



Evaluation Summary



International
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Roads for Development -Support Program (R4D-SP)

Quick Facts

Countries: Timor Leste

Final Evaluation: 1 November 2020 – 31 March 2021

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Administrative Office: ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste

Technical Office: ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific (Based in Thailand)

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Keywords: EIIP, Timor Leste, rural road development

Background & Context

This final evaluation of the Roads for the Development - Support Program (R4D-SP) was commissioned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The evaluation was completed between December 2020 and February 2021. The final evaluation period covered program implementation from April 2017 to December 2020. The purpose of the final evaluation was to review overall progress as a means to promote accountability to the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL), the Government of Australia (GoA) through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the ILO. It was also prepared to enhance overall learning and decision-making.

During the implementation of the final evaluation, DFAT informed the ILO that a bridging phase would be considered through to December 2022. The evaluation pivoted its focus slightly to evaluate the implementation period (April 2017-December 2020) and to also provide suggested guidance and recommendations for consideration as part of the bridging phase.

Background

Phase I of the Roads for Development (R4D) ran from March 2012 to March 2017 and was co-funded by the GoA and GoTL

with technical assistance implemented by the ILO. In Phase I, the GoA contributed AUD36 million and GoTL provided approximately USD19.5 million to capital works, with ILO managing the procurement and delivery systems. R4D Phase I successfully contributed to strengthened procurement systems (built staff capacity), strengthened planning/budgeting systems via the Rural Roads Master Plan and Investment Strategy (RRMPIS), and strengthened social and environmental safeguards/GIS units. R4D also contributed to development impacts through the provision of improved road access and employment through the application of labour-based approaches.

Following the preparation of the Design Update Annex (DUA), agreements were signed for the implementation of a 4-year R4D Phase II from April 2017 to March 2021. The program contract was a 2+2/start-stop arrangement that provided an opportunity to review progress and discuss future directions and priorities. The GoA agreed to contribute up to AUD26 million toward the R4D-SP technical assistance program, while the GoTL committed to providing USD20 million per annum for capital and operational costs. 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.*

R4D-SP contributes to the achievement of the R4D goal through two EOPOs:

- EOPO1: GoTL is effectively managing rural roads at national and municipal levels
- EOPO2: Increased contractor capacity, employment and income in selected rural communities¹

Methodology

The evaluation consisted of three phases: (i) document review and qualitative analysis; (ii) field work comprising interviews with key counterparts and stakeholders, visits to the field to meet with municipal staff, and conduct focus group discussions with communities and contractors; (iii) data analysis and reporting. Due to COVID-19, the international

¹ As part of program ownership and sustainability, the Minister of Public Works in 2019, issued a Circular No: 2884/MPO/IX/2019 re-branding R4D with a Tetum name "Estrada Rural ba Dezenvolvimentu" – (ERD). This Circular designated formal management responsibilities for the ERD programme through the identifies specific technical responsibilities within the National DRBFC and the DG-AF, as well as specifying that these agencies should allocate necessary time and resources for ERD work. Through the Circular, the Minister further requests that R4D-SP focus technical support on building the capacity of the MPW and municipal public works in fulfilling these responsibilities.

evaluation specialist worked remotely and was supported in-country by a national consultant.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Relevance

R4D-SP remains highly relevant to the development priorities of the GoTL, GoA and rural communities within Timor-Leste. Road infrastructure provides the foundation for other economic and social development investments

The GoTL has met the financial commitments of the Subsidiary Arrangement but there have often been delays in contributions due to political constraints and stalemates. There is commitment to raising the overall budget but based on previous experience, it is unclear if this will be realised in the short-term. The GoTL has met its commitment to the provision of staff at the municipal level. Governance and management arrangements involving the Government, program and DFAT have been partially met.

The R4D-SP modality employs an embedded model that works alongside MPW counterparts at the central level and within municipal government structures in municipalities. Overall the approach has worked well as it provides direct and tangible support to the GoTL. The embedded approach has also worked well in other contexts and is a recognised model to build engagement, partnership and joint-decision-making. It is also a model recognised by the ILO to build capacity for effective planning and management of rural infrastructure works. However, the model needs to be carefully reviewed and considered as there is a risk that the program becomes “part of the MPW” and does the work on behalf of the MPW.

