paid as outputs, as well as **employment quality** and the extent to which project benefits were **equitably shared** (see EFFECTIVENESS). Improved rural road infrastructure also created **long-term employment and economic development benefits** to communities and their people and businesses. In terms of wages, the ILO took the lead in ensuring that workers be paid the legislated **minimum wage**¹⁴. The cash put into workers' hands through the project undoubtedly had an impact on their lives at the time. In the evaluation's field visits many examples were given of how these wages were used to **enhance quality of life** (e.g., housing, education, medicine) and **livelihoods** (e.g., investing in agriculture and small businesses).

199. For some, this may have been a temporary supplement to their regular income, but the project's **investment in skills** development of contractors seems also to have had a positive impact on the longer-term employment prospects of some trainees. The Joint Contractor Tracer Study finding that 62 percent of the people it surveyed were still employed in the road construction sector¹⁵.

200. The ILO's RBSA-funded COVID-19 sub-project in a sense brought the ILO's work in the country full circle back to its early "crisis response" work in supporting vulnerable communities. In response to the crisis, funds were used as a **social protection** mechanism, supplementing government Program funds and creating additional rural roads maintenance work to ensure that affected communities and vulnerable populations were supported. Speedy payments are essential in these situations, so bypassing the slow payment system and paying contractors directly enhanced the impact of the project for the selected communities.

201. More broadly, the Program has been a key project contributing to the Decent Work Country Program for Timor-Leste and its actions had an impact of the Decent Work principles it set out, including promoting compliance with **workplace safety standards** (e.g., via the Social Safeguards Framework, training GoTL staff in OSH, training contractors, and the development of a tool for "joint inspections" during the Bridging Phase), promoting **fair and inclusive labour practices** (e.g., gender equality and disability inclusion were strongly emphasised throughout), requiring contractors to provide **accident insurance** for workers, contributing to the elimination of **child labour** (e.g., compliance monitoring of child protection provisions of the Social Safeguards Framework), and implementing safeguard for **environmental protection** (e.g., using bio-engineering techniques to improve outcomes).

202. In terms of **social dialogue and tripartism**, the evaluation **found the level of engagement of ILO social partners in the projects was relatively low overall**. Project staff pointed to examples of

¹⁴ The legislated minimum wage set in 2012 was USD 5 per day. In 2019, the National Development Agency (NDA) increased this to USD 7 per day for construction workers. In the planning stage for Phase I, the ILO also carried out a comprehensive study on wages: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/asist/asistdocs.details?p_lang=en&p_sess=sessid&p_accessionno=200888

¹⁵ At n=58, the sample size was quite small but given that the survey was conducted at a time when 37 percent of contractors had no current contract, this was still an encouraging result.

involvement, such as negotiations over minimum wages, occupational safety and health, accident insurance, and contractor capacity building, but this was episodic. The relatively low level of existing capacity of some social partners was a factor in this as was the fact that the workers involved in the project were from the informal sector (though the KSTL indicated a strong desire to engage with them and their communities despite this). The RBSA-funded COVID-19 response initiative attempted to lift social partner involvement, including a specific output (2.2) aimed at strengthening “capacities among, and dialogues between, the tripartite constituents regarding the design, implementation and monitoring of targeted emergency employment-intensive public works programs”. This mainly took the form of **joint monitoring visits** to the project sites by the Trade Union Confederation of Timor-Leste (KSTL) and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Timor-Leste (CCI-TL), something that had not occurred in other project phases. While this gave social partners access to workers and contractors and the opportunity to better understand the project’s operational environment, impact on their capacity to help design and implement such programs was unclear. SEFOPE, the government agency responsible for employment program design and implementation, was not actively involved in this project.

203. Field interviews suggested that there is still more work required to maximise the impact in these areas. In terms of **social partner involvement**, the KSTL believes more should be done to involve workers’ representatives in project design and at all stages of implementation. This needs to go beyond involvement in committees and attending launches:

*“With labour intensive projects **we really need opportunities to go to the field and observe working conditions and to speak with workers. We can also play a productive role in engaging with communities to resolve their concerns. Our role in the project has been mainly ceremonial.**”*

204. The Bridging Phase R4D-SP team saw good progress in advancing Decent Work and social justice, but recognised that more is needed to increase impact:

*“Social inclusion and safeguards were a focus through the CDOs, one in each municipality. These would check compliance, impact on community and reach out to community organizations. Checklists were developed to check compliance and process corrective action requests. **You need years to create a culture around this** – there was no real understanding of OSH, traffic management, responding to community concerns.”*

*“Social safeguards and safety are an increasing focus. Traffic management is poor – R4D promotes it but **compliance still poor**. In terms of OSH, the project has provided PPE but workers sometimes don’t wear them as they are new and want to keep them that way.”*

3.2 Sustainability

Finding 5: *The sustainability of many of the Program’s achievements is good overall but depend on the willingness and commitment of key stakeholders to maintain and continuously improve the systems and standards that have been established and to continue to build the capacity of national and municipal staff. The durability of the rural roads that have been rehabilitated through the project will depend on a clear commitment to maintenance including a dedicated annual budget.*

Will the roads and their benefits be sustained?

205. The rural road works delivered under the Program were reported to be of a good standard using materials that are likely to have a reasonable lifespan. Regardless, they will **all require ongoing maintenance** particularly given the challenges posed by Timor-Leste’s regular flooding and its mountainous terrain.

206. Routine and periodic maintenance are covered in the RRMPIS but there were some concerns expressed by team members, municipal staff, and other stakeholders that, despite maintenance priorities being set out in the RRMPIS, **not enough dedicated maintenance funding is in practice made available** by the GoTL. Municipalities do not yet have the autonomy and resources to do what is required to keep the Program’s rehabilitated roads in good condition. Community Maintenance Groups set up through the Program may or may not continue to be funded and community leaders interviewed by the evaluation indicated that they would do all they could to maintain the roads, but there are limits to these approaches.

207. Although overall budgets theoretically include maintenance, **lack of specific budget line items for maintenance** means that the function can end up with too few funds. This is an issue in roads management generally – as one informant said, it is a “systemic issue that doesn’t just affect R4D-SP roads”. As a representative of another donor said:

“Government keeps saying that there is a budget for maintenance, but there is no budget line item that would guarantee an investment. This is a major lesson of the road projects.”

208. Maintenance took place during the projects, and funds were secured for this purpose even when there was no budget for new works (e.g., in 2017-18 when the project secured USD 1 million for maintenance). But the issue needs continuous attention – a failure to address it systematically could mean that over ten years of Program investment in rural roads will be wasted.

Will the capacity that has been developed be sustained?

209. **Within the GoTL**, some of the systems and procedures introduced by the project are still new and need more time to be fully absorbed at an institutional level. Individual GoTL staff trained by the project remain key to sustainability as the systems, however well documented they may be, need to be implemented by people with a base level of experience. Not all systems have yet been sufficiently embedded in the institutions to ensure the retention of capability that is independent of individuals who have been developed to work in key roles (i.e., to a point where the institution can train its staff without external support or manage succession planning).

210. Some functional areas, such as procurement and contracting, may have reached a more advanced level of sustainability (i.e., by virtue of having staff who have been working in the unit for a long time and an in-house capacity to train other staff in systems), but others are probably more **vulnerable to the loss of key staff**. Municipal staffing levels in rural roads are still low and the risk of losing key people there may therefore have a greater effect on capacity. There is also the risk that changes at a political and senior administrative level (which the project had to often navigate all too frequently) might also lead to decisions which lead to loss of capacity.

211. Some functional capacities were identified by the current project team as being at risk of not being sustained. Social Safeguards were a particular concern with some aspects of this work yet fully embedded in procedures (e.g., in contract documentation and administration.)

212. At a more practical level, some municipal staff were worried that the **end of R4D-SP will mean they no longer have access to resources** that the project has provided that are necessary to continue effective supervision and site visits. These included access to R4D-SP vehicles.

213. The sustainability of the project’s work developing contractors is similarly dependent on the continued operation of the individual firms that were developed. There is no clarity about **if and how the contractor market will be supported in the future**. The Phase II evaluation suggested that contractors should pay for this training in future, though whether they would be willing to pay for some of the elements offered under the Program is yet to be tested (e.g., disability inclusion). MPW is now confident in its capacity to deliver training to contractors in bid preparation, but nothing is proposed to cover other skills and business development. One of the

existing training providers, Don Bosco, is contemplating becoming a contractor itself, suggesting that it sees limited market opportunity in continuing the training role it has so far played.

214. **Ensuring that contractors that invest in capacity building are recognised** in mainstream tender assessments (i.e., outside the Program and its successor) would also contribute to sustainability by establishing a **market incentive**. As a representative of Don Bosco explained:

“To support the sustainability of industry capacity building developed through R4D, procurement processes need to recognise and reward the efforts/investments made by contractors in quality, accredited training provided by the likes of Don Bosco (e.g. rate such providers higher in the selection process, give more points). Otherwise, there will be no incentive to improve capacity and quality in industry.”

215. EU and CCI-TL representatives made similar observations about the need for improvements in mainstream (non-project) processes:

“Our projects have trained contractors, but the procurement process is not really transparent and fair. Often they know who they want. Small contractors not recognised for their investment in training and accreditation and quality of the roads may be affected.” (EU)

“There are concerns that businesses that make the effort to be trained and accredited aren’t given any advantage in the tendering process – so what’s the point? Companies should meet standards at different thresholds of construction. Also, any work over \$1m is now open to international competitive bidding – CCI-TL is pushing for this to be increased to \$7.5m to maximise local economic development. Training of local engineers needs to continue – it is critical if Timor-Leste is to one day join ASEAN.” (CCI-TL)

3.3 Effectiveness

Finding 6: *The changing emphasis of the projects over ten years makes a collective assessment of their effectiveness difficult. Independent evaluations have generally reported good effectiveness overall in delivering most planned outputs despite many complex operational and institutional challenges. More support is required before the GoTL can effectively manage rural roads at the national and municipal levels independently and in a sustainable way.*

216. Although R4D’s program logic and associated activities remained consistent throughout the project’s life, each phase had its own emphasis and faced its own challenges. The following section reviews the effectiveness of each phase. (Note that the fourth RBSA-funded COVID-19 recovery project is discussed later under Finding 9.)

Phase I

217. Recognising that the responsible government agencies had little or no capacity to rehabilitate rural roads themselves at this time¹⁶, Phase I rural roads work was led and implemented directly by the ILO’s project staff. The donor funded the capital works in the first **phase** and the ILO administered these funds. An ILO specialist involved in the early stages explained that “in Phase I, the idea was that the ILO would first lead and build” while gradually building local capacity”.¹⁷ The Chief Technical Officer (CTA) at that time said the idea was “to demonstrate to MPW that a labour-intensive approach would work” as they were more familiar with approaches that used heavy machinery. The project started from scratch:

¹⁶ According to the ILO’s initial assessment, prior to R4D, the GoTL had no staff or resources specifically allocated to rural roads.

¹⁷ In the first operating year (2013/14), DFAT provided USD 10.8 million for rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance (80 per cent of the total budget for this work). Over the next two years, DFAT’s contribution to the total capital investment was 21% and in the final year (2016/17) all such costs were paid by the GoTL (USD 8.409 million). Source: Phase I Final Evaluation, Table 3, p.23

“We had to lay the foundations first – lobbying, assessing what systems were in place for planning, procurement, contracting, supervision, workforce organisation and quality control. Many of these proved to be missing altogether.”

218. The project embraced this hands-on role, laying the foundations for capacity building, achieving good physical outputs in the form of improved roads, as well as a high community profile. As a former ILO senior manager said “the project was highly visible across Timor-Leste and, in the eyes of the community, R4D was doing fantastic work” with long-neglected rural roads improved and community members employed. Local civil works contractors received training and mentoring in bid preparation, labour-based approaches, and business management, which tracer studies showed had built their capacity in some key performance areas¹⁸.
219. Progress in improving the level of resources allocated by government to rural roads (Outcome 3) was also advanced. With the R4D team embedded in the MPW and in a position to influence decisions from within, the GoTL progressively increased its share of the capital investment in the project after the first year – something that an ILO representative said was “not often seen in such development projects”. Though these finances and rural roads funding generally were noted in the Phase I evaluation as still being “too fragmented”, the project’s ground-breaking work in developing a RRMPIS was seen as having the potential to solve this problem. The project also introduced social and environmental safeguards that were largely missing from existing processes. These included a commitment to gender equity that led to good results.
220. These things were achieved despite many constraints and challenges. The project operated in an environment where funding from the GoTL was uncertain, there were major problems in the timeliness of contractor payments made by GoTL, there were not enough qualified national and municipal MPW staff, and there was no high-level coordination body that could review strategy and solve operational problems.
221. While the project was a success in demonstrating what could be done in rural roads work, it did not make as much progress in preparing GoTL agencies to do this work themselves. Despite the existence of a capacity development strategy, the transfer of skills to GoTL staff was described in the final evaluation of Phase I as having been somewhat “ad hoc”. DFAT’s Mid-Term Review Report pointed out that this was not entirely the project’s fault, citing the “low capacity and capability of existing [government] staff” and the GoTL’s unwillingness “to fulfil its commitments in providing all the required program staff and operational funds” (p14).

