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**SOCIAL SOLIDARITY
ECONOMY AS
PATHWAY
TO POST-COVID
SUSTAINABILITY**
P. 4

**MONEY FOR
THE SILK ROAD**
P. 7

STILL STRUGGLING
P.12

**WOMEN AND
CLIMATE CHANGE:
THE CHALLENGES
WOMEN FACE TO BE
CONSIDERED AS KEY
ACTORS**
P. 17

INSIDE



4

**Social solidarity
economy as
pathway
to post-Covid
sustainability**



7

**Money for
the Silk Road**



12

Still Struggling



17

**Women and
Climate Change:
The challenges
women face to be
considered as key
actors**



* Cover Photo by Markus Spiske.

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AS PATHWAY TO POST-COVID SUSTAINABILITY

RENE E. OFRENEO | FREEDOM FROM DEBT COALITION

With the world's pharmaceutical industry churning out one vaccine after another, government economic planners are heaving a sigh of relief. They are hoping the economy can return as fast as it can to the pre-Covid situation, that is, back to the "old normal".

But is returning to the pre-Covid "normal" desirable for the Philippines? The pandemic has bared to the full economic and social realities that are usually ignored by the drum-beaters for a simplistic grow-grow-grow pathway for the country. This pathway is focused on how to maintain the annual GDP growth at a high level until the country is able to graduate to the status of a high middle-income economy. The idea is to grow the economy through a build-build-build program, supplemented by FDI investments and supported by domestic and external borrowings.

And yet, after a decade or so of high GDP growth, the Covid pandemic has bared the ugly reality: the country had been growing in the pre-Covid years in an unequal and unsustainable way. First, we have a broken public health care system that cannot meet the basic health needs of the people, much less fulfil the requirements of the Universal Health Care law passed in 2019. Second, the overwhelming majority of the working people have precarious or marginal jobs and livelihoods, which explain the proliferation nationwide of urban and peri-urban colonies of dilapidated and poorly-built homes. The IATF and the LGUs have extreme difficulty enforcing their quarantine protocols and containing the spread of the virus in these congested communities which have limited access to basic services such as health, water, sanitation and so on.

Third, the economy's life savers – overseas employment and call center/BPO sector – are becoming more and more unstable due to rising xenophobia in labor-receiving countries and increasing application by industry of job-displacing technologies such as customer chat-bots and industrial robots. On the other hand, the Philippine industrial and agricultural sectors, laggards in Asia, have failed to grow jobs for the millions of the unemployed and underemployed, not to mention the one million plus annual labor entrants. To complete the picture, we have a badly-degraded environment and weak preparedness for climate change risks.

In summary, we have an unequal and unsustainable economy. A return to the "old normal" without any bold reforms to address the above realities is a bad idea. Post-Covid development planning necessitates national discussions on alternative pathways.

In this context, one pathway that the policy makers and government planners should consider is the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) framework being pushed by the Asian Solidarity Economic Council (ASEC). According to ASEC Founder Dr. Benjamin Quinones, the SSE development framework has been proven viable in building vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities. ASEC has affiliate SSE organizations across Asia.

Dr. Quinones, a former Central Bank economist and an Asian agricultural credit consultant, explains why government planners should abandon the existing "trickle-down free-market-oriented economic model". He said this model, while spurring high GDP growths, has failed the people and has exacerbated social and income inequalities not only in the Philippines but also in Asia. He fumes:

"It has encouraged the destructive and predatory operations of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) from mineral and oil extraction, land and ocean grabs, deforestation, to take-overs of public services, and operations of high-risk financial speculation. TNCs have rolled back the function of the state as defender of the public interest. This has resulted in the further exclusion and deprivation of vulnerable and marginalized sectors of society and threatened the viability of the planet."

He explains that the response of organized grassroots people to the foregoing is "building pathways to transformative socio-economic initiatives such as the social solidarity economy or SSE. The SSE, if fully developed, can be the alternative to the free market-oriented economy. It is aligned with the call of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for a new socio-economic order.

ASEC participated in the recently-concluded Asean People's Forum (APF) 2020 hosted by the APF National Organizing Committee of Vietnam on November 5-7, 2020. The APF featured a popular sharing of SSE models in Southeast Asia and other countries. The focus of the sharing was on how SSE initiatives have saved and strengthened vulnerable communities during the pandemic and difficult times in the past. Workers in the informal sector, farmers involved in community supported agriculture (CSA) and women engaged in community-based social enterprises are able to build resilient and sustainable communities capable of withstanding a pandemic, climate disasters and other challenges.

Shapes of SSE organizations vary. They include cooperatives, mutual associations, women's self-help groups, community supported agriculture (CSA) groups, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprises, and fair trade organizations. SSEs also cover collaborative arrangements between civil society organizations and communities as well as partnerships between a shareholding company and a group of micro and small entrepreneurs. However, all these SSE initiatives are imbued with the spirit of solidarity among the people, which enables them to undertake a collective and collaborative "bayanihan" action based on unified vision of welfare development for all members and the community hosting the SSE.

The specific features of SSE initiatives and organizations are: 1) a system of governance that is democratic, participatory, socially responsible and gender-responsive; 2) edifying ethical values uniformly held by the SSE leaders, managers and members; and (3) commitment of all to the triple “P” socio-economic mission of the SSE enterprise. The three Ps are: “People”, which stands for socially inclusive development, including provision of social protection and services for all; “Planet” for environmental conservation and protection, and “Profit” (towards “Prosperity”) for economic and financial sustainability.

Now, do these SSE initiatives and enterprises really work? The ASEC affiliates in different Asian countries were able to share a number of success stories during the APF in Hanoi. In the accompanying article, we have a brief description of the work of FPSDC, a cooperative of cooperatives.