Coherence

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) highlighted a number of areas for improvement for R4D-SP with regards to engagement and collaboration with development partners, government ministries (e.g. Agencia De Desenvolvimento - ADN) and other DFAT funded initiatives. The final evaluation notes that progress has been realised at some levels but there is still further work to be done. For instance, the Inter-Ministerial Roads Forum (IMRF) has been formed but is yet to meet. The Roads Working Group (RWG) remains in concept and is not fully developed or operational. The evaluation team is also aware that within some government quarters, the IMRF may not proceed at all. This would be a negative outcome as it potentially removes a very important governance mechanism and an opportunity to promote better engagement amongst key stakeholders.

R4D-SP also collaborated with EU through ERA-AF to jointly implement ILO's RBMA Maintenance Programme to support socio-economic recovery from impact of COVID-19 pandemic

R4D-SP has established good working relationship with other donors. Evidence from the documents, reports and interviews indicates that JICA are using the RRMPIS to inform their prioritisation as well as data and information from the developed Integrated Road Management Information System (IRMIS) including trainings and research. The World Bank (WB) has also adopted R4D-SP's approach to long-term maintenance contracts, particularly for women, working on national road works and is applying IRMIS tools developed through the R4D-SP program. Engagement with other DFAT

investments is occurring but appears to be more ad hoc and based on chance rather than the scheduling of regular meetings and working groups.

There is also scope to actively support the operation of the IMRF. This should be a priority as part of the bridging phase. If this governance structure remains unused, it would undermine the overall implementation and management approach. Both DFAT, R4D-SP and ILO need this mechanism to operate as it provides a basis for engagement and allows R4D-SP to strengthen coordination and have direct input into the development of policy, setting of planning priorities and supports better implementation. However, if the mechanism does not eventuate, then an alternative approach needs to be discussed and agreed.

Effectiveness

R4D-SP is effective. It has achieved a majority of outputs and made solid progression towards to achievement of outcomes. Analysis of information and data contained in the results framework indicates that R4D-SP has achieved, and in some cases exceeded targets. However it is unclear if the claims made, particularly at outcome level under KEQ 1, can be directly attributed to R4D-SP. The positive social and economic impact of improved rural roads on communities were well demonstrated and documented during R4D Phase I.

Theory of Change: As part of Phase II, R4D-SP sought to update its Theory of Change and M&E approach. The process consumed a significant amount of resources and time and it is unclear if the actual changes in approach resulted in better outcomes. Under the proposed bridging phase, R4D-SP should review its entire M&E system and ensure it is aligned to specific outcomes and deliverables over which the program directly contributes.

Rural Roads Policy: R4D-SP made important contributions to the development of a Rural Roads Policy (RRP) which was integrated into and Asian Development Bank (ADB) National Roads Policy. For the RRMPIS, the evidence here is mixed. R4D-SP has made significant contributions to the annual updating of RRPMIS (however it is noted that this was an output from Phase I). The RRMPIS has been reviewed since 2017 and updated annually in collaboration with MPW/municipalities regarding the prioritized road lists and investment plans which have been used in preparing and submitting annual rural roads civil works contracts and budgets through MPW to GoTL. The RRMPIS has also been incorporated into the new IRMIS to facilitate ease of annual updates. As of the end of 2020, the RRMPIS is out of date.

Manuals and Guidelines: A total of 14 “technical documents” have been reported as being produced as of December 2020. Interviews indicated varying opinions about their completeness, appropriateness and functionality. Some appear to remain in draft form, and it is also unclear if these documents are finalised. There does not appear to be any formal endorsement or supporting evidence of complete institutionalisation. The evaluation recognises that manuals, guidelines and tools are being implemented and used in training, however if a strict definition of “institutionalisation” is applied, it is difficult to conclude that these manuals and guidelines have met this requirement. The evaluation team received a link to training guidelines, reports and data

following the data collection phase. These were reviewed and findings included in the body of the report.