Phase II

222. Progress had been made in building institutional capacity in some areas (e.g., design, surveying, contract management and procurement) but concerns began to arise about “capacity substitution” and of the Program being seen as too much a “road-building project” and not enough as “a project to develop capacity to build roads”. The concerns were more about the GoTL not showing enough commitment to capacity transfer than about the project strategy and implementation to this point. In a telling comment, the DFAT Mid-Term Review Report said that GoTL informants acknowledged that:

“The GoTL placed less priority on rural roads assuming that it was being taken care of by R4D under the ILO’s management”. (p.14)

223. To address these concerns, the intervention model was redesigned, and the project was renamed the “R4D Support Program (R4D-SP)” to emphasise to the GoTL that the intention was to provide policy advice and operational guidance rather than to act as a type of outsourced road building service. Reinforcing this shift in emphasis, a new Subsidiary Agreement committed the GoTL to funding all capital works and to making sure staff were available to be trained. The

¹⁸ Tender quality and the quality of their work after the completion of their initial R4D contracts. Ibid, p.20

Australian Government would contribute up to AUD 26 million for technical assistance over four years (with a provision that allowed support to be terminated after two years if progress was unsatisfactory) and the GoTL would provide USD 13 million for capital works in the first two years¹⁹.

224. The Phase II project faced major challenges from the start:
- A **budget impasse** in the first two years meant that there was no new capital funding for road works, requiring the project to rely initially on funds carried over from the previous financial year.
 - A **new CTA** with an engineering focus had commenced at a challenging juncture for the project when the skills and approach needed to re-set the project's focus required not only strong technical skills but also skills in relationship-building. This mismatch of skills and approach adversely may have affected the project's working relationship with DFAT.
 - There was a **high turnover of government ministers and key senior officials** who were reported to "have their own agenda and priorities". Maintaining continuity in the project strategy and implementation was difficult.
 - GoTL **administrative and financial processes** were now more central to project delivery, but these were **slow and inefficient** (in Phase I, the ILO's own procurement system was used).
 - **Decentralisation** was suspended in a state of administrative limbo, where processes, staff roles and responsibilities remained unclear (complicating the project's capacity building plans), budgets were still controlled centrally, and there were tensions between central and municipal authorities.
 - Later, the project also had to deal with the major disrupting effects of the **COVID-19** pandemic.
225. At the time of DFAT's independent mid-term review of Phase II, there were concerns that the project was about to be terminated. However, this review found that "discontinuing R4D-SP will lead to significant loss of investment in capacity development and a deterioration in rural road access". It also noted how the project had "managed to progress technical capacity-building during a period of political instability in Timor-Leste and with limited ability to influence the enabling environment" (p.52).
226. In fact, the independent review did not paint a bleak picture of the Program at all. Its recommendations focused on strengthening cooperation between DFAT and R4D-SP on policy and enabling environment issues including enhanced stakeholder engagement and communication to inform DFAT's policy dialogue with the GoTL, establishing a donor coordination committee, and an inter-ministerial committee and technical working group, and support for decentralisation. At a more operational level, recommendations also included strengthening capacity-building through a clearer framework and ensuring documents driving implementation were focused on the right outcomes.
227. Over the course of Phase II, the project achieved most of its planned outputs including the adjustments made in response to DFAT's mid-term review:
- The project drafted a Rural Roads Policy but a decision was made to incorporate this as an input for an envisaged **National Roads Policy** being prepared by the Asian Development Bank. This current status of this ADB work is not known. Not having it in place was "a major missed opportunity" according to the R4D-SP team as it would have given the project the clarity it needed by enshrining agency responsibilities into law and giving greater certainty to planned investment budgets.
 - The **RRPMIS** (2015-2020) investment plan developed in Phase I was updated annually in Phase II in consultation with the municipalities, though the continuing funding issues and ambiguity about roles associated with decentralisation meant it has not completely fulfilled its potential

¹⁹ Funding for the second two years would be clarified at a later time and be subject to parliamentary approval.

to guide decisions and planning. Because of this, according to a former project staff member, the project was often “pulled in different directions” by MPW.

- **Manuals and guidelines** (most of which did not exist in any form prior to the R4D Program) continued to be developed and were being implemented and used in training, though were not yet fully embedded in agency procedures.
- **Capacity development in procurement and contracting** was singled out in the Phase II final evaluation as being a particular success due to the “consistent and in-depth support” provided by the project. The DFAT mid-term review described these among areas “developing to the point where they **require minimal assistance or oversight** to perform routine functions” (p.23). These included:
 - IT
 - GIS (via a GIS Unit established and operationalized within the MPW with R4D support and guidance)
 - Basic construction supervision
 - Material testing (including via regional laboratories established and operationalised with R4D support and guidance)
 - Gender equality
 - Social inclusion
 - Environmental safeguards
- More broadly, **training of GoTL staff** involved 498 staff and 8,835 person-days over the duration of Phase II.
- At the **municipal level**, where human and financial resources remained limited due to the still incomplete devolution process, the Phase II final evaluation found that there was still some **capacity substitution**, with R4D-SP staff “fulfilling roles and responsibilities that contradict their advisory nature” (p.9) due to lack of municipal staff with the capacity to do the job.
- **Training of contractors** continued in Phase II with another 56 involved (107 across Phase I and II). This included training delivered by an external provider, Don Bosco Training Institute, and training delivered by MPW and R4D-SP in pre-bidding. Concerns were raised about market saturation and the need for a broader approach to their business development (i.e., beyond R4D-SP projects) and to enhancing the pre-qualification arrangements.
- A **social safeguards framework** and guidelines developed in Phase I were applied which helped raise awareness and supported implementation though non-compliance remained a continuing challenge. The project also supported the MPW Community Development Officers (CDOs) through training.

228. In the second half of Phase II, the project also implemented the recommendations of DFAT’s mid-term review, though the outcome of some of the actions designed to improve the project’s enabling environment were poor. The project:

- Participated in a **donor coordination committee, convened by ADB**, which met regularly in Phase II (though it became inactive during the COVID-19 crisis and has not been reactivated – this was outside the project’s control).
- Engaged in a **decentralisation working group** established by DFAT in 2019, the **results of which were unclear**. The evaluation learned that the group only met twice and, importantly, did not include representatives of MSA.
- Developed and implemented a new **stakeholder engagement and communication plan** to help inform DFAT’s policy dialogue though the extent to which DFAT made use of this is not known.
- Reviewed its **Capacity Development Implementation Plan** and consulted with the MPW and municipal government to develop an “integrated capacity development program” but this was never implemented by MPW.
- Developed a **Theory of Change** in conjunction with DFAT and M&E House as a “document driving implementation”, though this was seen by the Phase II final evaluation as very time-

consuming and offering marginal benefits. (Previously, there was no formal Theory of Change and the Program relied on a logframe.)

- Progressed work on an **Integrated Road Management Information System (IRMIS)** though this has since had **significant problems** (see Bridging Phase below).
- An **Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Group** was formally established in 2019 but **has never met**.

Bridging Phase

229. Covering an 18-month period from July 2021 to December 2022, the R4D-SP Bridging Phase was conceived as a transitional program during which DFAT planned to review its approach to investment in Timor-Leste's road sector. Given the logistics involved in setting up this final phase and in winding up a project office that had been operating for over ten years (e.g., disposal of assets, handover of materials, finalising employment contracts etc.) the effective time available to achieve planned results was closer to 12 months. Other factors affecting implementation and results during this phase included COVID-19 restrictions, the need to support flood response work following Cyclone Seroja in April 2021, and the political uncertainty leading up to the 2023 elections.

230. During the final stages of Phase II, the project scoped a funding proposal for the Bridging Phase which focused on laying the foundation for future work supporting rural roads development. The project started recruitment of key technical staff including a new CTA, a Training Advisor and a new Social Protection and Safeguards Officer. COVID-19 travel restrictions delayed their arrival in Timor-Leste but they commenced work remotely.

231. The key results against planned outputs and outcomes in this phase were:

- Supporting the **finalisation of a National Roads Policy** - This was intended to include the provision of inputs on rural roads to the work being done by the ADB on a National Roads Policy, an activity that commenced during Phase II and would require coordination across GoTL ministries and agencies via an Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum (IMRF). This work by ADB was not advanced so DFAT and the project **agreed not to proceed** with this element. Some other policy related work was done in cooperation with the EU's Enhancing Rural Access – Agroforestry (ERA-AF) project (see **COHERENCE** for more detail).
- **Updating the RRMPIIS** – Delayed by funding cuts in Phase II, the project ran a participatory process involving MPW and 13 municipalities to update the investment prioritization list for the period 2023-27. This was endorsed by the MPW's Advisory Committee in October 2022.
- **Completing and deploying the IRMIS** - Commenced in Phase II under the guidance of a working group established by the MPW, the ESTRADA system was intended to consolidate road asset and contract management data for planning physical works on rural roads (with the potential for adaptation for other road classes). **Major system functionality issues** were identified at the beginning of the Bridging Phase. There were negotiations with contractors to resolve these issues but these did not lead to a solution and the system has not been implemented. Deficiencies in the formal testing phase, such as the non-involvement of the intended end-users (as opposed to more senior officials) seem to have been a primary cause of the problems. The system and all associated data have now been transferred to GoTL servers but will either need to be updated or scrapped and redeveloped.
- **Completing and institutionalizing manuals, technical resources and training materials** - In keeping with the project's focus on laying a foundation for future rural roads development, 13 technical manuals and an Operations Manual, were finalized and endorsed by the MPW for use in the training of national and municipal staff.
- **Training and capacity development support for national and municipal staff** - The project conducted training for 297 GoTL national and municipal staff (28% women) covering social and environmental safeguards, gender and disability inclusion, rural roads network planning,

child protection, PSEAH, GIS, and basic IT skills. Developing the capacity of GoTL to continue training beyond the project is a future challenge for project sustainability. Senior municipal and national staff indicated to the evaluation team that the manuals and resources produced by the project provided a good basis for this.

- **Training and mentoring of contractors** - The project delivered less formal training during the Bridging Phase, concentrating instead on providing on-the-job training through R4D-SP Field Engineering Trainers. Contract compliance was strengthened by applying the **joint inspection tool** developed in Phase II. Significantly, the MPW conducted pre-bid training for 370 contractor staff between June and October 2021 with R4D-SP providing only operational support (unlike earlier phases where the project led this training.)
- **Strengthening social and environmental safeguards** – The Bridging Phase sought to strengthen its capacity building in this area, including by continuing to develop the skills and knowledge of Community Development Officers (CDOs) commenced in earlier project phases. One CDO told the evaluation that this built his capacity to “effectively resolve social and environmental concerns about public works” and gave the example of successfully mediating community concerns about dust from works (the contractor was found to have not complied with contract requirements).
- **Supporting the Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum (IMRF)** - This body, intended to improve whole-of-government coordination on roads policies and programs, has still not met due to a lack of political will. An internal MPW Advisory Committee was set up, but this serves a different role (i.e. addressing R4D-SP implementation matters).
- R4D-SP also supported the capacity of the “**Ad Hoc Design Unit**” established within the MPW to respond to the flood damage cause by Tropical Cyclone Seroja – including the construction of prefabricated offices and the supply of equipment.

Finding 7: All phases of the Program addressed gender and disability inclusion in their design and achieved solid results in policy development, institutional awareness raising and capacity development, support for female-led businesses, and the direct employment of women and people with disability in roads work.

232. In the projects’ results frameworks, gender and disability inclusion were incorporated into a broader group of outputs related to “social and environmental safeguards”. These cover a range of Decent Work priorities (e.g., OSH, child labour, environmental issues etc.) According to project documents, no GoTL mechanisms were in place to implement these safeguards before the project commenced in 2012 and there was “no evidence for systems or procedures addressing the inclusion of women or persons with disabilities”²⁰

233. The Program addressed gender issues and disability inclusion and good results have been achieved over time building on a low base of capability and systems within the responsible ministry.

- **A Social Safeguards Framework (SSF)** was developed which was built into roads rehabilitation and maintenance projects delivered supported by the project. This was updated over the life of the project (e.g. including a zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment). Formal training and mentoring was provided to MPW and municipal staff to support their implementation of the SSF and gender-inclusive employment practices. Contractor training also included modules on gender, including on women’s participation and sexual harassment.
- **Community Development Officers (CDOs)** were appointed by municipalities (four in 2013 and another eight in 2016) to drive compliance with the SSF, to facilitate inclusive labour practices and to support the achievement of project targets. The project provided training and support to these staff and has driven a stronger awareness overall – as one Municipal Director said:

²⁰ Stories of Significant Change, PAF Indicator 7, 2018

“Women and PWD have benefitted from the project. Whenever new works begin and at every visit, we reinforce with the Chefe de Suco the importance of inclusiveness and non-discrimination. R4D provided training to our staff in this. We always make an effort in this and the experience with R4D has been pleasing.”

- R4D-SP contracts stipulated that **30% of labourers must be women** and inspections checked that women were working on projects as indicated by contractors, that they were being paid the same wages as men, and whether there were any incidents of sexual harassment or violence. By the end of the project 24.9% of people employed as labourers were women – equating to about a half a million person-days of work. The RBSA project, which set a target of 50% female participation, achieved a result of just under 40%.

234. The evaluation considers these to be **very strong results**, despite being below the target. This was especially so, given that cultural norms and stereotypes can discourage the participation of women²¹ in these roles and their overall share of employment in the construction sector when the project commenced was just 3%. Project reports indicated that for many women, R4D was the first time they had worked outside their homes and was their first wage-paying job²². Project staff reported that these good results followed a tradition of emphasising gender equality in projects in Timor-Leste. Its good results in achieving outcomes for women in the construction sector (through R4D-SP and ERA-AF) helped the ILO champion gender equality more broadly with national stakeholders and the development community.

235. The project facilitated the participation of women at different levels, including as owners of contracting businesses (see **Case Study 1**). The final independent evaluation of Phase II highlighted how female leadership of Community Maintenance Groups (CMGs) increased from 8% (7 women) in 2016 to 21% (23 women) in 2020. It found that this result had promoted female engagement and leadership more broadly at the community level (p.54.) As documented by the project²³, one female CMG leader said:

“I am proud of myself. Even though I am an older woman, I can work and get money and help my husband to sustain our life. My husband had a stroke and he could not work anymore, so I feel lucky because I can work and get money to support my family - particularly my children.”