To conclude, the SSE pathway seeks to promote community-based enterprises to spur growth, livelihood creation and community cohesion through the organized efforts of the people at the grassroots. To make such efforts work, the word “solidarity” is there as the unifying and empowering instrument.

With the failure of the “old normal” pathway pursued by Neda, is it not time that it considers new pathways such as the SSE pathway, one that is inclusive and sustainable?

An SSE success model: Federation of People’s Sustainable Development Cooperatives

One successful SSE story is that of a cooperative of cooperatives: The Federation of People’s Sustainable Development Cooperatives (FPSDC), a cooperative composed of cooperatives from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Registered by 21 founding members with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) in 1998, FPSDC had an initial share capital of P5 million. It has now grown into a multi-million enterprise and has benefited thousands of members and families through the years.

How does FPSDC help their member cooperatives? FPSDC offers an integrated and efficient partnership program to the cooperatives and allied people’s organizations involving assistance in institution building, business development, training and coaching, business facilitation, partnership formation and so on. However, all the foregoing are done based on the FPSDC’s 4P development framework:

People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace.

One FPSDC’s SSE example is the establishment of a sustainable cooperative community called “Co-op

Ville” in Brgy. Mambuaya, Cagayan de Oro, Misamis Oriental, to help victims of Tropical Storm Washi re-settle and rehabilitate their homes and livelihoods. Completed in 2012, Co-op Ville now has 200 housing units which serve as shelter to 133 families. The resident families have established the Peoples’ Sustainable Consumer Cooperative which coordinates the development of the family enterprises and manages the marketing of their products.

According to FPSDC CEO Tetay Plantilla, the FPSDC has adopted a whole-of-value-chain development (WVCD) approach in providing support to the productive undertakings of member cooperatives. Under the WVCD approach, FPSDC provides working capital, capacity building, quality assurance as well as the distribution and marketing of the products of its member-coops to around 1,000 supermarket and institutional outlets in Metro Manila under the brand name Farms & Cottages (F&C). FPSDC has also established its own market channels such as F&C kiosks and the e-commerce platform, PilingPinoy.coop.

To sustain the WVCD approach, FPSDC developed the Handholding in Viable Enterprises (HIVE) Program. HIVE is a Social Franchising Facility which provides a total package of capacity building processes that help member-coops build and operate a WVCD business model and which shortens the learning curve required in establishing products in the market. The HIVE total package includes (i) facilitation of technology transfer, (ii) putting up of needed infrastructure, (iii) establishment of product standards, (iv) scaling up of existing initiatives, (v) training/skills enhancement, (vi) business development support, and (vii) enhancing access to marketing and distribution, among others.

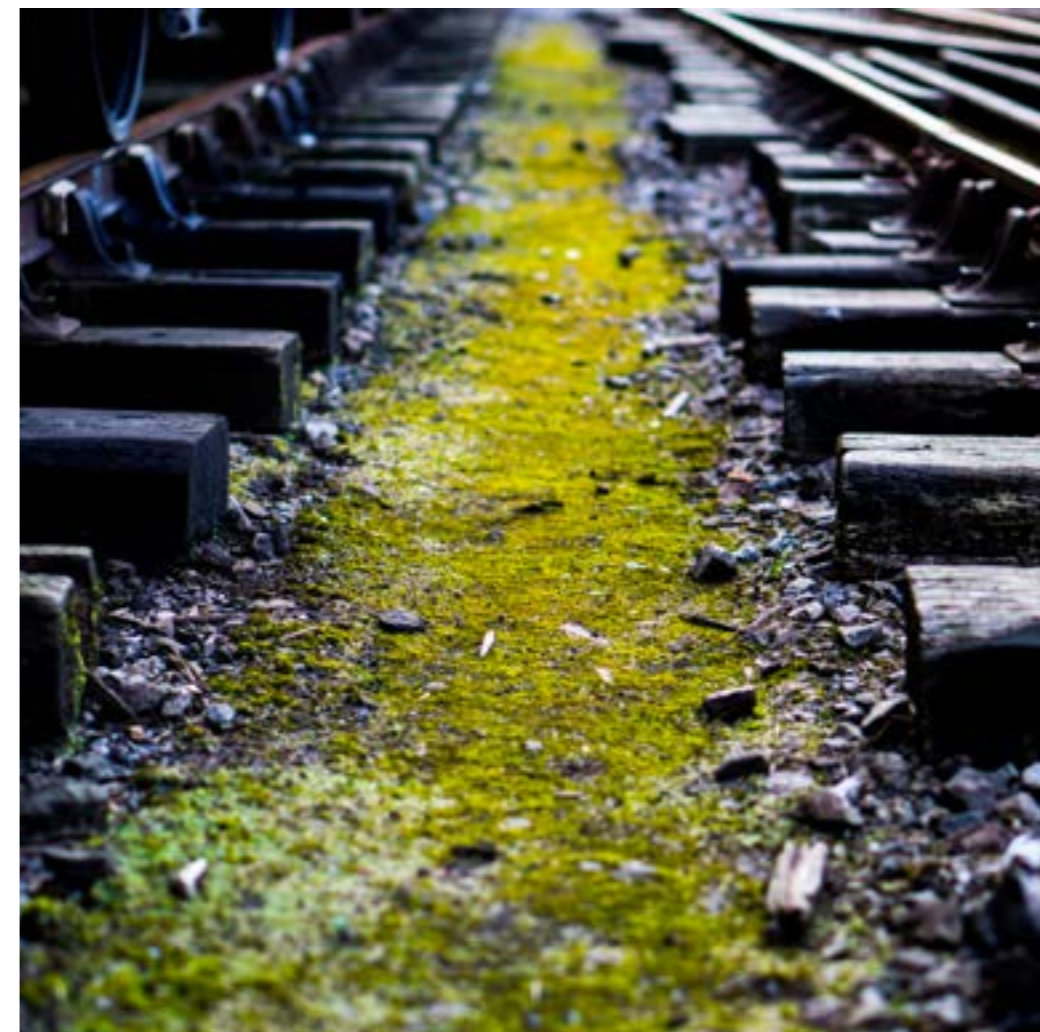
In response to unemployment challenges facing ageing rural folk and the youth in underdeveloped regions of the country, FPSDC launched the Youth Leading in Entrepreneurship and Agriculture Development (YLEAD) Program. Under the YLEAD program, youth representatives from FPSDC member-coops are enrolled for three months to learn and experience product development, leadership, business development, communication and marketing, among many others. Students are required to come up with their own products which can be incubated in the HIVE Program.