It is noted by the evaluation teams that there were no manual and guidelines before R4D started up. In such an environment, it is important to acknowledge the substantial efforts of R4D to introduce uniform and standard practices in the sector. Unfortunately, the expectation would be that these manuals and guidelines (along with training guides and tools) would be finalised, approved/endorsed well before the final evaluation.

Systems: R4D-SP has been working with MPW to develop systems and associated operational guidelines and tools. To date 11 systems have been designed. However, like manuals and guidelines, it is unclear on the status of these systems and if they have all been endorsed by the MPW. Also, some of the “systems” appear to be manuals, frameworks and plans. To help planning going forward, the evaluation recommends that R4D-SP reviews the current “systems” and align them to the systems detailed in the RRMPIs. The RRMPIs covers 5 systems: (i) Planning (includes prioritization); (ii) Designing and Cost-Estimation (includes surveying); (iii) Procurement (includes contracting and contract management); (iv) Supervision and Quality Control; (v) Monitoring and Evaluation. The 11 “systems” that R4D-SP is supporting are actually elements of one or more of the 5 main RRMPIs systems detailed above (with the exception of the R4D-SP procurement system, which is one of the 5 core systems).

Capacity Development: For capacity development, the DUA was clear in its approach to support a transition away from direct contract work to support institutional development and capacity development. Training and capacity support has been provided at both the central and municipal level in key areas where R4D-SP is supporting. The results framework indicates the number of participants has reached target, however there is limited evidence to suggest changes in knowledge and overall performance and how this has led to improved performance and supported GoTL’s ability to better manage rural roads (KEQ2). There is also evidence of capacity substitution, particularly at the municipal level with Regional Coordinators (RC) fulfilling roles and responsibilities that contradict their advisory nature. This is primarily due to a lack of technical staff with sufficient capacity and limited operating budgets for work and travel. Capacity substitution is justified at certain levels to fill short-term gaps however with the timeframe for implementation it would have been prudent to have a clear transition process underpinned by a structured approach to training and mentoring that would see a full handover of roles and responsibilities to municipal staff.

A highly visible area of support has been within procurement and contracting. This is a key work area that has enjoyed consistent and in-depth support over a number of years and R4D-SP has done a good job in supporting the MPW improve its procurement and contracting process.

Contractors: There is strong recognition and appreciation of R4D-SP’s work with contractors over an extended period of time. There is a need to refresh the approach to contractors. Significant resources have been provided to date through Phase I and Phase II for training. The risk with on-going training is that R4D-SP is potentially contributing towards a saturation of the contractor market, particularly in an environment when GoTL’s budget allocations are low and

unstable. Rather than R4D-SP continuing with training (through Don Bosco), it would be more effective and sustainable for R4D-SP to institutionalise this support (i.e. have MPW pay or have Don Bosco charge for courses) and facilitate training through existing providers. However, it is important to assess whether or not Don Bosco and other training providers have the capacity to absorb such training.

Communities: R4D-SP has provided broad benefits to communities and has contributed towards improved accessibility to roads and employment through labour-based work and access to markets. On the outcome of economic benefits, having road access in municipalities created improved access for the local farmers to the market.

Efficiency

The “embedded model” is an effective and efficient modality that has been employed by DFAT on other road initiatives. Unpredictable and delayed GoTL resourcing (annual budget and staffing) is an issue that affects MPW (and R4D-SP). The key factor that impact R4D-SP is lack of adequate operational budget for municipalities to complete their work.

Capacity development and associated institutional arrangements need adequate systems and approaches to support. As mentioned in the effectiveness section, the program would benefit from having updated capacity development plans, particularly at the municipal level. The evaluation is aware that these are in place at present but do require an update as part of the bridging phase.

Decentralisation, like budget allocations, has had a significant influence on overall efficiency (and to a degree, effectiveness). The main issue is that roles and responsibilities within the decentralisation agenda are still be discussed and prioritised. This may have implications for budgets and also ultimate control of expenditure and associated management decision-making. The evaluation team is not entirely confident that R4D-SP is fully aware of the implications and current political tensions around the roles and structures between central and municipal actors.