236. **Monitoring and Evaluation** activities gave attention to the projects’ impacts on women including via, for example, contractor and labourer tracer studies and a Women and Rural Roads impact assessment completed in 2015. A Joint Contractor Tracer Study covering both R4D-SP and the ERA-AF project and R4D-SP was also completed in 2021.

237. For **disability inclusion**, the project developed an R4D-SP Guidance Note for Disability Inclusive M&E which reinforced the message that staff needed to ensure the project “supports the equal right of all persons to access the benefits created by the rehabilitation and maintenance projects implemented by the R4D program” including not only employment but also “access to decision making processes that affect implementation” and “equal opportunity to enjoy social and economic benefits” created.

238. R4D-SP set a **2% employment participation target for people with disability** and, by the end of the project, had **achieved 2.96%**, equating to just under 60,000 person days of work. This was also a strong result, though more granular data on the participation of different disability groups may have helped future project design and implementation.

²¹ A barrier which the project took steps to overcome - for example seeking to influence attitudes towards the involvement of women in rural road works via publications and promotional material.

²² Stories of Significant Change, PAF Indicator 14, 2018

²³ Stories of Significant Change, PAF Indicator 14 (v3 update), 2020

239. Project reports indicated that difficulties in recruiting and retaining a full-time international Social Inclusion and Safeguards Officer (SISO) in the Bridging Phase had an adverse effect on social inclusion support and results. Support provided through this role focused on capacity building of Community Development Officers.

Case Study 1 – Support for Female Contractors

The Program gave significant attention to supporting the development of female-run contracting businesses. Of the 172 persons trained who were at the company director level, 30% were women. A 2021 joint contractor tracer study²⁴ of contractors found that this was high by international standards.

The study found that the project played a facilitatory role in ensuring women participated at this level, including through its support to their firms technical capacity and tender preparation. While ERA-AF had even higher rate of 44%, unlike this project, R4D-SP used government procurement systems which gave no preferential points in the tender process to female owned firms.

Female contractors may also have been better positioned to recruit more women in R4D-SP projects. The tracer study quoted one as saying: “I do prefer to recruit more women because they are more diligent in their work and they listen much better compared to men.” (p.54)

The evaluation interviewed a female contractor in Baucau who highly valued the training provided by the Program. She had no engineering background and her project engineer was a recent graduate. The Program (and ERA-AF) gave her the skills, knowledge and confidence to successfully tender for the work and to deliver against her contract. She said her business had grown as a direct result – engineering staff have increased from one to four, supervisors from one to four and, in terms of equipment, the firm now has six trucks and one excavator when previously it had just a single truck.

Significant barriers remain however. As one woman was quoted in the tracer study, “due to the patriarchal society, many people put a label on women engaged in business – in their view women who are not at home are ‘bad’ women.” Gender stereotyping and sexual harassment, violence and even extortion (i.e., government officials asking female contractors for sex to win contracts) were all raised by women in the tracer study.

The construction sector remains male dominated in Timor-Leste and there is a need to continue the work the ILO has done through the Program and ERA in supporting female contractors, including through business training and mentoring, and by training government officials at the national and municipal levels to improve female participation at this level and to ensure a safe and equitable work environment.

***Finding 8:** Embedding the project within the MPW was an effective strategy. The project’s development of the Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS) was also an important innovation for Timor-Leste, creating a guiding framework for planning rural roads works and for preparing annual budget submissions, though the GoTL did not always adhere to it in practice.*

Embedding the Program in the MPW

240. Embedding the project team within the MPW has been an effective strategy overall. As the evaluation learned from senior ILO staff, this approach was not new in Timor-Leste and goes back to the earliest days of independence when there were few effective government institutions in place and those that were had poor structures and few skilled staff. Early ILO employment programs in the country adopted the approach of embedding project staff within government, for example in SEFOPE, so that they could work side-by-side with their staff to build their capacities.

241. The experience in Phase I highlighted the potential drawback of this approach – that is, that the embedded team can be seen by some in government as being a de facto operational unit of

²⁴ ILO, Conducting a Joint Contractor Tracer Study of the ERA-AF and R4D-SP Projects in Timor-Leste, Period 2012-2020.

government. As mentioned earlier, DFAT sought to strengthen GoTL commitment to a taking more direct responsibility for doing the work. Where there are tensions between different Ministries (such as those reported to exist between MPW and MSA) being embedded in one of these might also make it more difficult to influence effective coordination between the two ministries.

242. Overall, however, the strategy has worked well. Despite the concerns about continuing capacity substitution, DFAT's independent mid-term review saw it as a project strength, both in terms of the GoTL's commitment to the program ("the embedded nature of the program has supported close collaboration" p.35) and compared to the arrangements in place with other donors (highlighting the difficulties faced by the ADB in its road program because it was not embedded p.33). The Phase II independent final evaluation, found the embedded model to be an example of good practice that could be replicated in other ILO programs, as it "provides opportunities to fully engage with direct counterparts and stakeholders" and for "potential influence and direct capacity support" (p.102)

243. Interviews with senior GoTL officials revealed a high level of appreciation of the value of the embedded approach. As one senior MPW official put it:

"Working with the ILO so closely was a good experience. The main challenges were from our side. Political issues are difficult for engineers to manage."

244. This was echoed by another senior official in the Ministry:

"ILO were very cooperative and responded well to changing government priorities. Whatever we asked for they provided."

Developing the Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS)

245. At the start of the Program's work in Timor-Leste in 2012, there was **virtually no information on rural roads and no rational basis for planning and budgeting** works. For example, there was no information about the condition of the rural road network, no design standards or uniform technical specifications, no information about typical unit costs for maintenance, rehabilitation and reconstruction of different classes or roads, conflicting data about the populations of individual Sucos, no platform for spatial data entry, processing and analysis, and no clear system or approach for prioritizing investments in roads²⁵. The project's development of the RRMPIS in 2014 and 2015 researched these and other information gaps and, after an extensive consultation process at the national and municipal levels, identified 1,975 kilometres of core rural roads and established a prioritization index, considering economic benefits and engineering costs.

246. The GoTL approved the RRMPIS in 2016. Over time it has proved to be **an effective mechanism** for the MPW for annual planning and budgeting and as an advocacy tool for budget submissions, although **political challenges** affected the funding that was ultimately allocated. Early in its life, due to political instability, the GoTL invested only 30% of what was detailed in the RRMPIS in rural roads and the final evaluation of Phase II also indicated a problem with the overuse of "emergency contracts" as hindering planning and expenditure management (p.27). These contracts were created outside the R4D Program but reduced the funds available to it. Overall, the RRMPIS has been an effective strategy, is being implemented (though not as fully as intended) and has been a force for continuity of planning when faced with high turnover of Ministers and senior officials. One project document quoted a municipal MPW official:

"Before we had the RRMPIS, everyone could just do what they wanted to do. A lot of things were unorganized and it wasn't clear how to achieve objectives. After implementing RRMPIS, the works are systematic, including the target that we want to achieve and who is benefitting from the roads."²⁶

²⁵ Sayed Faheem Eqbali, Bas Athmer and Augustus Asare, Rural Access Index (RAI) - The Case of Timor-Leste, R4D Technical Paper, ILO, October 2017, pp.8-9

²⁶ Stories of Significant Change, PAF Indicator 20, 2020

Finding 9: *The project did well to continue activities despite the disruption caused by the pandemic and took clear action to minimize risk to staff, communities and contractors. The RBSA-funded COVID response project provided a rapid response benefitting those most affected by the crisis.*

COVID-19 response

247. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the GoTL declared a three-month State of Emergency (SoE) from April to June 2020. This affected project implementation and engagement with stakeholders including through restrictions on gatherings, travel between municipalities, the use of public transport and international travel. Despite these restrictions, the Program continued as implementation of rural roads projects required staff to support supervision on-site. As a team member explained:

“While other projects shut down and their staff were evacuated, R4D staff all stayed and continued to work. There were no flights and a hard border was imposed. For 3 months Dili was closed down. Road works were affected by access and supply issues but still continued.”²⁷

248. ILO/UN protocols were put in place for project staff, but as they were embedded in MPW offices, the project had no control over the conditions in place around them (e.g. no mask wearing or social distancing). According to the final report of the Bridging Phase, following a UNDSS risk assessment and recommendations, the Program sought to relocate but this was not approved. Staff morale was adversely affected by periods of mandatory home confinement and the inability to take leave to see families.

249. Despite these obstacles, the project’s response to COVID-19 was effective and appropriate and active steps were taken to minimize risk to staff, communities and contractors. These included:

- supporting COVID-19 related occupational safety and health measures on site, including development of COVID-19 specific guidelines that were designed in a simple, easy-to-understand way, specific to the local context.
- supporting training of contractors and their workers in COVID-19 measures, including health assessments, social distancing, hand washing, use of personal protective equipment.
- Incorporating COVID-19 measures into the Program’s Social Safeguards Framework (SSF)
- Modifying activities in line with UNCT and GoTL directives
- Supporting necessary contract adjustments (e.g. extending completion times)
- Providing Program staff with guidance on COVID-19 procedures and with personal protective equipment and encouraging vaccination.
- Ongoing monitoring and coordination with UNCT and the Australian Government

250. Recognising that planned R4D-SP and ERA-AF infrastructure projects did “not explicitly target the most affected rural communities” in the context of COVID, the ILO’s Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste in Jakarta successfully applied for USD 550,000 of additional funding from the ILO’s Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) earmarked for COVID-19 response work. Like the ILO’s early infrastructure-related work in Timor-Leste, the project reflected the need for “**emergency employment support**” that offered “**quick delivery, a high labour intensity and low delivery costs**”. To get cash into the hands of the neediest, the project had to bypass the payment delays that persisted under GoTL systems under R4D-SP and instead made payments directly to contractors. The project engaged more with SEFOPE (as well as MPW and municipalities) and involved the tripartite social partners in its delivery.

251. The project was implemented effectively and, according to the progress report provided to the evaluation (dated February 2022) achieved most of its planned outputs and targets including:

²⁷ Project reports show that no new road contracts were issued in 2020, but that 2019 saw 599.95 km of new projects approved for which work was carried out in subsequent financial years.

- **Decent employment and income support** – By February 2022, 97% of total contract funds had been disbursed resulting in the short-term employment of 2,800 workers (target was 1,850) completing 44,800 workdays. An earlier report indicated that 39.8% of this work went to women (target was 50%) and 0.7% went to people with disability (target was 2%).
- **Strengthened ILO social partner capacities in designing and implementing employment-intensive public works programs for the most affected rural poor and vulnerable people** – The Trade Union Confederation of Timor-Leste (KSTL) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Timor-Leste (CCI-TL) conducted joint site monitoring with the KSTL informing the evaluation that this helped identify some irregularities in workers’ pay and conditions. KSTL indicated that their involvement in the RBSA project demonstrated the importance of involving the social partners more fully in the implementation of ILO’s rural roads projects “and not just be invited to events and ceremonies”.

3.4 Coherence

Finding 10: Over its different phases, the Program linked well with other related development interventions in Timor-Leste though its later efforts to integrate rural roads policy and planning into a more holistic approach (led by ADB) are yet to show results. Mechanisms introduced by the GoTL to improve coherence and collaboration between GoTL agencies have not been activated and this has adversely affected project performance.

252. The Program has worked closely with the EU-funded ILO project, Enhancing Rural Access– Agroforestry (ERA-AF) and its predecessors, achieving good levels of coherence. These projects ran in parallel to R4D throughout (from September 2011 to June 2022) and shared many characteristics in terms of stakeholders, the focus on rural roads, the capacity development of contractors, and the development and use of private training providers. By extension, this relationship created connections with a GIZ project designed to support the Ministry of Agriculture's efforts to foster a conducive environment for agro-forestry activities, and with other development agencies. As an EU representative explained:

“ERA and R4D had a common interest in training contractors but with different focus communities. ERA roads were about facilitating GIZ agro-forestry work while R4D road selection was not so constrained. The R4D-produced RRMPIS was also a factor in ERA road choices. The projects did plan some complementary stretches (i.e., some kilometres done through R4D, then more through ERA). We used same contractors like Don Bosco. Other donors with interest in national roads like ADB and WB invited to project meetings.”

253. Evaluating the Program’s engagement with other DFAT investments in Timor-Leste over the last ten years fell outside the scope of this evaluation, but previous evaluations found that this was minimal. DFAT’s mid-term review noted that R4D-SP had limited coordination with its other investments in Timor-Leste including To’os ba Moris Di’ak (or Farming for Prosperity), Programa Nasional Dezenvolvimentu Suku (National Program for Village Development Support Program) and projects related to public financial management, women in business, and disability inclusion (p.42). The Phase II final evaluation found that little progress had been made in connecting with these initiatives other than through ad hoc contact, citing the pressures faced by these projects that restricted such engagement as well as the effects of COVID-19. (The Phase I final evaluation included no findings on coherence.) It should be noted that DFAT itself was not proactive in connecting the R4D Program with its other initiatives.

254. Recent examples of collaborative initiatives and coherence with other programs and projects include:

- Working with ADB to support the design of MPW’s ten-year roads infrastructure investment program.
- Promotion of gender equality issues working with Care International and UN Women.

- Participation in EU-funded joint UN Spotlight project addressing violence against women.
- Engaging with advocacy organisations supporting women and people with disability.