* Article originally appeared in [Business Mirror](#).

MONEY FOR THE SILK ROAD

THE ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK AS A PLAYER IN THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

KNUD VÖCKING, NORA SAUSMIKAT I URGEWALD



China’s Belt and Road Initiative calls for investments in the billions. A number of actors are involved in financing the individual projects, one of which is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Largely controlled by China, it is still a comparatively small player, but its influence is growing steadily.

When the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was first set up in October 2013, many questioned the reasoning behind it. Was there a need for another Asia-related International Financial Institution (IFI), in addition to the globally active World Bank and the regionally based Asian Development Bank (ADB)? China and other emerging markets evidently believed so. They had

long demanded that their voting weight in the World Bank be increased in proportion to their greater economic power. The US Congress blocked any such move, whereas the Europeans supported changes in voting rights. The AIIB therefore should be seen as an attempt on China’s part to overcome US dominance among IFIs.

Yet the AIIB is also part of China's emerging foreign policy, which has created new conditions for an aggressive investment strategy. Already after China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, it focused diplomatic attention on bilateral treaties and free trade agreements, specifically with neighbouring Asian countries. Step by step, the "dream of a rejuvenated China"—the slogan for Xi Jinping's accession to power in 2013—developed. The AIIB is indeed a multilateral bank, as its Chinese President Jin Liqun consistently stresses. At the same time, together with the Silk Road Fund and China's major state banks, it is used to finance costly infrastructure projects in the energy and transport sectors within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Chinese state banks as a whole, however, retain a much greater share of the financing of BRI projects.

The founding of the AIIB in 2015 produced divisions among the industrialized countries of the Global North. The US went to great lengths to prevent its allies from joining it. It was, however, only successful in doing so in the cases of Japan and (for the moment) Canada. When Great Britain announced its accession, the dam broke, and other European countries joined the ranks of those willing to sign up. There was a suspicion that Downing Street's aim was to anchor foreign exchange trading in Chinese currency in the financial centre of London. At the same time, it was feared that the AIIB would also be associated with an attack on the supremacy of the US dollar. This concern was denied by China. Yet the IMF subsequently included the yuan in the basket of currencies used to calculate its special drawing rights, and as a consequence the Chinese currency gained importance within the international financial system.

With the accession of the European states, the AIIB increased its initial capitalization from 50 to 100 billion dollars. One fifth was paid out directly, and the remaining 80 percent in the form of guarantees. In Germany's case, the sum consists of 900 million dollars as deposits and 3.6 billion dollars in guarantees. Thus the AIIB succeeded in obtaining the highest rating from rating agencies, an AAA designation, which is likewise the highest rating according to the World Bank. The better the rating, the cheaper refinancing becomes through bonds issued by the bank. In mid-2020, the AIIB placed its first bond on the financial market, notably in Chinese currency. Due to their high rating, these bonds were a safe option for various types of investors.

Development banks each include limits on the number of loans offered to individual recipient countries, but because a new bank qualifies as a separate source of financing, these limits may be circum-

vented through co-financing. Country X, which can only get a loan from the World Bank for a maximum amount of Y, is thereby in a position to borrow further money from the AIIB for a given project. Of course the problem in this case is that the debt capacity of the recipient countries may not merely be reached, but even exceeded. Economic shocks such as those caused by the Corona pandemic can very well lead to a new crisis of over-indebtedness.

A "Chinese Bank" with a Strong President

In its organizational structure, AIIB conforms to the structure of all other development banks. China, as the largest shareholder, has the (unwritten) right to nominate the AIIB's president, just as the US does with respect to the World Bank. The president is elected by a board of directors consisting of twelve members representing member countries. This body in turn advises the bank on policy, strategy, and allocation. In contrast to the World Bank, however, the members of the board of directors (the executive directors) are not based in Beijing, but rather meet regularly in person or through video conferences for their deliberations. The AIIB is aiming through this protocol to realize aspects of its mission statement, "lean, clean, and green". But the structure does eliminate informal contact and the flow of information between board members and management, a component of the daily routine, at, for example, the World Bank and the ADB.

The commanding position of the AIIB's president also gives cause for concern. Within the accountability framework, President Jin Liqun can independently approve projects worth up to 200 million US dollars in the public sector, those of up to 100 million in the private sector, and 35 million dollars in equity investments—without any prior decision by the board of directors. From mid-2021, the first two amounts will increase to 300 million and 150 million, respectively. Although each of the twelve members of the board of directors can request that individual decisions be referred to it, the board will not be able to take any decisions alone. This process is made more complicated by the questionable rules regarding information. Broadly, their aim is to let the board of directors deal with the "big picture", while day-to-day business is left to the president and his management. Such an arrangement does not guarantee a sufficient level of control by the board.

Environmental and Social Standards, Yes; Disclosure Obligations, No

"Lean, clean, and green" is also identified by the AIIB as a guideline for its Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), as well as for its publication regulations, and accountability rules. The ESF was adopt-



ed before AIIB began operations in January 2016; the remaining rules were not implemented until sometime afterwards. By involving former World Bank staff in the development of the ESF, the AIIB wanted to prove that such rules would withstand comparison to prevailing international standards. For someone unfamiliar with the finer points, such conditions do appear to be satisfied. All key words and targeted goals valued by interest groups are mentioned. As always, however, the devil is in the details.