Impact

High level impacts are always difficult when working in an environment that supports institutional strengthening and capacity building. Whilst it is evident that R4D-SP has supported the achievement of key results it is difficult to verify and confirm the result of R4D-SP’s direct work, particularly to KEQ 1. However that said, R4D-SP has achieved positive results with regards to its systems and processes being applied by MPW and other stakeholders.

Overall, the program has made a positive contribution to the promotion of gender sensitive and gender aware systems and processes that have translated to improved opportunities and access individuals at the community level, particularly for women. The ESF and SSF provide a comprehensive framework to support the active promotion of women within communities.

Sustainability

R4D-SP has developed a strong reputation for in-depth and coordinated support within the MPW over the past 8-years. There is a chance of sustainability and a number of key practices are already being implemented. However when

viewed from a realist perspective, it is unclear if there is sufficient capacity within the MPW (and municipalities) to sustain the work if R4D-SP was to end now.

For sustainability² to be achieved there is a need to renew the focus on what capacity building is and what needs to be done to adequately transfer knowledge, skills and approaches in a meaningful way. Capacity development will ultimately be assessed by a large extent on the availability of adequate training and systems capacities (including procedures) within MPW, Municipalities and private sector training providers. DFAT currently provides funding for all contractor training. New approaches and ideas need to be considered for sustainability to be realised.

Partnership

R4D-SP has supported the development of the R4D Social Safeguards Framework (SSF) and an Environmental Safeguards Framework (ESF) that establishes specific mechanisms for gender equality for R4D rehabilitation and maintenance works. The evaluation team note that there was no SSF/ESF prior to R4D-SP involvement. Despite the overall success of the SSF and ESF in supporting contractors and communities, work at the institutional level and influencing of key decision-makers does require further attention.

Ideally both frameworks would be something adopted by MPW as a key institutional document/manual which would establish a mandate for more targeted support to have the framework mainstreamed across all government led and donor funded activities moving forward. There is also scope to more proactively engage on the issue of disability. The ESF and SSF including disability remain high priorities for MPW and DFAT and strategies need to be employed to ensure R4D-SP's SSF and disability strategies have a direct and tangible influence on results.

COVID-19

R4D-SP has played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ILO quickly mobilised a grant of USD550,000 to support routine maintenance works. The benefit of this support was to provide short-term employment opportunities to rural communities and ensured that much needed income continued to flow to support a range of households and small businesses. Another important component was the development and application of COVID-19 guidelines. This was both a safety and awareness measure as means to promoting decent work.

The pandemic has affected the program as it had to resort to social distancing measures and the restrictions placed on travel. Despite the challenges, the program has responded well and has maintained a continued level of support. The program has also managed risk well and responded well to both budget reductions and COVID-19. The mitigation measures have been effective, and the evaluation acknowledges the constraints of reduced staff numbers has influenced performance overall.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

The following section identifies areas of good practice and also outlines a series of key lessons learned identified by the evaluation team. Areas of good practice include:

² Sustainability in this context relates to the ability of MPW and the municipalities to efficiently manage rural road works carried out by contractors and communities in an effective manner to good quality standards.

- The R4D-SP “embedded model” does provide an opportunity to strong engagement and consultation with key stakeholders within the MPW and also within municipal administrative structures.
- The contribution of support to contractors (through training) and to communities (through the application of labour-based approaches) is an effective model to promote both private sector development and economic growth in rural areas.
- The provision of guidelines and manuals is a positive opportunity for engagement and influence but is less effective unless such tools are embedded, insititutionalised and applied.