255. Despite the clear need for improved coherence between different levels of government to resolve many strategic and operational issues affecting the project, the **Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum (IMRF)** established by the GoTL in 2019 has never met. In its absence, the project did its best to solve issues through personal contacts and behind-the-scenes advocacy, but a higher-level systemic solution was needed. This finding was reinforced in the Phase II final evaluation:

“It is difficult to expect one individual or one program to have the leverage to fully influence and change government policies, regulations and approaches. It requires a coordinated and multi-faceted approach.” (p.44)

3.5 Efficiency

Finding 11: *Previous evaluations found that project efficiency has been generally good but noted that a more structured approach to capacity transfer through its “embedded” model of support – defining more clearly the points at which functional autonomy are reached - may have enhanced results and enabled a more efficient re-focusing of Program resources and support. Some planned activities and positions were cancelled due to DFAT funding cuts or instructions in Phase II and some of these left the project in a weaker position to achieve some goals.*

256. The evaluation was not tasked to undertake a detailed analysis of efficiency over the life of the project but some key points can be drawn from previous evaluations and project documents and from interviews.

Previous evaluations and project documents on efficiency

257. The **Phase I** final evaluation found that overall the project’s **resources were allocated strategically and effectively** to achieve the defined outcomes. The relative efficiency of labour-based approaches to road works compared with more technologically-driven methods was raised by some informants, but this was counter-balanced against the development benefits in the form of cash transfers to vulnerable rural communities and those flowing from improved road access.

258. The **Phase II final project report** detailed the effect on the project’s efficiency and effectiveness brought about by the unexpected reduction in the project’s budget. This was reduced in 2019 from AUD 26 million to AUD 21.5 million and affected both the project’s planned scope of works and its staffing profile. **Planned activities in the scope of works that were cancelled** including:

- **Additional impacts studies** – these prevented the project from gathering more data on progress towards its development objective.
- **Support for the application of the IRMIS system** – presumably not needed given the system’s development status.
- **Updating the RRMPIS during 2020** – potentially leaving a gap in planning capacity building until this task was completed (in 2022 during the Bridging Phase)

259. Staffing profile changes included leaving unfilled the position of international Capacity Development Specialist (which on the surface seems a curious decision given the strengthened importance of capacity development to achieving Phase II goals) as well as a Social Protection and Safeguards Officer. The project also cancelled planned recruitment of a Team Leader/Chief Engineering Officer.

260. The **Phase II independent final evaluation** found that the “embedded model” of institutional capacity building was efficient and effective but suggested that an **increased focus on a structured transfer of capacities** may have enhanced results further. The appointment of a National Policy Adviser in November 2018 was also presented as equipping the project with a new and efficient

mechanism to engage with senior Ministry staff. Interviews with key informants revealed that they believed this role greatly enhanced the project's access to decision makers and helped resolve some operational problems "behind the scenes" rather than through the formal mechanisms that had proven to be difficult to activate (such as the IMRF). By the time of the final Bridging Phase report, this person had been promoted to Deputy Team Leader, allowing greater autonomy and efficiency in engaging with government at senior levels.

261. The **Bridging Phase internal mid-term evaluation** noted the **efficient transition from Phase II**, including the appointment of a new CTA, and the two positions that were left unfilled in the Phase II (international Training Advisor and Social Protection and Safeguards Officer), though COVID-19 travel restrictions meant that they initially worked remotely. It also criticised the **slow use of available funds to hire consultants** who could have accelerated the delivery of key project outputs such as technical manuals.

262. The **RBSA-funded project reports** contained little information to enable an assessment of efficiency other than **disbursement of funds**, with 97% having been paid by 14 February 2022.

Observations on efficiency from the interviews

263. **Time to recruit** was raised as an efficiency issue by a number of evaluation informants. The project team indicated that in some cases this was due to factors outside the project's control such as COVID-19 travel restrictions.

264. Some questioned whether the ILO had fully made a **transition in its staffing profile and role descriptions** from one designed primarily to support rural roads work implementation to one that would best support work at a policy level and in institutional capacity development. Informants referred to the staffing profile in Phase II as still being biased towards "engineers who just wanted to build roads" or as preserving an "engineering mentality". Of course, this is a question of balance of skills within the team - it does not mean that engineering expertise was not needed. The project could not operate without it.

265. The **budget freeze in Phase II** affected the project's efficient delivery. One ILO informant explained that during this time the project could only maintain work because of funds rolling over from previous financial years and it was difficult to plan given the continuing uncertainty over what the government might do. Even when budgets were available, the cycle for procurement and works execution was generally too short leading to an inability to spend allocated budgets before the end of each financial fiscal year²⁸. As a senior MPW official explained:

"The tender process can take quite a long time and road works are often time critical. TL needs to better align its budget processes with its needs – for example by having a multi-annual budget with a specific allocation to maintenance."

266. Though not under the control of the project, the slow **payment of contractors had a flow-on effect in terms of efficiency**. The processes to approve payments were reported to need streamlining and there was also a need for improved systems to monitor and address late payments. This flowed on to affect the efficient completion of rural roads work – for example, contractors minimized their exposure to risk by engaging fewer workers and taking longer to complete projects. All phases of the project grappled with this problem and, although some progress was made, it is far from resolved.

267. The lack of clarity about **decentralization and responsibilities, complex reporting lines, staffing and resource constraints, and lack of administrative support** at municipal level all affected the efficiency of the project's capacity development efforts. In some cases and

²⁸ According to a project staff member, there were some mechanisms applied to overcome such restrictions, including getting procurements approved in advance.

municipalities, staff were recruited to positions but could not get to the R4D Program training because they had no transport or travel allowance.

268. Developing the capacity of institutions and staff was reported to be especially challenging when there were **high levels of turnover** of Ministers and staff. As an ILO staff member said: “With instability and turnover at the Ministry level, project found itself having to start all over again in building relationships and commitment.”

269. The consistent and focused approach to rural roads development through **a single program implemented for over ten years also** had significant efficiency benefits. The consistency of support provided to the GoTL and to the construction sector and the standardisation of approaches and work methods created a much-needed point of stability in an often-volatile context in the development of the capacity of the public and private sector to plan, manage and implement rural road works. In other developing countries, capacity development efforts can be fragmented by multiple agencies working in this space.

3.6 Relevance

Finding 12: To maintain relevance over time, the Program adapted reasonably well to changing circumstances and priorities. While the Program could clearly demonstrate the relevance of the rural road improvements themselves, it was less able to demonstrate the relevance of its capacity building efforts by accelerating the handover of operational responsibilities. This was made difficult by political, budgetary and administrative barriers and by uncertainty over decentralisation of these responsibilities.

Maintaining relevance as priorities changed

270. Early in the implementation of Phase I, when the capacity of the MPW was extremely limited, R4D took the lead in directly achieving rural road improvements. With direct counterparts not available and GoTL willingness and capacity to engage still low, the focus at this time was to “remain centred on improving rural roads and to ensure all efforts and inputs are aligned to achieving this end”²⁹. Capacity building was also a focus and some advances were made in building the foundations for local autonomy.
271. Concerns later began to emerge that the project’s capacity development was not leading to a fast enough transfer of operational responsibility. There was a risk identified of “capacity substitution” and of the project team operating as a de facto rural roads department for the MPW. For this reason, the second, four-year phase of the project (the “R4D Support Program”) aimed to strengthen the focus on supporting MPW capacity to do the work itself. The donor built in a “stop-go” clause that could see the project cancelled after two years if the GoTL and MPW failed to demonstrate the commitments set out in the DFAT-GoTL “subsidiary agreement”. As the GoTL’s capacity to finance rural infrastructure had by this time improved, capital investments from the donor were to be replaced by direct government funding.
272. To maintain relevance and better align its work with these priorities, the project did make adjustments to its approach in **Phase II**, but had to grapple with longstanding operational challenges, uncertainty over decentralisation (see below), and ongoing political, budgetary, and administrative barriers. While the relevance of improving rural roads remained unquestionable, all of these factors made it far more challenging for the project to demonstrate the relevance of its capacity building by accelerating the handover of operational responsibilities and overcoming longstanding policy roadblocks.
273. The project itself was not solely responsible for overcoming these obstacles. DFAT’s mid-term review report on the project said that more work was needed by all stakeholders to influence the enabling environment for the project, including mobilising other donors over shared concerns, supporting ILO engagement with GoTL on capacity building in the context of decentralisation, and seeking to establish an inter-ministerial committee³⁰.
274. The final 18-month **Bridging Phase** saw the Program wind up its activities and again adapt to new priorities. In line with DFAT’s emerging higher-level policy orientation, the project included policy advisory support for the ADB’s proposed national roads policy (started in Phase II) but this did not proceed. It also gave R4D the opportunity to further strengthen institutional capacity in social safeguards, community engagement, the involvement of women and people with disability, and climate resilience. This phase also saw the update and finalisation of various technical manuals to support institutional capacity in rural roads management and an update of the RRMPIIS. Support for the planning, implementing and managing rural road works continued, adding elements of post-disaster reconstruction (following Cyclone Seroja) and COVID-19 recovery.

²⁹ Independent Monitoring Group (IMG), Roads for Development (R4D), Review Report No.1, 11 April 2013, pp.6-12

³⁰ M&E House, Roads for Development Support Program (R4D-SP) Mid-Term Review Report, DFAT, August 2018, p. 30

Finding 13: *The relevance of the ILO's efforts in building capacity at the municipal (decentralised) level was constrained by continuing delays within the GoTL in making decentralisation a reality. The Program has developed systems, procedures and technical manuals suitable for use by municipalities, but their institutionalisation at that level is incomplete.*

Decentralisation delay and its effect on the relevance of Program capacity building

275. Building the capacity of local institutions to manage rural road projects has always been an objective of R4D and the effectiveness and impact of their activities in this area are described later in this report. The R4D Program was always mindful of the GoTL's commitment to decentralise responsibility for rural roads and the need ultimately to position itself to support capacity at a municipal level and for this reason embedded staff at both central MPW agency level and at the municipality/regional level.
276. Decentralisation of responsibility for rural road works in Timor-Leste has been anticipated through all phases of R4D but uncertainty about when and how the policy would be implemented has made the project's planning of institutional capacity building difficult. The 2013 IMG report on R4D highlighted the importance of the project assisting the MPW "to plan accordingly for the implications of decentralisation" (p.21) and the 2018 M&E House mid-term review report stressed that "capacity-building at the municipal level needs significantly longer and greater investment in line with the decentralisation agenda" (p.46).
277. The GoTL approach to decentralisation recognises the need to address the significant capacity gaps that exist at the municipal level and is therefore being implemented gradually in stages. The transfer of authorities and competencies to the municipal level was completed in 2016 under Decree-Law No.3. Parliamentary Law No.23 was passed in 2021 and reaffirmed Municipal Governments' responsibility for the "construction, reconstruction, or improvement of rural roads". Some staff from central agencies have also been transferred and now report to both the municipal president and MPW, though the number of public works staff was reported to be limited to certain roles³¹ such as supervisors and administrative staff while local planning, procurement and engineering staff are not yet in place. It also needs to be noted that decentralisation is a process that applies to other government work areas, not just roads, and that many of the required policy decisions and implementation arrangements extend beyond the scope of R4D.
278. Importantly, municipalities do not yet have financial autonomy. Supervision and planning of road works have been transferred to the Ministry responsible for local government, the Ministry of State Administration (MSA) but MPW continues to hold the budget and implement procurement.
279. Project staff understand well that the **relevance and sustainability of its capacity building may ultimately depend on the work it can do with municipalities**, but these are not yet fully staffed, skilled and resourced to take the lead. As described in the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Bridging Phase, this "meant that the project has been continually left in the difficult situation of being (a) embedded in the MPW but (b) needing to engage with and support municipal staff under the auspices of the MSA" (p.32).
280. DFAT's 2018 Mid-Term Review Report suggested that the ILO could have done more to alert DFAT about the barriers it was facing in respect of decentralisation:

"The ILO has not been sufficiently proactive in providing DFAT with briefs and information to enable the Australian Embassy to engage and advocate for changes to the enabling environment in... supporting decentralisation." (p.39)

³¹ Under the terms of the Phase II Subsidiary Agreement, the GoTL was to "provide 48 personnel from DRBFC to work on R4D Phase II at the Municipal level. They will form teams of four in each municipality, comprising two engineering supervisors, one planner and one community development officer".

281. Communication of such issues and coordination of strategic and operational responses (not just to decentralisation but to many other difficult operational constraints and funding issues) would have been greatly facilitated had DFAT advanced more fully its “Ways of Working Strategy” (2017), a revised project governance mechanism “to ensure effective communication and coordination between key stakeholders and to enhance the enabling environment for rural roads” (3.1). This would involve regular operational meetings, as well as higher-level strategic planning meetings³² between DFAT, ILO and MPW and coordination meetings with other ministries and the broader donor community. Had this regular and higher-level engagement occurred it might have helped overcome the barriers R4D-SP faced, including those related to decentralisation. However, this high-level element of the strategy was never fully implemented leaving unresolved the project’s capacity building dilemma and other issues related to the project’s enabling environment.

282. Moving beyond the R4D Program, details of the new successor project were not yet available but the evaluation learned that the GoTL had agreed in principle to begin full decentralisation in two municipalities in 2024 and in all municipalities by 2027.³³

Finding 14: Supporting Timor-Leste to improve its rural roads infrastructure has provided a platform to advance decent work and social justice in rural communities.