The ESF assigns borrowers nearly all responsibility. They are expected to comply with every due diligence requirement regarding environmental and social impact, to inform and consult those who may be affected by a project, and to report on its progress and any problems that may arise. In the course of doing so, project sponsors are even expected to evaluate the possibility that it might be preferable that their own work should be abandoned. The AIIB is then held responsible for credit

approval, basing itself on the filed documentation. Lean administration is thereby secured.

In principle, it is quite important for the local communities (negatively) affected by a project to be fully informed before any approval and implementation. In this way, potential problems may be identified early and avoided. This is precisely where the ESF's greatest weakness lies, however, rendering the fineformulations of its outlined objectives meaningless.

There are no binding deadlines in the ESF for when information must be published. The matter is only stated as a suggestion regarding consultation with those affected by a project. Exactly when and how this should take place is left completely undefined. The option is even reserved for the bank to approve a project without completing an assessment of its environmental and social effects. It remains a mystery how the board of directors, in the event of uncertainty, is to reach a decision without access to such fundamental information.

When criticism has arisen that there are no binding disclosure deadlines for the period before a project's approval, the AIIB refers to its publication guidelines. These deal with other bank documents; regarding projects themselves, the guidelines invoke the ESF. What emerges is a classic circular argument that leaves those seeking information in a Kafkaesque position. In the upcoming revision of the ESF in 2020/21, the European AIIB member countries want to close such loopholes by instituting clear rules. However, the first drafts of the new version still lack binding, time-critical guidelines.

Criticism of Grievance Mechanisms

Because the AIIB, like all other development banks, enjoys immunity as an international institution, it cannot be sued if persons or communities affected by projects feel their rights have been violated. The IFIs have established independent accountability mechanisms for such cases. At the AIIB, however, the office hearing complaints is one part of a unit also

responsible for anti-corruption and evaluation. This unit is too close to management to be truly independent. Additionally, barriers stipulated by the regulations are so stringent that it is almost impossible for those affected to advance their claims. For projects jointly financed by the AIIB and other banks, this unit indicates that the partner financial institution is to handle the application of environmental and social standards, as well as any claims that may arise.

Yet another point of concern is the implementation of environmental and social standards by public or private borrowers, instead of by the ESF itself. The reasoning behind this setup is that it ostensibly allows clients to deal with rules with which they are familiar, and therefore strengthens their capacity where loopholes or deficiencies persist. However, here again there are no clear rules ensuring that the standards applied to borrowers are made public and are really adequate.

At first glance then, the AIIB has an organizational structure and a system of rules comparable to those of other IFIs. However, a closer look reveals serious shortcomings and gaps. The AIIB's system is certainly lean, but the categories "clean" and "green" are dubious. Urgewald published a study in 2019 in which the organizational structure and standards of the AIIB are criticized in detail.

Germany, China, and the Bank

When the ratification of the German accession to the AIIB was imminent, the Bundestag drew up clear specifications pertaining to it, formulated as follows: "In view of this situation, all parliamentary groups urged the German government to demand high environmental, social, human rights, and governance standards, such as, at a minimum, those of the World Bank, in further negotiations on AIIB standards, including, for example, the exclusion of investments in nuclear and coal-fired power plants; to work towards the establishment of an efficient monitoring system; to support the standards of accountability and transparency of the AIIB in other international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank, in the further negotiations regarding AIIB standards; to support an independent grievance mechanism over the course of further negotiations..."

Unfortunately, the record of these efforts looks rather grim. There has been no coal phase-out, and environmental and social standards, transparency, as well as the grievance mechanism, all fall far short of World Bank standards. There are also fears that investments in nuclear power will be promoted under the Climate Change Investment Framework launched in September 2020.

The AIIB's system is certainly lean, but the categories "clean" and "green" are dubious.

This poor record will not of course lead to a withdrawal from the AIIB. Germany's geopolitical and economic interests in China are far too highly developed. Moreover, even among the non-regional shareholders, agreement on questions such as the phase-out of coal or the obligation to provide information is not always a given. Nevertheless, these developments are contributing to an increasingly tense relationship with China. Negotiations have now been under way for nearly a decade, but even the EU-China Summit under the imprimatur of the German Council Presidency (held virtually in September 2020 due to COVID-19) was not able to bring the long-awaited investment protection agreement to a conclusion. The Federation of German Industries (BDI) has been talking about China as a systemic rival since 2019. But human rights are not the primary focus in that case.

From 2013–2017, financial resources amounting to 290 billion US dollars (primarily development aid funds from the DAC states as well as the World Bank, EU institutions, and the Council of Europe) have flowed from Western states mainly to the regions of South and Southeast Asia, and also to states in Central Asia and Africa. The infrastructure financing requirement through 2030 is estimated to be 90 trillion dollars. All multilateral development banks work closely together in this area, and standards are being fought over in various sectors. The European guidelines for sustainable finance are characterized by these disputes. Yet diluting standards to favour investment is not something welcomed by the AIIB alone. Worldwide, human rights, climate, and environmental protection are severely threatened, espe-

cially now, given the constraints of the pandemic. The AIIB and the promises of the German Bundestag's finance committee to uphold the highest environmental and social standards will have a major role to play here.

The finance committee of the Bundestag is regularly briefed by the Ministry of Finance and German representatives at the AIIB, respectively. In the first two years, Germany supplied the executive director representing the AIIB's eurozone members; thereafter it has sent a deputy to the AIIB. This arrangement enabled the Finance Ministry in Berlin to build up in-house expertise. There is, additionally, ongoing informal exchange among non-governmental organizations, the Ministry, and members of the Bundestag, to gauge the severity of problems and the need for political intervention.