Key lessons learned include:

- The embedded model, while identified as a good practice runs the risk of implementing “capacity substitution” effects. It is important to ensure all technical advisers and staff have a direct counterpart (individual or work unit) and have a clear capacity development plan and workplan, including a transition plan with strategies on how to effectively handover skills and knowledge in defined timeframes.
- High level strategic engagement and policy advice and guidance are critical components of an overall approach to R4D-SP. Technical support is important but is limited by the constraints in the enabling environment. It is important to strike a balance between strategy and policy advice and technical support and direction.
- Important to agree on effective roles and responsibilities to develop strategies to address the issues that have been raised in previous reports and evaluations, namely: (i) contractor payments; (ii) consistent and regular budgets; (iii) government processes (e.g. ADN) and (iv) implications for decentralisation.
- Effective and robust government led governance mechanisms (IMRF and RWG) are critical functions that influence govern decisions and influence policies guidelines and standards. Without these systems, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of interventions is questioned.
- It is important to view rural roads support as a component of private sector development, employment creation and economic growth, particularly in response to the COVID-19 situation. When viewed as a broad package, there is broader scope to channel support and assistance and to view roads as a component of support to help rural economies develop economically.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: R4D-SP to design a bridging phase that has a clear focus on key components (policy, institutional capacity and targeted training support) and has clear targets and an appropriate structure to realise these. R4D-SP and DFAT to carefully consider the overall structure and strategic focus of the program with regards to influence and engagement with the MPW and other key stakeholders within Government.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP and	High	Short	Medium

DFAT

Recommendation 2: R4D-SP, MPW, ILO and DFAT, as part of the bridging phase, to clarify and confirm partnership arrangements, roles and responsibilities and priority areas for partnership engagement between them. This should be built in as a performance measure.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP , MPW ILO and DFAT	High	Short	Medium

Recommendation 3: R4D-SP and DFAT to work with the Minister of MPW to promote the importance of the IMRF and to consider strategies and options to have it operationalised. Also to consider other alternatives for engagement (e.g. working with Ministry of Planning) should the IMRF cease.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP, MPW and DFAT	High	Short	Low

Recommendation 4: R4D-SP to support an immediate review and update of the RRMPIS and to work with MPW to ensure updated information, data and maps are included to support planning and budgeting processes.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP, DFAT and MPW	High	Short	Medium

Recommendation 5: R4D-SP manuals, guidelines and systems to be finalised over a six-month period and work to commence on embedding within ministry systems and departments with intention to have endorsement by MPW. R4D-SP should also conduct an immediate stocktake of all manuals, guidelines and systems and provide an immediate update on current status.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP and DFAT	High	Short	Medium

Recommendation 6: R4D-SP to review and revise capacity development plans for all staff that set clear targets and milestones and detail transition arrangements with key counterparts. A reporting system to track progress is an immediate priority for RCs as part of their transition process.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP	High	Short	Low

Recommendation 7: R4D-SP to review current arrangements between contractors and communities and working with municipal counterparts undertake a stocktake of all contracts and contractors to identify and rectify non-compliance issues. Also work with municipal counterparts to rectify non-compliance issues in communities with regards to safeguards.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP	High	Short	Low

Recommendation 8: R4D-SP should review and assess the value of the embedded model as part of the bridging phase and consider ways in which strategic engagement and associated work processes could be enhanced to promote greater efficiency.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP	High	Short	Medium

Recommendation 9: R4D-SP should review its capacity development approach and seek to address key reforms, particularly as they relate to decentralisation. There is a need to develop and implement capacity building plans that are relevant to the context and respond to the constraints identified and be realistically implemented with available R4D-SP technical assistance support. Supporting the work should include a simplified reporting system that provides clear evidence of progress towards defined targets and expected results.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP	High	Short	Medium

Recommendation 10: R4D-SP to engage with specialised service providers (e.g. TLDA) to seek independent and experienced advice to promote context specific approaches that directly seek opportunities to raise the profile and associated benefits to women and people with disabilities

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP	High	Short	Low

Recommendation 11: R4D-SP to review social safeguards and update accordingly to actively promote and details strategies that support all communities with a renewed focus on women and PWD's. R4D-SP should also actively implement strategies, using social dialogue with key constituents, that support women and PWD in communities.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP	High	Short	Medium

Recommendation 12: ILO and DFAT need to prioritise support to GoTL's decentralisation agenda and plans and to confirm priorities and implementation strategies with regards to works, budgets and ultimate responsibilities.

Responsible Unit(s)	Priority	Time Implications	Resource Implications
R4D-SP and DFAT	High	Medium	Medium