283. In terms of the evolution of the Program’s priorities and their relevance to the ILO’s own mission and its work through the Employment Intensive Investment Programme, despite shifts in its priorities and emphasis, advancing decent work and social justice continued to be a relevant focus of project activities. Such shifts have followed a similar pattern elsewhere and are not unique to Timor-Leste. Considering the ILO’s global work in employment-intensive investment projects, a senior ILO specialist said that:

*“Over time, ideally, the **emergency employment projects evolve into infrastructure projects, as in Timor-Leste, and the emphasis moves from quality employment to quality infrastructure...** However, even if the overriding objective is quality infrastructure... there is still potential to create more jobs and increase the impact of the programmes. In the end, we build for people... strengthening the social dimension we hope these investments will trigger.”*

284. While the evolution of these projects can get to the point where changed priorities risk the ILO to involve itself in activities that have a more tenuous connection with its own constitutive mandate, key capabilities, and comparative advantage – what is sometimes referred to as “mission creep” - there is a continuing need for the sort of work that the ILO is well suited to deliver, including support for infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance using labour based methods³⁴. As the senior ILO specialist said:

*“I still see a role for ILO to work to help to ensure that small contractors engage, that the creation of jobs isn’t complete forgotten, workers are engaged decently, and vulnerable groups continue to benefit from these investments. This doesn’t happen ‘automatically’ when ILO leaves the scene... So ideally, after all these years, a small ILO component should remain to continue supporting the GoTL to ensure the human dimension is not forgotten when road investments are made...whether by the GoTL or donors.” (See **RECOMMENDATION 2.**)*

285. The fourth project in this Cluster Evaluation – the RBSA-funded COVID-19 recovery project – in a sense brought the ILO back full circle to the focus and modality of its early crisis response work

³² Project staff reported that the strategy proposed quarterly meetings from 2017 between DFAT, MPW and ILO but only one of these took place (in November 2021). Staff said that particularly in the Bridging Phase, DFAT was less involved in the project, giving no feedback on plans and reports that were submitted.

³³ The Bridging Phase project team pointed out that the whole concept of decentralization is still not fully understood and there are groups who question whether it is even appropriate for Timor-Leste – especially as a part of the management of a national road network - given the resources it requires

³⁴ These are referenced in Timor-Leste’s Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 and in its COVID-19 Development Response Plan.

in Timor-Leste. To strengthen the relevance of the project, its rationale included renewed attention to the rural communities most affected by the pandemic and recognised that existing projects (viz. R4D-SP) were “not modelled around emergency employment support that necessitates quick delivery, a high labour intensity and low delivery costs”. The project also engaged more directly with ILO social partners, including the Timor-Leste Trade Union Confederation (KSTL), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI-TL) and the Ministry of Labour (SEFOPE).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

286. The R4D projects “put rural roads on the map” as a development priority in Timor-Leste. Access by rural communities to quality roads infrastructure increases their economic output, creates employment, and facilitates access to education, health and other community services. It improves people’s lives and allows their communities to thrive. By the end of 2022, almost 1000 kilometres of rural roads had been rehabilitated and maintained through the projects and all the communities consulted in the evaluation attested to the profound impact the Program had made on their quality of life.
287. In terms of gender and inclusion, the Program achieved excellent results in ensuring that women and people with disability shared in the economic and social benefits of the rural roads works completed. This included relatively high levels of employment in the construction sector, a field where these groups are typically excluded. The Program championed international labour standards including introducing appropriate wage rates for participants, training GoTL and industry in adhering to occupational safety and health standards, as well as embedding environmental safeguards and sustainability into procedures. The level of involvement of the ILO’s tripartite social partners, however, was relatively limited overall.
288. Building on the Program’s significant impact, future work in Timor-Leste requires a more holistic approach to the development of all classes of roads. This will require a more integrated planning approach that involves the cooperation of multiple ministries. Despite the Program’s efforts to encourage such cooperation, significant, long-standing barriers will need to be overcome for it to be achieved.
289. The national institutions the projects were designed to support had very low capacity to manage rural roads in 2012 and the ILO used its expertise in labour-based methods to demonstrate how these roads could be rehabilitated in a way that maximised benefits to communities. Institutional capacity to manage this work had improved and the Program now leaves behind a legacy of trained personnel, documented systems that are in use, a Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS), and a market of trained rural roads contractors that can participate in competitive tenders and operate as viable businesses. The ILO’s engagement in the Program meant that it could embed decent work and social justice principles in its delivery and promote these more generally in public works in Timor-Leste. It also provided leverage for the ILO to contribute to other development initiatives in the country. More work is needed to preserve and build on this legacy.
290. From the start, the Program aimed to build the foundations of local capacity by developing strategies, systems and procedures and by training government staff and contractors. Initially, it also involved playing a more hands-on role in rural roads planning and implementation. Subsequent phases were expected to place greater emphasis on “support and guidance” but there were many factors that made it difficult to wean local institutions from more direct operational assistance and to hand over to them all aspects of rural roads management. The Program operated for over ten years and, in that time, had to navigate ongoing political uncertainty, budgetary and civil service recruitment freezes, frequent turnover of key officials and ministers, natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Alerted to the risk that “capacity substitution” could continue indefinitely if progress in capacity development was slow, the donor became concerned that the project was measuring the value of its work too much terms of kilometres of road laid rather than by how much administrative and policy development capacity had been transferred to government agencies.
291. In practice, making this transition from “doing less and supporting more” was not straightforward. Getting rural roads built was in everyone’s interests, including the GoTL and the

donor³⁵, and given the ILO’s organisational decent work mandate and its focus on delivering tangible community benefits, it was always going to be hard for it to stand back, draw a line in the sand, and potentially let the whole physical road rehabilitation program grind to a halt while it focused on overcoming longstanding political and administrative obstructions and resourcing constraints that continue to this day. Even deep into Phase II, R4D was still playing a hands-on role in municipalities simply because the capacity was not yet in place and resources had not been made available by the GoTL. In the end, the project did not get the balance right in making the transition and often did too much, but to suggest that it stubbornly stuck to road building and “capacity substitution” because of its own operational inclinations or an “engineering mindset” would be simplistic and unfair.

292. The following recommendations are made for future work in this sub-sector in Timor Leste and more generally:

- **Recommendation 1: Invest more in the development or adoption of an institutional capacity development framework as a structured process that can support the design and implementation of projects and interventions that build capacity at a national or sub-national level.**

A framework is needed at the design stage to ensure that interventions can more clearly track progress towards capacity development goals, demonstrate their impact to stakeholders and guide enhancements to their approach. Following a recommendation made in the DFAT Mid-Term Review, the Program made some efforts to develop and apply a tool retrospectively for this purpose (the Annual Capacity Development Implementation Assessment, ACDIA), but this proved to be difficult to use. Such a framework should be explicit about ongoing system improvement, sustainability, and “graduation from assistance” (i.e., the point at which local institutions can be considered autonomous in performing specific functions). Given that capacity building is central to much of the ILO’s work across its many policy and program domains, a framework could be developed that could be adapted to various policy contexts, including EIIP. In June 2022, the ILO’s Evaluation Office (EVAL) published a new Guidance Note on the Evaluation of Capacity Development but what is needed is framework that would assist project design.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
ROAP, PARDEV & EVAL	Medium	Medium	Medium

- **Recommendation 2: Pursue opportunities to continue to add value to the GoTL’s work in rural roads and other infrastructure development by promoting Decent Work and social justice.**

With the end of R4D other channels need to be explored to continue the development of Timor-Leste’s road and infrastructure policies and improving the quantity and quality of employment in rural areas. Routine maintenance is crucial to protect the significant investments made in Timor-Leste’s rural road network. Such work is also conducive to local employment generation and cash for work as it can be performed at high labour intensity. The ILO’s work in this field goes back to the earliest days of the country’s independence and it retains a high profile and community goodwill to continue this work in a way that adds value to and complements the work that will continue. The ILO’s expertise in areas such as small business development, vocational education and training, fundamental principles and rights at work, gender equity and diversity, as well as labour-based methods remain relevant to Timor-Leste.

³⁵ The donor continued to request the Program to report on kilometres of road laid/rehabilitated even after it was agreed that this should not be a measure of Program success.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
CO & ROAP	High	Medium	Medium

- **Recommendation 3: As policy contexts and donor priorities evolve, future EIIP projects should use the scoping of new project phases to consider a more comprehensive review of project strategy and staffing. They should also consider the value that might be added by involving other ILO departments and programs.**

R4D-SP was a flagship for the ILO’s work in employment-intensive investment and its first phase succeeded on many levels and there was perhaps a natural inclination to build on this by maintaining a continuity in staffing and approach. In hindsight, the change in focus in Phase II required a more comprehensive review to ensure that the project team had the right mix of skills. There may also have been value, in terms both of adapting to the change of focus and in strengthening and broadening the project’s promotion of Decent Work principles, by involving other ILO departments and programs in re-scoping project activities (e.g., Enterprises, Skills, Work Quality). Earlier ILO work in Timor-Leste did explore such internal synergies (e.g., linking construction work with the development of accredited, industry-led training programs; female entrepreneurship programs).

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
EIIP	Medium	Low	Low

- **Recommendation 4: Ensure ILO social partners are meaningfully involved in all stages of EIIP project design, implementation, and review.**

While some of the social partners interviewed in the evaluation were not involved in the project in its early phases and could not comment on what occurred then, concerns were expressed that they had not been as involved as they should in project design, implementation and review. The joint KSTL and CCI-TL site visits conducted in the RBSA-funded project were seen as their first opportunity to engage with the projects on the ground. Some said their role was more generally confined to a “ceremonial” role.

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
CO, ROAP	Low	Low	Low

- **Recommendation 5: Ensure that all project resources generated by the project, including technical manuals, guidelines and training materials, are kept safe and accessible within GoTL institutions and are also uploaded to the ILO’s global EIIP literature database.**

R4D has developed many useful resources that need to be kept safe and accessible for current and future reference. The GoTL should ensure that its knowledge management processes protect these resources, especially in an environment where structural changes such as decentralisation can lead to changes in the physical storage of key documents. Similarly, all project resources should be uploaded to the ILO’s own knowledge management system where they can provide a form of backup as well as contributing to development in other countries

Responsibility	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
MPW, CO	High	Low	Low

5. Key lessons

293. Constraints in the Program's enabling environment – identified in multiple evaluations – need to be addressed and having the right balance of skills on the project team to support this is important. However, individual development cooperation projects are limited in their capacity to shape their environment. Support is needed from the donor and from other stakeholders with similar interests and facing similar obstacles.
294. Inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination is needed to ensure that there is clarity over roles, responsibilities and resources in public works projects, especially in an environment when decentralization is taking place. Again, development cooperation projects can support this, but the political will needs to be cultivated at higher levels to ensure that planned coordination mechanisms (such as the IMRF) are activated.
295. Clearer measurement of institutional capacity building efforts, including defining points where institutional autonomy is considered achieved, would assist project efficiency and effectiveness.
296. The embedded model of institutional support can be an effective mode of delivery for this capacity building provided there are identified counterparts or units within the Ministry who will ultimately take the reins and there is a clear plan in place for handover.

Annex A: Interviews

Name	Organisation	Designation	Mode*	Date
Adelino, Mr	Kevkel Unipessoal Lda (Contractor)	Director	GI	29/11/22
Alves, Etevio Essaub	Ainaro Municipality	Community Development Officer	PI	02/11/22
Alves, Joao	Liquica Municipality	Field Training Engineer	PI	17/11/22
Alves, João	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Timor-Leste (CCI-TL, Employers' Organization)	Vice President	PI	18/11/22
Alves, Zelia (F)	Maluk Unipessoal (Contractor)	Director	GI	23/11/22
Alves, Julio	Ermera Municipality	Community Development Officer	PI	22/11/22
Amaral, Ivonio Martins	Viqueque Municipality	Public Works Supervisor	PI	01/12/22
Araujo, Estanislau Gomes de	Walay Unipessoal Lda (Contractor)	Engineer	GI	02/12/22
Araujo, Joao Henrique de	Ainaro Municipality	DSMOP Director	PI	02/11/22
Araujo, Jorge de	Biamali JV Hatululi (Contractor)	Director	GI	23/11/22
Athmer, Bas	ILO	Former CTA, R4D	RI	10/11/22
Babo, Carlos Soares	EDM Unipessoal Lda (contractor)	Director	GI	23/11/22
Barreto, Domingos de Jesus	Bobonaro Municipality	Public Works Chief of Department	PI	29/11/22
Barreto, Horacio	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Dili	Coordinator for Rural Infrastructure Development	GI	14/11/22
Belo, Jose	Haburas Sarai Unip. Lda.	Director	GI	03/12/22
Boavida, Jacinto da Costa	Ainaro Municipality	Public Works Field Engineer Trainer	PI	02/11/22
Cardoso, Mateus (plus 5 community members, 1F)	Saelari Community, Baucau	Chefe de Suko	GI	15/11/22
Correia, Sebastiao	Metagou Community, Liquica	Chefe de Suko	PI	17/11/22
da Cruz, Jeremias	Liquica Municipality	Community Development Officer	PI	17/11/22
Da Cruz, Jeremias	Bobonaro Municipality	Community Development Officer	PI	28/11/22
da Silva, Estasnilau (plus 12 community members, 4F)	Bahamori Community, Baucau	Chefe de Suko	GI	16/11/22
da Silva, Marcelino	Metagou School, Liquica	School Teacher	PI	17/11/22
de Berito, Domingos	DB Ingracia Unipessoal, Baucau (Contractor)	Director	GI	15/11/22
de Carvalho, Martinho Mira	Baucau Municipality	Chief of Public Works Department	PI	15/11/22
De Jesus, Alda (F)	Bobonaro Municipality	Public Works Supervisor	PI	28/11/22
Donnges, Chris	ILO (HQ, Geneva)	Senior Economist, EMPINVEST, EMPLOYMENT	RI	8/11/22
Exposto, Felisberto	Ermera Municipality	Field Training Engineer	PI	22/11/22
Faria, Andre Silvino	Dom Bosco Training Centre, Dili	Engineer	PI	18/11/22
Fraga, Carlito de Assis	Baucau Municipality	Laboratory Technician	GI	15/11/22
Goveia, Almerio Vila-Nova	Konfederasaun dos Sindikatu de Timor-Leste (KSTL – Workers' Organisation)	President	PI	14/11/22
Gui, Father do Carmo da Silva	Dom Bosco Training Centre, Dili	Coordinator	PI	18/11/22
Gusmao, Antonio Belo	Baucau Municipality	Laboratory Technician	GI	15/11/22
Gusmão, Dulce	EU Delegation to Timor-Leste, Dili	Programme Officer	PI	18/11/22
Guterres, Dionisio B. da Silva	Ministry of Public Works, Dili	National Directorate for Procurement & Finance	PI	14/11/22
Guterres, Rui Hernani Freitas	Ministry of Public Works, Dili	Director General – Roads, Bridges & Flood Control	PI	14/11/22
Johannesen, Bjorn	ILO (Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok)	Senior Engineer, Employment Intensive Investments	RI	10/11/22
Jolly, Rachel (F)	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Dili	Counsellor, Governance and Economic Development	GI	14/11/22
Jonimo	Lomber Unipessoal Lda.,	Director	GI	29/11/22
Kuppers, Amanda (F)	ILO (R4D-SP Team), Dili	M&E/KM Officer - Bridging Phase	GI	14/11/22