It is clear that digital infrastructure is at the top of the agenda of the next Chinese five-year plan (2021–25). Just as with the recent determination of the Chinese Communist Party's fifth plenum, innovation and digital infrastructure also rank high on AIIB's agenda. Under the banner of rebalancing the partnership with China and the changing situation in the wake of the U.S. election, the prospects of a multilateral, coordinated climate policy are once again improving. Nevertheless, the protection of human rights, transparency, and public access to information remains a major challenge. The extent to which the EU—and Germany in particular—will prioritize this outside of official rhetoric is an open question in light of the economic interests at stake in relations with China.

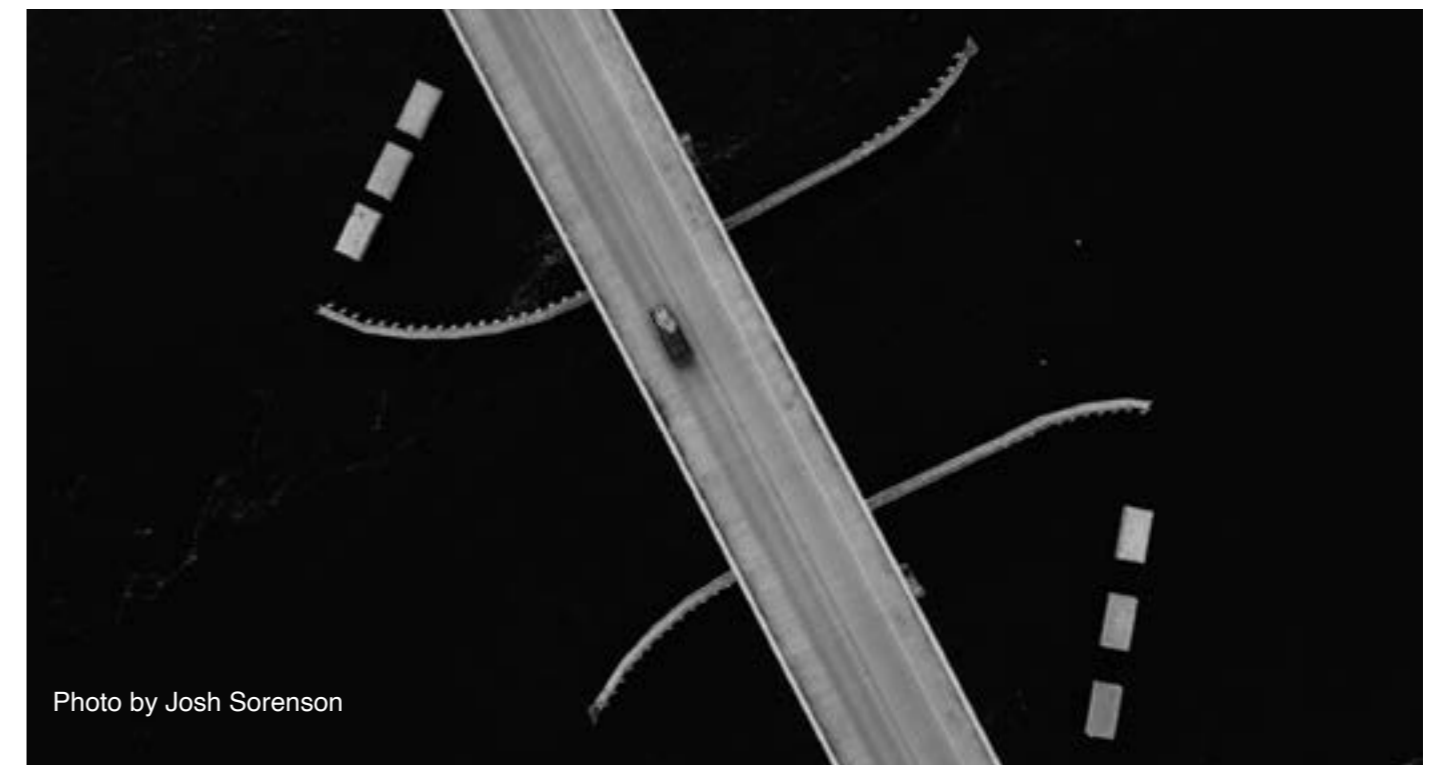


Photo by Josh Sorenson

STILL STRUGGLING:

LONG-TERM RESETTLEMENT IMPACTS OF ADB'S ROAD REHABILITATION PROJECT ON A SMALL LOCAL COMMUNITY IN CAMBODIA

KOL LEAKHANA, SIN CHHIN, AND TOSHIYUKI DOI

Introduction by Ming Chhin

Chumreap suo². My name is Sin Chhin. My family and friends call me Ming (Aunt) Chhin. I am a leader of Stung Slot Community (SSC),³ which is located near Neak Leung in Prey Veng Province, Southern Cambodia. The SSC families, including myself, were relocated in early 2000s due to the Highway One (HW1) rehabilitation project financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).¹ Some Bank Watch readers may remember our story. If you are not familiar with it, please take a look at the NGO Forum website.⁴

The SSC members, especially women, have tried in so many ways to lift ourselves out of the impacts of the HW1 project's involuntary resettlement. We have been lucky to be helped by both Cambodian and international NGOs, many of whom are Forum members. Our collective efforts, including my participation at ADB's annual meetings, have led to some mitigation measures on ADB's part, including the

2004 resettlement audit (and succeeding compensation repayment), the 2007 acceptance of our complaint at the Special Project Facilitator (SPF) office, the management's socio-economic survey the same year, and the 2009 income restoration grant. After more than 20 years, however, we are still struggling to restore our life and livelihoods. One of the community members recently said, "The road is better but our livelihoods have gotten worse. We have to work harder and we have more debts."⁵

Last year (2020), an independent researcher invited me to lead action research to document challenges currently facing the SSC families and design action plans for the future. She explained that action research would also help us develop research skills and strengthen links among the community members, especially those who have left the resettlement site. I agreed with her and joined a team of four women. We spoke with more than 40 SSC members inside and outside the resettlement site.