Lamotte, David	Ex-ILO (Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok)	Former Deputy Regional Director	RI	10/11/22
Lay, Kristian	Cresendo Unipessoal, Liquica (Contractor)	Director	GI	17/11/22
Liberato, Sidonio de Araujo	Ainaro Municipality	Public Work supervisor	PI	02/11/22
Mafalda (F)	Marcela Unipessoal Lda.	Director	GI	29/11/22
Mafalda, Santina (F)	Marchela Unipessoal, Liquica (Contractor)	Director	GI	17/11/22
Magalhaes, Nivio Leite	ILO (R4D-SP Team), Dili	Deputy Team Leader – Bridging Phase	GI	14/11/22
Mendonca, Tomas	Finlos Unipessoal Lda.	Director	GI	02/12/22
Meneses , Mario Angelo	Viqueque Municipality	Public Works Engineer	PI	01/12/22
Miyamoto, Michiko (F)	ILO (Country Office for Indonesia & Timor Leste)	Country Director	PI	19/11/22
Moneiro, Milton Ramanata	Ministry of Public Works, Dili	National Directorate for Roads, Bridges & Flood Control	PI	14/11/22
Monteiro, Marito Monteiro	Viqueque Municipality	Community Development Officer	GI	01/12/22
Moreira, Jorge	Baucau Municipality	Community Development Officer	GI	15/11/22
Nelson	Lomber Unipessoal Lda.,	Engineer	GI	29/11/22
Octavia, Lita (F)	ILO (Country Office for Indonesia & Timor Leste)	National Programme Officer for Timor-Leste	PI	14/11/22
Ornai, Rosa Maria (F)	Rozi Construction, Baucau (Contractor)	Director	GI	15/11/22
Pacheco, Alexandrino	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Timor-Leste (CCI-TL, Employers' Organization)	Executive Director	PI	18/11/22
Pereira, Cesario da Costa	Baucau Municipality	Laboratory Technician	GI	15/11/22
Pinto, Januario de A	Marques Unipessoal Lda.	Engineer	GI	01/12/22
Rego, Mario do	Viqueque Municipality	DSMOP Director	PI	01/12/22
Santos, Agapito da Silva dos	Berdato Unip. Lda	Director	GI	03/12/22
Santos, Deolindo dos	Ermera Municipality	Public work supervisor	PI	23/11/22
Silva, Hipolito da	Walay Unipessoal Lda.	Engineer	GI	02/12/22
Smith, Peter Howard	ILO (R4D-SP Team), Dili	CTA – Bridging Phase	GI	14/11/22
Soares, Antonio	Liquica Municipality	DSMOP Director	PI	17/11/22
Soares, Antonio	Bobonaro Municipality	DSMOP Director	PI	28/11/22
Soares, Armindo	Ermera Municipality	DSMOP Director	PI	22/11/22
Soares, Genoveva (F)	Novalo Unipessoal Lda.,	Director	GI	29/11/22
Soares, Jeronimo	Viqueque Municipality	Public Works Supervisor	PI	01/12/22
Soares, Alerico	Ermera Municipality	Public Work Chief of department	PI	23/11/22
Thakuri, Laxman	ILO (R4D-SP Team), Dili	Regional Coordinator	GI	14/11/22
Uriyo, Albert	ILO (Afghanistan)	Former CTA of the ERA project in Timor-Leste	RI	14/11/22
Verdial, Antoninha (F)	Leotyliya Enterprise.	Director	GI	03/12/22
Ximenes, Agostinho	Baucau Municipality	Supervisor	GI	15/11/22
Ximenes, Renaldo	Rozi Construction, Baucau (Contractor)	Engineer	GI	15/11/22
Ximenes, Tarciso Augusto	Finlos Unipessoal Lda.	Engineer	GI	01/12/22
Yat, Un	ILO (R4D-SP Team), Baucau	Regional Coordinator	PI	15/11/22
Zelius, Mr	CV Pinto (Contractor)	Engineer	GI	15/11/22

* PI = Personal interview (face-to-face); GI = Group interview (2+ people, face-to-face); RI = Remote interview (via Teams or Zoom)

Annex B: Documents reviewed

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Annex C: Terms of Reference

International Labour Organization
TERMS OF REFERENCE
Roads for Development -Support Program (R4D-SP)
Cluster Independent Final Evaluation

Project titles, DC Code and duration:	<p>Project 1: Roads for Development TIM/12/01/AUS (1 March 2012-31 March 2017)</p> <p>Project2: The Road for Development Support Program (Phase II) TLS/16/03/AUS (April 2017- 30 June 2021)</p> <p>Project 3: Road for Development Support Program Bridging Phase - TLS/21/01/AUD (1 July 2021- 31 December 2022)</p> <p>Project 4: Supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through targeted employment-intensive emergency public works for the rural poor and vulnerable in Timor-Leste- RBSA TLS176: TLS/20/01/RBS; August 2020-October 2021 (no-cost extension to 31 December 2022)</p>		
Donor and funding	1.	Government of Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	AUD 36,000,000 (USD 32,284,391)
	2.	Government of Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	AUD 21,500,000 (USD 15,587,538)
	3.	Government of Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	AUD 7,050,000 (Estimated at USD 5,448,223)
	4.	ILO Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA)	USD 550,000
Administrative Unit	ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste		
Technical Backstopping unit	ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific (Based in Thailand) DWT-Bangkok		
Type of evaluation	Independent Final Evaluation		
P&B outcome (s) under evaluation	1.	R4D-SP Outcome 01 - Employment Promotion: More women and men have access to productive employment, decent work and income opportunities	
	2.	Outcome 1: More and better jobs for inclusive growth and improved youth employment prospects	
	3 & 4.	Outcome 3: Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all.	
SDG under evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. • Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. • Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. • Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. • Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels 		
Evaluation Manager	Pamornrat Pringsulaka and Aye Pearl Hlaing		

Background

1. The poor state of rural infrastructure in Timor-Leste particularly affects people living in rural areas, where for example, higher transport costs impede economic growth, access to services and the reduction of poverty. In 2018, a national survey found that 68% of persons living outside of Dili found the conditions of roads and bridges as one of the biggest challenges faced by people in their area.
 - a.
2. The government's Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2011-2030, (a) recognises that road network is deteriorating, with most roads in poor condition and requiring climate resilient rehabilitation; and (b) prioritizes roads infrastructure noting that an "extensive network of quality and well-maintained roads is essential to connect our communities, promote rural development, industry and tourism, and provide access to markets." The SDP further calls for the rehabilitation and maintenance of all rural roads using employment-intensive technologies to boost local employment creation.
 - b.
3. Accordingly, the Government of Timor-Leste's (GoTL's) Roads for Development (R4D) program rehabilitates and maintains the country's core rural roads network, with the broader development objective of contributing to social and economic development in rural areas³⁶. Currently, the implementation of the program is led by the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) through Directorate for Roads, Bridges and Flood Control (DRBFC), in partnership with staff working at municipal-level government³⁷ and the private construction sector.
 - c.
4. Since 2012, through a series of three projects under this cluster evaluation, the GoTL's R4D program has been supported through a partnership between
 - Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) who have contributed to staffing, operational costs and capital works funding.
 - Government of Australia (GoA) through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) who have provide funding for technical assistance and during Phase I funded capital works.
 - International Labour Organization (ILO) which implements the support projects through its Employment Intensive Infrastructure Program (EIIP).
 - d. The overarching rationale and goal for R4D-SP is "Women and men in rural Timor-Leste are deriving social and economic benefits from improved rural road access". The three projects funded through DFAT and implemented by the ILO are:
 - Project 1: Roads for Development - TIM/12/01/AUS (1 March 2012 - 31 December 2016).
 - Project 2: The Road for Development Support Program Phase II - TLS/16/03/AUS (1 April 2017 - 30 June 2021) R4D-SP contributes to the achievement of the R4D goal
 - Project 3: Road for Development Support Program Bridging Phase - TLS/21/01/AUD (17 July 2021 - 31 December 2022)
5. With the overall intention of providing a continuous program building national capacities (government, private contractors and national project staff) to effectively rehabilitate and maintain rural roads, each of these three projects was designed building on the previous projects experiences and there were no breaks between projects
 - e.

³⁶ The Minister of Public Works to issue a formal Circular (No: 2884/MPO/IX/2019) defining the vision, structure, and respective responsibilities of the Ministry in implementing the R4D programme. The Circular also rebranded the program as the Ministry of Public Works' Estrada Rural Ba Dezenvolvimentu (ERD).

³⁷ Municipal-level government includes both Ministry of Public work staff assigned to Municipalities and staff employment by the Municipalities.

6. This partnership between the GoA, GoTL and the ILO is relatively unique in terms of its (a) duration and continuity, (b) scale and budget and (c) reporting and evaluation documentation. Furthermore, the approach of applying employment-intensive technologies to boost local employment creation and embedding project staff in government agencies implementing the R4D program was unique in Timor-Leste.

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7. Additionally, in 2021 the ILO through its Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA), funded a fourth project under this cluster evaluation that builds on the GoTL's R4D program by supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through targeted employment-intensive emergency public works for the rural poor and vulnerable in Timor-Leste. This RBSA project was designed to work with on-going R4D-SP project.

g.

8. The R4D-SP program to be evaluated is designed to address the ILO's priority themes for gender equality and empowerment for women and girls, build resilient infrastructure, end poverty, promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all and peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels in Timor Leste by realizing economic empowerment, social integration, and resilience towards social mobilisation efforts to empower female heads of households, persons with disability and other vulnerable groups to join and access the opportunities.

h.

9. Additional information on these projects (thereafter "the R4D-SP program") can be found at:

- Project 1: Roads for Development - TIM/12/01/AUS
https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/whatwedo/projects/WCMS_184617/lang--en/index.htm
- Project 2: The Road for Development Support Program Phase II - TLS/16/03/AUS
https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/whatwedo/projects/WCMS_553153/lang--en/index.htm
- Project 3: Road for Development Support Program Bridging Phase - TLS/21/01/AUD
https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/whatwedo/projects/WCMS_842764/lang--en/index.htm
- Project 4: Supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through targeted employment-intensive emergency public works for the rural poor and vulnerable in Timor-Leste- RBSA TLS176
https://www.ilo.org/jakarta/whatwedo/projects/WCMS_771422/lang--en/index.htm

o.

10. ILO carried out over the years independent midterm and final evaluations of the Project1, Project2, and Project 3 (midterm) and it has been recognised that the final evaluation of the current Bridging phase should be beyond the scope of the bridging phase and focus on the achievements and impact, lessons learnt and good practices of the entire R4D-SP programme over the 10 years period in order to learn and document important contributions of the program.

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11. The final evaluation will comply to UNEG Norms and Standards and ethical safeguard. It will be managed by ILO Independent evaluation manager with quality assurance and support by Regional Evaluation Officer and oversight by ILO Evaluation Office.

Purposes, Objectives, Scope, and Clients

Purposes and objectives:

q.

12. Noting the uniqueness of this 10-year partnership between the GoTL, GoA and ILO in supporting the development and implementation of the R4D program, this final evaluation will focus on the contribution to significant changes and impact that the R4D-SP program has brought about in Timor Leste. The broad purpose of this cluster evaluation is to promote accountability and also to enhance learning among ILO, Government of Timor Leste, social partners, donor and other key stakeholders.

13. The relevant tripartite constituents and key stakeholders and beneficiaries will be consulted and their inputs will be taken into consideration throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation should cover the project's collective results focusing not only on what has been achieved but especially how and why. Accordingly, this evaluation is to provide insight into the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the 4 projects under the partnership between the GoTL, GoA, and the ILO in supporting the R4D program.
14. The evaluation will apply OECD/DAC criteria with a focus on Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact/Sustainability and has the following objectives: -
- Identify and assess the significant, long-term contributions and potential transformative effects (social, economic, and environment) of the 4 cluster projects over the 10 years period as per the Theory of Change and its results framework. The following areas of achievements and impact should be assessed but not limit to
 - employment generation for women and men (improved livelihood)
 - improved accessibility of rural communities (school, health care, markets and other economic activities) due to better quality of roads and more rural roads
 - improved decent work dimension (i.e. Occupational safety and health, rights and social dialogue)
 - Capacity building within concerned government institutions and the private construction industry to manage continued improvements to and maintenance of the rural road network.
 - assess what works well and what works less well to build the GoTL's capacity to implement its R4D program and national private sector capacity to rehabilitate/maintain rural roads
 - provide forward-looking recommendations and identify good practice aimed at informing future road programs and projects, and in particular ILO's Employment Intensive Infrastructure Program (EIIP) approach. (what do we need to know to take it forward i.e. what approaches worked with government etc. what were the biggest barriers? Are there any insights to overcoming them? If they cannot be overcome did the program try alternatives etc.?)