Ming Chhin (second from right) and SSC members



Highway One Improvement Project

Below is a summary of initial findings of our research.⁶ My friends have helped write them up. I wanted to update you on how we are doing, as it has been a while since I attended Forum activities. I also wanted to show how involuntary resettlement, especially when it is mismanaged initially, could impact small and vulnerable communities like ours over a long period of time. For that, I would want Bank Watch readers and Forum members to continue to watch large-scale development projects supported by ADB and other financial institutions closely and carefully. I sincerely hope that no other local community will have to experience the same hardships we are still going through.

Findings of Action Research

1. *The area around the resettlement site has developed considerably but the SSC families are not being benefitted very much.*

The area around the resettlement site, especially along HW1, has been rapidly modernized and urbanized in the past 20 years. Many big hotels, guesthouses, and restaurants have been built. Large

commercial banks and companies have opened their branch offices. Fancy cafes and bakeries have started their business. The HW1 traffic has increased very much. A symbol of these economic developments is a huge concrete bridge constructed across Mekong River, which was financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The economic development in the area, however, has not benefitted

the SSC families very much. Although it has created new employment opportunities, for instance, hotel clerks and restaurant waitresses/waiters, the SSC members have not been trained to be hired for these positions. A few members work as cleaners and guards at guesthouses. Wages/salaries for these and other available positions are higher than before. So are living expenses, however. Living costs in the area are getting close to those in urban centers.





Japan/JICA-funded Tsubasa (Wing) Bridge across Me-kong River in the back



Families who have come from outside occupying land around one of the pump-wells on the resettlement site



Entry road from HW1 into the resettlement site



SSC woman showing another woman the snails and morning glory she collected at a nearby wetland

Many SSC families have borrowed money to build a house and start/keep a business. Some have needed money to pay medical bills. They borrow money from community saving groups, private leaders, and/or micro-finance institutions.

The rapid economic development is bringing about new challenges. Most serious is land speculation. Land prices in the area have sky-rocketed. Rich people have started visiting the resettlement site and telling the SSC families to sell their land plot, which they got for resettlement compensation. The rich people have succeeded purchasing quite a few land plots, especially from the families who were struggling with debts and/or looking for a bigger piece of land. Moreover, a number of new families, some of whom are landless, have come to occupy public and other open spaces, for instance, land around pump-wells, along the entry road, and even inside HW1's ROW (right of the way) in and next to the resettlement site.⁷ This is making it difficult for the SSC families to access clean water and hold community activities. The squatter families have also sold the occupied land to others and often continue to stay where they are. This is making land ownerships in the resettlement site extremely complicated.

Families who have come from outside occupying land around one of the pump-wells on the resettlement site

2. *Almost half of the SSC members have left the resettlement site and the community is disintegrating.*

In 2003, when the SSC families moved into the resettlement site, 39 land plots were allocated to them. ii Now, 21 families still live there, which means that

18 have moved out. Some of them have sold their land plot, have purchased less expensive land along HW1's old route, and are living there. Eight families keep their properties on the resettlement site and have migrated to urban centers such as the capital Phnom Penh, which is 70.0 km away. A few have gone to work in the neighboring Thailand.

Major reasons so many SSC families have left the resettlement site are economic, that is, seeking for better livelihood means elsewhere. On the resettlement site, most families earn income by selling goods, such as snacks, cigarettes, coffee, and gasoline, at a small space in front of their house. Running shops, however, gets harder for the members whose houses are further in the back and away from HW1. For some, the allotted 7 x 13 m land is too small to plant vegetables and raise animals. The SSC families also earn additional income by collecting and selling snails, crickets, morning glory, firewood, recyclable materials, etc. around the resettlement site. However, finding NTFPs (non-timber forest products) and other natural resources has also become more difficult because forests, lakes, and creeks are disappearing.

The SSC members who have moved to the HW1's old route grow and sell mango trees. Some plant cucumbers, pumpkins, and gourds; Others collect recyclable materials. The families who have migrated to urban centers are often employed at garment factories and construction sites. Although the members who live close to the resettlement site try to maintain ties with the community, SSC has been disintegrating and weakened as a community. This is very worrying because group coherence and solidarity function as a mutual support system and give the community power to cope with challenges. One of the motiva-

tions behind the action research was to create opportunities for the SSC members to meet and talk with each other so that they could reactivate mutual relationships. One of the members who still stay in touch with the community said, "We are poor and affected people by the HW1 project. We have to have solidarity among ourselves and help each other".

3. *Natural resources the SSC families have depended on are mostly gone or have become private properties, which makes it very hard for the families to continue to utilize them.*

The action research has revealed how much the SSC families have depended on natural resources in the area for their livelihoods. Some testified that there used to be a big lake named Boeung Tros nearby, which was surrounded by many tall trees. They went fishing there or to other lakes/wetlands and often took sand to use it to build houses and pagodas. They also collected a variety of NTFPs in forests. They used to see many more rice paddies, farmlands, and orchards, too. In fact, the area is known for its agricultural productivity. One woman said, while recalling:

"This area was in between farms and local markets where villagers from Svay Rieng and Prey Veng Provinces always passed by, commuting to farms and going to buy crops and vegetables.... Many men practiced fishing and provided services like repairing bikes, operating transportations, and working as seasonal laborers on rice paddies".

Many of the lakes and forests, however, have become private properties and are blocked access from

the public. Worse, some companies take soil there and sell it to construction sites in cities. Farmlands and orchards have been sold to private owners, too. Both sides of HW1 around the resettlement site are flood plains but many parts have been reclaimed to create new land. People who have capitals have purchased these lands but often keep them for speculation and leave them unused for productive purposes such as agriculture, decreasing livelihood opportunities for the SSC families, who used to be hired as seasonal workers.

In retrospect, HW1 project-related materials, not only those made by ADB but also those by sympathetic NGOs and researchers tended not to sufficiently address the importance of natural resources to the SSC and some other project-affected families. SSC women were typically thought of as running small-scale house-shops and men involved in the transport sector as horse cart/tricycle/tuk tuk/motor drivers and repairers. The reality was that they earned quite a bit of complementary cash income through these more ad-hoc, less visible (and sometimes gender-differentiated) livelihood means.

4. *Although no member has contracted COVID-19, the pandemic has still affected the SSC families badly in several ways.*

The number of reported COVID-19 infection cases in Cambodia is lower than that in other ASEAN countries. No infection has been found among the SSC families so far. Many Cambodians, however, have lost their jobs due to the economic slow-down triggered by the pandemic. Many SSC members who were employed in and around urban centers have been laid off and come back home. Those who work at home have suffered income loss. For instance,

an SSC member who regularly collects garbage has told that his average daily income has dropped from 5.0-7.0 to 2.5 USD, which is about or less than half of what he was earning before the pandemic. Some families try to eat less and/or mostly rice with prahok⁸ to save money.

The government announced a 40.0 USD relief fund scheme for all Cambodian citizens and told company/factory owners to provide laid-off workers with one-time 30.0 USD unemployment support. These funds, however, were only very slowly distributed, if at all, and have not reached many SSC families. International institutions and NGOs offered emergency assistance for Cambodia but tended to focus on Phnom Penh and/or western and northeastern provinces where Indigenous/ethnic minority groups heavily reside. Very little rescue support has reached SSC.

All schools were shut between March and November 2020.⁹ Public schools broadcasted compensatory teaching programs for children on TV and the social media. Children at the SSC families, however, have limited access to communication devices such as TV sets and smart phones, and so were able to make little use of the remote teaching. This is alarming because SSC teenagers, especially girls, were known to drop out of school very frequently even before the COVID-19 outbreak, mainly due to their parents' lack of money to spend for their children's education. Not being able to fully participate in the compensatory program during the pandemic makes it difficult for the SSC teenagers to keep up with school work.

The SSC Families' Ideas to Move Forward

In the action research, the SSC families voiced several ideas to improve their situations. For instance, several SSC members have the government-issued "ID Poor Card", which entitles the holder with free medical/health treatment as well as a monthly COVID-19 relief fund. According to them, the village chief played a key role in getting them the card. So, some families suggested that SSC as a group contact and ask the village chief for help so that more families could be registered in the program.

The SSC families also suggested that the community should:

- Collectively rent a space in the local market to sell their goods and products;
- Encourage the members who owe SSC a debt to return the money, with which to reactivate the community revolving fund to support both existing and new jobs;



Scene from focus group discussion among SSC women

- Invest in the agricultural sector, i.e., collectively rent a farmland to raise chickens and other animals;
- Work with authorities so that they can approve a social land concession for the landless families who are squatting on the resettlement site;
- Contact school principals and ask them to provide scholarships and other support to SSC children;
- Involve more men in the committee to integrate their views and support into community activities; and
- Outreach groups of farmers, middle-men, retailers, and buyers to establish a network of sellers and buyers of their goods and products.

Final Remarks

Individual differences do emerge among the SSC families in terms of the current level of their living conditions. While some have managed to save part of the money they got by selling the land on the resettlement site, started a new business, and become able to pay for their children's education or even job training courses, a few others have become landless. However, the following statement made by one participant in the action research seems to capture the overall feelings of many SSC families:

"Suppose there was no HW1 (expansion) project, we would still be living along the road, selling things, and having much work to do because we would live along the road. We would not have such problems as land conflicts with new squatters. We would still have lakes. We would go fishing

and collecting plants at lakes and NT-FPs in forests as before. We would never buy food and our income would be saved. Now, we have to buy everything. There is no nature around us. There is no organic food, which makes our health worse. Also, we don't have cars to make use of this road. Instead, we experience traffic accidents."

It would require more full-fledged research to conclude that the challenges facing SSC currently are due to ADB's lack of supervision over the HW1 project's resettlement more 20 years ago. At the same time, it should be fair to say that if the SSC families had been resettled more properly, or not resettled at all, their hardships would be much less. This part of their story should be taken by ADB to its heart. In other words, ADB should pay particular attention to socially vulnerable communities like SSC right at the very beginning of its safeguard due diligence. Otherwise, the institution would always end up leaving some people behind.

1 All pictures in this article were taken by Kol Leakhana in 2020.

2 Hello in Khmer

3 There used to be two communities: Stung Slot and Kraing Kaok, but they decided to merge into Stung Slot Community. In 2007, around the time of the merger, there were 63 members: About two-thirds lived on the resettlement site; the others lived outside.

4 ADB's 1995 Policy on Involuntary Resettlement was to safeguard the affected families from becoming economically and socially worse-off. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be the case. See NGO Forum "GMS Road Network Improvement Project" <https://www.forum-adb.org/adbroadnetproject> (Last accessed 25 February 2021) and Mekong Watch "Highway One" <http://www.mekongwatch.org/english/country/cambodia/HighwayOne/index.html> (Last accessed 25 February 2021). For Ming Chhin's story, see Soentoro, Tea (2011a) "Eleven Years of Promises (Part 1 of 2)" <https://www.forum-adb.org/post/eleven-years-of-promises-part-1-of-2> and Soentoro (2011b) "Eleven Years

of Promises (Part 2 of 2)" <https://www.forum-adb.org/post/eleven-years-of-promises-part-2-of-2> (Both last accessed 25 February 2021).