Clients:

15. The clients of the evaluation are:
- Government of Timor Leste, ILO constituents and key stakeholders involved in the R4D-SP programme.
 - ILO backstopping Unit and other relevant entities at HQ; and the donor-DFAT
 - Project staff, ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

Evaluation scope

16. The scope of the evaluation covers the entire period of the four projects under this cluster, from the start of the partnership in 2012 to the present time. The evaluation will consider the relevant findings and recommendations of previous project evaluations, studies on impact assessment and tracer studies.
17. The evaluation will integrate gender equality and disability inclusion as a crosscutting concern throughout its deliverables and processes, with special attention to women and people living with disabilities. This implies (i) applying gender analysis by involving both men and women in consultation and evaluation's analysis, (ii) inclusion of data disaggregated by sex and gender in the analysis and justification of project documents; (iii) the formulation of gender-sensitive strategies and objectives and gender-specific indicators; (iv) inclusion of qualitative methods and use of mix of methodologies, (v) forming a gender-balanced team, and (vi) assessing outcomes to improve lives of women and men.

Evaluation criteria and questions

18. Below are proposed evaluation questions. The evaluation questions may be modified by the evaluator(s) and a more detailed analytical framework of questions and sub-questions will be developed by the evaluator(s) as part of the inception report and in agreement with the Evaluation Manager.

OECD/DAC Criteria	Proposed evaluation questions
<p>RELEVANCE: Are interventions doing the right things</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Relevance of strategy – As the cluster of projects evolved did, they remain relevant to the government priorities and development needs of the people of Timor-Leste? b. Did the cluster of projects strategies adequately address gender equality and disability inclusion? c. How have R4D capacity building efforts managed to adapt its focus in line with changing management arrangements and in particular the decentralisation of the mandate for rural infrastructure to the new municipal institutions?
<p>COHERENCE: How well do interventions fit?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Comparative advantage - To what extent did the partnership between GoTL, GoA and ILO in supporting the R4D program build on the comparative advantages of these organizations and what lessons can be learnt from this experience? b. How well did the cluster of projects complement and fit with other ongoing development initiatives in Timor-Leste?
<p>EFFECTIVENESS: Are interventions achieving their objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The extent to which the 4 projects to be evaluated have achieved its planned objectives/outcomes. Assess the quality of the outputs produced. b. Innovation -- What implementation approaches or strategies have been particularly successful in reaching this R4D goal? c. Enabling factors - What factors can be identified as facilitating / hindering progress towards acquiring the capacities to sustain the R4D program? Are there specific areas that should be addressed in any future related development assistance? d. Gender and disability inclusion - To what extent and how did the cluster of projects mainstream gender equality and promote disability inclusion? Are there specific examples of successful innovations? e. COVID-19 - To what extent has the implementation of the cluster of projects been effective and timely in providing an adapted COVID-19 response and guidance to stakeholders?
<p>EFFICIENCY: How well are resources being used?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use of resources - To what extent has the resources allocate through the cluster of projects been adequate to achieve expected results, in a timely and effective manner? b. Within the scope of resources provided through the DFAT/GoTL/ILO partnership did the cluster of projects receive adequate administrative, operational, technical and political support?
<p>r. IMPACT: What difference does the interventions make? s. t. The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Contribution towards goals - To what extent did the cluster of projects support the GoTL in achieving their R4D goal that “women and men in rural Timor-Leste are deriving social and economic benefits from improved road access”? To what extent have the beneficiaries, women and men workers, communities been better off (e.g. livelihood, access to market, school, health care, time saving from travelling)? b. What is the nature of the longer term and broader scope of impact of the 4 cluster projects (social, environment and economic effects). Identify indirect, secondary, and potential consequences of the 4 cluster projects.

OECD/DAC Criteria	Proposed evaluation questions
<p>intended or unintended, higher level effects.</p> <p>u. Examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms and potential effects on people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.</p>	<p>c. To what extent has R4D capacity development of national governments and private sector resulted in legal or policy reforms? E.g. issues concerning institutional arrangements for project delivery, monetary and non-monetary incentive systems for the public service, and the project's support for transparent and fast-acting aid management and procurement systems. To what extent has R4D capacity building had an impact on the private construction industry's ability and capacity to effectively build and maintain rural roads?</p> <p>d. Effective management of infrastructure works is dependent on the availability of effective management tools such as for quality assurance, procurement, contracts management, timely planning and implementation of works, and addressing social and environmental concerns. What is the impact of R4D support in such capacity building activities? , how has R4D capacity building managed to strengthen the industry's resilience and capacity to respond to crisis situations, i.e. seasonal floods and the recent COVID-19 pandemic?</p> <p>e. Assess the extent to which the cluster projects contributed toward promoting decent work dimension e.g. increased awareness and knowledge on international labour standards (resulted in negotiations around wages, collective bargaining agreements, and working conditions, improved OSH, labour rights, social dialogue, gender equality, non-discrimination and disability inclusion). What were the facilitating and limiting factors in project's contribution to these cross-cutting issues?</p>
<p>SUSTAINABILITY: Will the benefits last?</p>	<p>v. The extent to which the net benefits of the 4 cluster projects continue or likely to continue (e.g. rural roads, capacity of trained government officials, pool of trainers, trained contractors). Examine financial, economic, social, environmental and institutional capacities needed to sustain net benefits over time.</p> <p>w. Building capacity in the industry is a continuous process. To what extent has R4D contributed to securing adequate local training capacity for new entrants into the sub-sector and also in order for the industry to expand capacity in the future and respond to new challenges?</p> <p>x. c. Sustainability strategies - What have been the most influential factors in mobilizing different stakeholder groups to take ownership of and sustain the government's R4D programme, and adapt its learnings to other government policies and programmes?</p>

Methodology to be followed

19. The methodology should include examining or reconstruct the intervention's Theory of Change.
20. The evaluation will apply mixed-methods, analysing both quantitative and qualitative data through key informant interview/focus group discussions and/or survey, and will integrate gender equality other non-discrimination issues as a cross-cutting ILO concern throughout its methodology and all deliverables, including the final report. The evaluation will follow guidance note 3.1 on integrating gender, as well as the guidance note on norms and standards.
21. Broadly the evaluation is expected to be carried-out through an (a) exhaustive desk review, (b) interviews and consultations with partners and (c) field visits.
 - *Desk review*

- All project documents (including technical manual and guidelines, M&E studies), Annual review reports, past evaluation reports of R4D phase 1, 2, and the bridging phase, DWCP country reports to tripartite advisory group, donor reports on technical and financial progress, media releases.
 - Other relevant documents e.g. Mission, meeting, workshop and training reports, Project budgets – planned and actual- expenditures, results framework, quantitative and qualitative surveys/assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation data and plan.
 - *Interview and consultation with key stakeholders and partners:* The evaluation team will need to conduct individual and/or group interviews with relevant partners including:
 - MPW and municipal staff involved in managing the GoTL’s R4D program
 - Representatives from other ILO project and other road implementation programmes
 - National contractors undertaking R4D rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance
 - DFAT staff (present and available past) responsible for supporting the cluster of funded projects.
 - ILO EIIP technical staff responsible for backstopping the cluster of projects (HQ and at ILO’s Decent Work Team for Asia and the Pacific)
 - Field Director and program staff from ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste responsible for providing administrative support to the cluster of projects
 - Current and available past project management staff
 - ILO constituents and private sector i.e. contractors
 - *Field visits* – the evaluation team will select the field visit locations to observe R4D rehabilitated roads to meet with community leaders and beneficiaries of the improved roads. The criteria and locations of data collection should be reflected in the inception report. Representatives of beneficiaries (with an aim of equal numbers of women and men among interviewees) through a survey or case study or experimental
22. Since several individual project evaluations have been completed it is proposed that the evaluators consider doing several thematic case studies to complete their analysis of the overall effectiveness of the support provided to the GoTL’s R4D program. The topics may be proposed by the evaluation team during the inception phase, after initial briefings and the desk review.
23. The evaluator will develop systematic data collection tools (i.e. checklists, guides and/or questionnaires as part of the inception report to guide the interviews, capture qualitative and quantitative data and ensure objectivity and consistency in interviews. This will also help the evaluator identify knowledge gaps that need to be verified and validated through the interviews. The evaluation team should seek to apply a blended approach of techniques – desk review, meetings with stakeholders and observation through field visits as applicable. Triangulation of sources and techniques should be central to the overall methodology. The evaluator will ensure that opinions and perceptions of women are equally reflected in the interviews and that gender-specific questions are included.
24. The evaluator will present preliminary findings to the project team and relevant ILO staff of CO in Indonesia and Timor Leste, DFAT, ILO Regional Office/HQ. Upon completion of the report the evaluator will take part in a teleconference to provide a debriefing to donors and the ILO on the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations as well as the evaluation process.

25. The evaluator may adapt the methodology, especially in light of Covid-19 restrictions in the country, subject to the agreement with the evaluation manager, and reflected in the inception report.
26. This evaluation will follow the ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation; and the ILO EVAL Policy Guidelines Checklist 3 “Preparing the inception report”; Checklist 4 “Validating methodologies”; Checklist 5 “Preparing the evaluation report” and Checklist “6 Rating the quality of evaluation report”.

Deliverables

27. The evaluation should comprise the following deliverables, which must be presented in English and submitted to the Evaluation Manager in electronic version compatible with Word for Windows:
 1. An Inception Report (follows ILO inception report and methodological guidelines)
 2. A preliminary findings powerpoint presentation and Draft Evaluation Report (structure and lessons learnt and good practice -follows ILO standard format)
 3. A Final evaluation Report and standalone evaluation summary (in standard ILO format)
28. Inception report should
 - Describe the theory of change underlying R4D-SP program, and the conceptual framework that will be used to undertake the cluster evaluation;
 - Elaborate the methodology proposed in the TOR, including how the clustered approach will be put into practice including the sampling approach (selection criteria);
 - Set out in some detail the data required to answer the evaluation questions, data sources by specific evaluation questions; data collection, triangulation and analysis methods; selection criteria of respondents for interviews, and identification of field visits, etc.;
 - Provide the tools to be used for interviews and field visits etc.;
 - Provide an outline for the final evaluation report.
 - Detail the work plan for the evaluation, showing the phases in the evaluation, their key activities, deliverables and milestones
29. **Draft evaluation report:** A draft report for comment will be prepared according to the outline. The draft report will be reviewed methodologically by the evaluation manager. After that, it will be shared with all relevant stakeholders for two-weeks for comments. The comments will be consolidated by the Evaluation Manager and provided to the evaluator to arrive to a final version that integrates the comments.
 Each lesson learnt or good practices identified must be accompanied by a one page to elaborate on the lesson learnt/good practices as per ILO standard template. Standard ILO title page will be used.
30. A preliminary findings maybe presented to key stakeholders after the field data collection for critical reflection. This will help the evaluator to validate the findings which is helpful for the preparation of the draft report. There may be more than one round of comments on the draft report if the evaluation report did not meet quality as per ILO Evaluation guidelines.

31. **Final evaluation report and stand alone evaluation summary** - structure of the report will follow ILO guidelines for evaluation report. The evaluator will incorporate inputs and comments from all key stakeholders to finalize the evaluation report. The report (word file) should not exceed 35 pages excluding annex. The structure is outlined below: -
- Cover page
 - Table of contents, including boxes, figures and tables
 - Executive Summary with the methodology, key findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as any lessons learned or good practices
 - Acronyms
 - Description of the Cluster of Project
 - Purpose, scope and clients of evaluation
 - Methodology
 - Findings (organized by evaluation criteria)
 - Thematic case studies and individual stories
 - Conclusions and Recommendations
 - Lessons learned and good practices
 - Annexes (including TOR, lessons learnt and good practice templates, evaluation instruments, questionnaires, list of document reviewed, list of key informant interviews, focus group discussions, etc.)
32. The Evaluation Manager will review the final version and submit it to Regional Evaluation Officer for quality assurance and for submission to ILO Evaluation Office (EVAL) for their final approval. The quality of the final report will be assessed against the standards set out in the ILO Policy Guidelines for Evaluation. The evaluation report will be considered final only when it is approved by ILO Evaluation Office. Once approved, the evaluation report, good practices, and lessons learned will be uploaded and stored at ILO i-eval Discovery as to provide easy access to all development partners, to reach target audiences and to maximize the benefits of the evaluation.

Management arrangements and tentative time frame

Management Arrangements

33. The evaluator will report to the Evaluation Manager Ms. Aye Pearl Hlaing (hlaingap@ilo.org) and should discuss with her on any technical and methodological matters. The Evaluation Manager will undertake the following tasks:
- Serve as the first point of contact for the evaluators
 - Provide background documentation to the evaluators
 - Brief the evaluators on ILO evaluation procedures
 - Ensure that the evaluation is conducted in accordance with terms of references
 - Review and circulate draft and final reports to all stakeholders for comments
 - Consolidate comments on inception and draft report for the evaluators
 - Liaise with project staff to ensure logistic support is provided as required
34. The Evaluation Manager will be supported by ILO's Regional Evaluation Officer, who will do quality assurance of the report and EVAL, Geneva will give approval of the final evaluation report.

35. The evaluation contract will be administratively managed by the ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste
36. The evaluation will be carried out with logistical support of the ILO’s Road for Development Support Program Bridging Phase currently operating in Timor-Leste. The Bridging Phase project management team will also assist in organizing in-country meeting and field visits, and to ensure that all relevant documentations are up-to-date and accessible by the evaluation team. The extent of logistic support will need to be negotiated through the Inception Report.
37. Roles of other key stakeholders: All stakeholders, particularly the relevant ILO staff in the ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste, the donor, and the relevant government agencies and other key partners will be consulted throughout the process and will be engaged at different stages during the process. They will have the opportunities to provide inputs to the TOR and to the draft evaluation report prior to finalization.

Proposed Workplan and timeframe

38. It is expected that the evaluation will take place between early October and end December 2022, based on the provisional workplan as shown in Table below. Workdays can be split between different team members and the evaluation team may wish to re-allocate days for different phases of the evaluation as long as the overall number of days remains unchanged. Total combined work days is 54. It's a combined efforts of team leader and national consultant.
39. The final independent evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluation team The evaluation team will be led by an international team leader and support by local team member/firm.

Task/Deliverable	Responsible person	Work days	Tentative deadline
Inception Phase			
Desk review + initial discussion with project team	Evaluation Team	10	
Drafting of Inception report	Evaluation Team	4	
Circulation of Inception Report within ILO, consolidation of comments to be sent to Lead Evaluator	Evaluation Manager		
Final Inception Report (Deliverable 1)		1	25 October 2022
Data Collection			
Interviews/meetings with Key stakeholders	Evaluation Team	10	
Field visits and interview with beneficiaries	Evaluation Team	16	
Report writing			

Draft evaluation report (Deliverable 2) and preliminary findings workshop	Evaluation Team	10	09December2022
Review and clearance of draft report	Evaluation Manager	--	
Circulation of draft evaluation report (2 week for comments)	Evaluation Manager	--	
Finalize evaluation report, including annexes and a completed comments log table (Deliverable 3)	Evaluation Team	3	28 December 2022
Report Approval and Evaluation Summary and Fact Sheet			
Submission of report to EVAL (ILO HQ)	Evaluation Manager	--	
Approval of evaluation report	EVAL	--	

Desired competencies and responsibilities for evaluators

40. The table below describes desired competencies and responsibilities for an international evaluator as team leader

Responsibilities	Profile
Conduct evaluation and deliver all deliverables under this TOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review of programme documents and other related documents • Development of the evaluation instrument • Briefing with ILO • Telephone interviews with HQ and DWT-Bangkok specialists [and virtual interviews with stakeholders in Timor-Leste if the situation does not allow for field visit] • May undertake a field visit in Timor Leste (if situation permits) • Facilitate stakeholders' workshop/ debriefing with the programme and key stakeholders • Draft evaluation report • Finalise evaluation • Draft stand-alone evaluation summary as per standard ILO format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No previous involvement/engagement in the design and delivery, and the evaluation of R4D-SP • University Degree with minimum 10 years of experience in international project /program evaluations; • Have proven expertise and experiences in evaluating labour-based infrastructure development programmes and/or rural employment-related development projects/programs • Sound understanding on ILO employment-intensive investment approach will be an asset • Substantive experience in project evaluations in the UN and/, or other international context, human rights-based approach, inclusiveness • Experience in using results-based management principles, Theory of change /LFA analysis for programming • Ability to bring gender and non-discrimination dimensions into the evaluation, including in data collection analysis and writing • Demonstrate an understanding of the ILO mandates and tripartism • Excellent analytical skills and communication skills; • Experience in Timor Leste will be an advantage • Fluency in spoken and written English • Experience in facilitating workshops for evaluation findings. • Be flexible and responsive to changes and demands; client-oriented, and open to feedback.

The table below describes desired competencies and responsibilities for the National Evaluator as a team member

Responsibilities	Profile
The national consultant (a national of Timor Leste) will support the team leader in conducting a participatory and inclusive evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No previous involvement in the delivery or evaluation of the R4D-SP project

Responsibilities	Profile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collect background information and prepare a summary in English as required; • contribute to a desk review of relevant program and non-program documents; • pro-actively provide relevant local knowledge and insights to the international consultant; • take part in the data collection e.g. interviews with key stakeholders and assisting the international consultant in taking notes during interviews, or conduct other data collection methods as required by the team leader • contribute to the main report to be prepared by the team leader • maybe requested to write certain sections in the draft report as requested by the team leader • participate in and jointly facilitate the stakeholder’s workshop • provide interpretation during the evaluation data collection as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Degree with minimum 5 years of strong and substantial professional experience in project evaluations and/or experience in local economic development context; • Knowledgeable in program/project evaluation methodologies • Excellent analytical skills, writing and interview skills; • Excellent command of oral and written English; • Understanding of Tetum local language; • Sound knowledge on the socio-economic conditions of Timor Leste and gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination is desirable • Knowledge of ILO’s roles and mandate and its tripartite structure as well as UN and its programming will be an advantage

Legal and ethical matters

41. The evaluation will comply with UN Norms and Standards. The evaluator will abide by the EVAL’s Code of Conduct for carrying out the evaluations. UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines will be followed. The evaluator should not have any links to project management, or any other conflict of interest that would interfere with the independence of the evaluation.

42. Evaluators should have personal and professional integrity and abide by the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for evaluation and the [Code of Conduct for Evaluation](#) in the UN system to ensure that the rights of individuals involved in an evaluation are respected. Evaluators must act with cultural sensitivity and pay particular attention to protocols, codes and recommendations that may be relevant to their interactions with women. Evaluators will be expected to sign the respective ILO Code of Conduct to show that they have read and understood the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System process.

43. Ownership of data from the evaluation rests jointly with the ILO and the consultant. The copyright of the evaluation report will rest exclusively with the ILO. The use of data for publication and other presentations can only be made with written agreement of the ILO. Key stakeholders can make appropriate use of the evaluation report in line with the original purpose and with appropriate acknowledgement.

Security and Covid-19 restrictions and guidance:

- ILO EVAL has provided guidance on Implications of COVID-19 on evaluations in the ILO that should be consulted and followed by the national consultant: http://www.ilo.ch/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_744068.pdf
- The national consultant is required to fully comply by the advisories issued by the local government and the UN regarding domestic travels and social distancing.
- The national consultants are also required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_649148.pdf) together with the contract document.
- All UN personnel, including consultants, are expected to complete the UNDSS BSAFE (security awareness training course) and, if travel is required, are obliged to provide the Security Clearance.
- External collaborators benefit from the security arrangements and protection provided by the United Nations Security Management Network (UNSMN) at duty stations which are either not under a security level or up to security level four (4).
- No external collaboration contracts may be issued for work that entails travel to a location at security level five (5) or higher.
- If external collaborators for whom travel has been paid by the ILO find themselves at a location where security level five (5) or six (6) is declared during their presence there, immediate arrangements must be made in liaison with SECURITY to ensure that they leave the duty station as soon as possible.
- In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, if the situation in the sub-region changes, appropriate actions will be taken amongst the following options:
- Suspending the implementation of the contract until further notice or until a specific time when it can be reviewed further in the face of new developments;
- Reducing the contract activities/scope/services (partial suspension); or
- Terminating the contract if it appears unfeasible that the desired deliverables will be received/achieved.

All relevant UNEG and ILO evaluation guidelines and standard templates.

- [ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations 4th edition](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the ILO](#) (to be signed and returned by evaluator to the evaluation manager)
- [Protocol on collecting evaluative evidence on the ILO's COVID-19 Response measures through project and programme evaluations](#)

Guidance Notes

- ✓ [Guidance Note 3.1 Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation of projects](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 3.2 Adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 3.3 Strategic clustered evaluations to gather evaluative information more effectively](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 4.3 Data collection methods](#)
- ✓ [Guidance Note 4.5 Stakeholder engagement](#)

- ✓ [Guidance Note 5.5 Dissemination of lessons learned and good practices](#)

EVAL Checklists and Templates for the Evaluator:

- ✓ [Checklist 4.8 Writing the inception report](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.2 Preparing the evaluation report](#) [including the templates for completing [lessons learned](#) and [emerging good practices](#), as well as the templates for the title page and [executive summary](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.3 Filling in the title page](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.4 Preparing the Evaluation Report Summary](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.5: Documents for Project Evaluators](#)
- ✓ [Checklist 4.9 Rating the quality of evaluation report](#)

Annex D: Good Practices and Lessons learnt



► Template 4.2: Emerging good practices

Roads for Development Cluster Evaluation

Project DC/SYMBOL: TIM/12/01/AUS; TLS/16/03/AUS; TLS/21/01/AUS; TLS/20/01/RBS

Name of Evaluator: Tony Powers

Date: 02 February 2023

The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Working with local institutions to develop the capability of private sector contractors provides an opportunity not only to develop technical and business management skills, but also to promote, embed and normalise decent work, social justice, and environmental sustainability principles in the sector's operations and in the government institutions' procurement standards.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Support provided to the development of a market of skilled contractors and to improving government procurement processes allow the ILO to influence the standards that contractors are expected to meet.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	Inclusion of above principles in contractor training, procurement processes and contract management and supervision ensure compliance in the work performed.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Contractors – improved knowledge, capacity and compliance with the above principles. Institutions – improved knowledge, capacity and the ability to embed the above principles in contract design and management.
Potential for replication and by whom	Especially relevant to projects supporting public works institutions and their private sector contractors.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Potentially all decent work goals as all international labour standards are embedded.
Other documents or relevant comments	



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The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Completion of a well-researched and comprehensive developmental master plan and investment strategy can help ensure that government decisions on priorities and investments are strategic and data-driven and not based on short term political expediency.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	In this context, a comprehensive Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS) was developed that collected and analysed relevant data on rural roads nationally. Limitations include the willingness of government to commit to its vision and to make adequate funds available for implementation.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The RRMPIS was generally adhered to greatly improved the transparency of decision making and the efficiency of rural roads rehabilitation.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Institutions – improved knowledge, capacity and the ability to make data-driven decisions on development priorities and public works investments.
Potential for replication and by whom	Especially relevant to projects supporting public works institutions.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO’s Strategic Programme Framework)	Supported DWCP rural roads and employment intensive investment goals.
Other documents or relevant comments	



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The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Constraints in an intervention's enabling environment need to be addressed to maximise results and this requires the right balance of skills on the project team (i.e., advocacy and policy influencing skills as well as technical skills). Projects are however limited in their capacity to shape important dimensions of their environment and other stakeholders need to be mobilised including donors, constituents, other development actors and other stakeholders with similar interests and facing similar obstacles.
Context and any related preconditions	In the context of decentralisation of rural roads work projects, there was a need to improve coordination between the Ministries of Public Works and State Administration to ensure that capacity building work at the municipal level was effectively delivered.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Direct – institutions and staff involved in rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance; Indirect – rural communities and their inhabitants
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Stalled progress in fully implementing decentralisation agenda in Timor-Leste.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Suitable balance of technical/influencing skills on project team and willingness to adjust staffing as project needs evolve. Willingness of key stakeholders to act to improve enabling environment of the intervention.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Staff recruitment considers all skill needs (e.g. in role description). Work plans articulate influencing/advocacy activities. High level negotiations entered into with stakeholders (donor, constituents, other) to improve enabling environment .



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The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination is needed to ensure that there is clarity over roles, responsibilities and resources in public works projects, especially in an environment when decentralization is meant to be occurring. Development cooperation projects can support this, but the political will needs to be cultivated at higher levels to ensure that planned coordination mechanisms (such as the IMRF) are activated.
Context and any related preconditions	In the context of decentralisation of rural roads work projects, there was a need to improve coordination between the Ministries of Public Works and State Administration to ensure that capacity building work at the municipal level was effectively delivered.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Direct – institutions and staff involved in rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance; Indirect – rural communities and their inhabitants
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Formally constituted, inter-ministerial coordination group was never convened due to a number of factors (political instability, lack of will, COVID-19 disruptions).
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Willingness of key stakeholders to encourage implementation of the group.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	High level negotiations entered into with stakeholders (government, donor, constituents, other) required.



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The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Clearer measurement of institutional capacity building efforts, including defining points where institutional autonomy is considered achieved, would assist project efficiency and effectiveness.
Context and any related preconditions	In the context of capacity building of local institutions involved in rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance, a clearer structure was needed that to ensure that a focus was maintained on developing their autonomy in implementation of key tasks, to reduce their reliance on ILO technical assistance, and to avoid capacity substitution.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Direct – institutions and staff involved in rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance; Indirect – rural communities and their inhabitants
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Low base capability of local institutions, political instability, and administrative inertia elevated the risk that the projects continued to play a too hands-on role.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Development of a tool at project design stage that would make clear the stages of capacity development including points at which the target institution can be said to have graduated from the need for assistance.



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Name of Evaluator: Tony Powers

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The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the lesson may be included in the full evaluation report.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	TEXT
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	The embedded model of institutional support can be an effective mode of delivery for this capacity building provided there are identified counterparts or units within the Ministry who will ultimately take the reins and there is a clear plan in place for handover.
Context and any related preconditions	In the context of capacity building of local institutions involved in rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance, embedding project technical specialists to work side-by-side the institutions' own staff provides a good opportunity for knowledge transfer and support .
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	Direct – institutions and staff involved in rural roads rehabilitation and maintenance; Indirect – rural communities and their inhabitants
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	A risk of dependence on embedded support can be created if there are no clear strategies or timelines to hand over full responsibility for performing the functions supported.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	Enables a rapid implementation of planned road works and a progressive shift to more local autonomy.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	Equipping embedded staff (and potentially the institutions' staff) with knowledge and resources needed to perform the work in country – local institutions may be inadequately resourced.