5 All quotes in this article are from the action research, which was funded by The Takagi Fund for Citizen Science under the title "Still Struggling: A Cambodian Community's Assessment and Response to Long-Term Negative Effects of Involuntary Relocation" (Research Grant for Asia in 2020 awarded to Kol Leakhana) http://www.takagifund.org/e/archives/19/193-018_kol.html (Last accessed 25 February 2021). The authors are very thankful to the fund for its kind support to the research. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not represent the fund.

6 Main data collection measures for the research were focus group discussion and a household survey. The findings below are based mostly on results of focus group discussion.

7 The total number of squatters is around 30.

8 Cambodian fermented fish paste

9 All Cambodian schools were shut again for two weeks at the end of November 2020 due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools are shut yet again for two weeks after 22 February 2021 due to the third wave of the outbreak.

i In 1998, ADB's Board of Directors approved a 40.0 million USD concessional loan to support the Cambodian government's plan to rehabilitate a section of HW1 that runs from Phnom Penh to the Cambodia-Vietnam border. The project was to expand and renovate a 105.5 km section of the road between the Mekong River ferry crossing and the border town of Bovet. ADB's 1997 feasibility study estimated that 5,920 Cambodians in 1,184 households would be variously affected. See ADB (2008) "Project Performance Evaluation Report: Greater Mekong Subregion: Phnom Penh to Ho Chi Minh City Highway Project" <https://www.adb.org/documents/greater-mekong-subregion-phnom-penh-ho-chi-minh-city-highway-project-1659-camsf-and-1660-v> (Last accessed 25 February 2021). Other numerous project-related documents are found on ADB's website.

ii When the resettlement site was established in 2003, 48 land plots were allotted, of which 9 were given to flood victims who moved in from the Varmy village. Most of the 39 SSC families also got a land title later on.

WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CHALLENGES WOMEN FACE TO BE CONSIDERED AS KEY ACTORS

PRITI DAROOKA WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY FARIDA AKHTER | PROGRAMME ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (PWESCR)

Climate change impacts women differently

Climate change impacts everyone. However, the impact of climate change is experienced differently based on one's socio-economic position. It is important to realize that women and men are impacted differently, not only as users of energy, water etc. but also as workers and contributors. [2]

Women are the food producers of the world. (According to FAO women produce more than 50% of global food). Natural calamities such as droughts, floods, hurricane, cyclones, earthquake, landslides etc. due to climate change particularly impact women producers, indigenous women, rural women, women from marginalised groups, whose lives and livelihoods rely on natural resources such as land, water and forest. Millions of women who are in agriculture, the informal economy or are self-employed are exposed to toxic chemicals, extractives, and development projects adopted by countries. They are in the bottom most tier of the supply chain, taking up hazardous occupations with precarious working conditions. Therefore, climate crisis impacts women most critically.

From vulnerable group to active actors

In climate debates, women are profiled as victims or vulnerable groups—severely impacted. However, these platforms generally don't recognise women as active climate actors with knowledge and agency. Women's unequal participation in decision-making processes, including land and natural resource management, and in paid labour market continues to prevent them from being part of climate related planning, policy making and implementation. The question to raise is whether the role of women or the concerns and priorities of women in their multiple realities are taken into account in the climate solutions, in just transition to green economy or green Jobs. [3] Women are often affected by the change and have a more active role to play.

The capitalist and neoliberal model takes nature for granted. It unfortunately believes that nature is a bottomless pit and will continue to sustain this excessive consumption with exploitative patterns of production forever. The same model also renders women's work invisible, especially the unpaid care work and unpaid work in subsistence forms of livelihood. In market economy if you consume what you produce you have not produced at all. Production only has value if it is for the market. Most of women's work, especially in global South is for self-consumption. Hence, most of women's work is of less or no value. The current economic policies is built on women's labour but considers women's labour as the same bottomless pit that will absorb all adversities and continue to provide care and subsistence limitlessly, and always.

Claiming for Climate Justice

The irony of current climate debates is that we want to change nothing, but we want climate change or climate justice. We are not willing to change our consumption patterns or lifestyle. Transition from fossil fuel to renewables for example is not going to resolve the climate crisis. There also needs to be changes in consumption and lifestyles.

The solutions to address climate crisis are sort through science and technology – renewables or reduction in carbon emission through climate change adaptations. The solutions are not human centric but science centric. Women due to their gendered role and cultural norms do have indigenous knowledge in sustainable resource management. The knowledge held by women at community level is scientific but is not valued. For example, in several agricultural communities, seeds are maintained by women and proper gene pool is ensured. This is an in-depth scientific knowledge that is passed from one generation to another – mother to daughters and within the community of women. And if women's leadership is engaged to address climate crisis there would surely be sustainable, inclusive and 'scientific' solutions.

Climate change effects are aggravated through loss of biodiversity that affects poor women and their food from the common resources and common land.

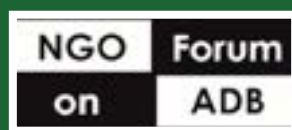
It is also ironic that the top 10 richest countries of the world are the top countries in global philanthropy. Developed countries hold technical solution and continue to pressure less developing countries to have climate adaptation solutions. Through philanthropic grants

these rich countries also provide west based consultants to provide technical support to governments and institutions in the South. This whole process also renders local knowledge, especially held by women on the ground regarding traditional resilience practices absolutely irrelevant and useless. These same rich countries, however, have their multinationals and brands exploit labour, and environment in these developing countries.

By leaving women out from the solutions, most climate change solutions directly or indirectly further contribute towards gender inequalities. For example, with all the noise around shift towards renewables, governments have not provided women with clean, green energy for cooking. Women still in most parts of the world, especially in the global South, continue to burn biomass for cooking.

Climate change debates and solutions therefore need to recognise women's role as workers and producers and as guardians of environment and nature and ensure they are at the centre of all discussions and solutions as key stakeholders.

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