Draft Final Report
Community Management of Rural Road Maintenance

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Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha, Bai Sau Village
Dinh Thi Thien, Ban Village
Nguyen Xuan Phong, Dan Phuong Village
Nguyen Van Duong, Du 5 Village
Nguyen Duc Thieu, Du 6 Village
Nguyen Van Dinh, Du 7A Village
Dinh Thi Thanh, Du 7B Village
Nguyen Van Y, Go Doi Village
Nguyen Van Lich, Hang Nuoc Village
Nguyen Thi Luu, Lung Hang Village
Dinh Van Minh, Noi Village
Nguyen Van Do, Pho Bai Nai 1 Village
Tang Xuan Thang, Pho Bai Nai 2 Village
Nguyen Van Dung, Suoi Nganh Village
Bui Van Ky, Vanh Village
And other members of Community Rural Road Maintenance Groups
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**Abbreviation**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>Community management</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development of the United Kingdom</td>
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<td>DOT</td>
<td>Department of Transport</td>
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<td>M4P2</td>
<td>Making Markets Work Better for the Poor Project Phase 2</td>
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<td>MARD</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>MOF</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
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<td>MOT</td>
<td>Ministry of Transport</td>
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<td>MPI</td>
<td>Ministry of Planning and Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTP-NRD</td>
<td>The National Target Program on New Rural Development</td>
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<td>P135</td>
<td>The Socio-Economic Development Program for Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas</td>
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<td>PARU</td>
<td>Policy Action Research Unit of the Making Markets Work Better for the Poor Project Phase 2</td>
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<td>PCMM</td>
<td>Promoting Community Management Model (project supported by SDC in Ky Son district, Hoa Binh province)</td>
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<td>PSARD</td>
<td>Public Service Provision Improvement Program in Agriculture and Rural Development supported by SDC in Hoa Binh province</td>
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<td>RIC</td>
<td>The Centre for Research on Initiatives of Community Development</td>
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<td>RRM</td>
<td>rural road maintenance</td>
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<td>RT3</td>
<td>Rural Transport project funded by WB and DFID, phase 3</td>
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<td>SDC</td>
<td>Swiss Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This policy action research addressed the lack of an institutional mechanism that would enable planned maintenance of rural roads as intended by and advocated by the Vietnam Rural Transport Strategy 2020. It contributes to the achievement of M4P2 project objectives through designing and piloting a community-based rural road maintenance model which benefits rural communities, particularly poorer members of those communities with better access to markets and infrastructure.

2. Methodology

The research has two specific objectives:

1. To design, pilot and advocate a community-based rural road maintenance model
2. To recommend mechanism/guidelines to be adopted by the central, provincial, district, commune governments, donors, and communities to foster a community-based rural road maintenance

The methodology combines and aligns two initiatives in community management and rural road maintenance. It also puts together research and advocacy for policy change into one process, developing a series of policy actions that will be supported through bottom-up verification and feedback.

The methodology envisages carrying the following activities:
☐ Legal review
☐ Institutional case study of rural road maintenance
☐ Pilot of community-based rural road maintenance model
☐ Advocacy for endorsement of community-based rural road maintenance by the National Targeted Programme on New Rural Development (NTP-NRD).

3. Legal Review

The legal review revealed significant gaps in the Vietnamese legal system regarding the maintenance of rural roads, such as:
☐ Unclear definition and classification of rural road
☐ Unclear assignment of institution(s) responsible for rural road maintenance and management
☐ Lack of budget and financing mechanism for maintenance
☐ Lack of budgeting procedures adapted for community groups and other non-state entities carrying rural road maintenance and management
The legal review highlighted the significant role that villages actually play in management, exploitation and maintenance of rural roads, although this has yet to be institutionalised by the state. With development and industrialisation of the rural areas, village communities need to have their ability to organisational themselves and improve internal management capabilities further strengthened in order to undertake their role in rural road administration and maintenance. They also need to have access to public resources designated to rural road maintenance. These are basic conditions for effective utilization and sustainable maintenance of rural roads in Vietnam.

3. Institutional case study of rural road maintenance

The case study was conducted in Hoa Binh province, which was also selected for piloting a community-based RRM model. A series of interviews and discussions were held with staff in charge of rural transport conducted in Hoa Binh Province’s Department for Transport, Infrastructure and Economy Section of Ky Son district People's Committee, transport staff of Mong Hoa commune, leadership of the district and commune People's Committees. Data was collected on road infrastructure, road maintenance and budget allocation for rural road maintenance throughout Hoa Binh province. Provincial policies, job descriptions of the relevant administrations and staff, and other related documents were reviewed.

The main findings of the institutional case study were as follows:

- Planned maintenance of rural road has not been undertaken by either province, district nor at the commune.
- At the district level, rural roads are maintained when budgets become available. The ‘asking-giving’ modality\(^1\) is the main financing mechanism that heavily affects the ability of the road administrator to maintain quality roads.
- At the commune level, annual rural road maintenance campaigns and instructions that drive maintenance is conducted with little enforcement. There is no budget nor effective budgeting arrangements for rural road maintenance at the commune level.
- Village communities provide labour and are responsible for ensuring the quality of rural roads. Villagers repair roads only when transport becomes impossible. There is a clear wish to manage road utilization but they lack authority and capacity to organize work. Also, they often lack the needed technical expertise to carry out this work.

4. Pilot of Community Management and Maintenance of Rural Road model

The pilot has been implemented since February 2012 and will be carried on by commitment of the organisations members of the research. The pilot includes two parallel capacity building processes:

\(^1\) The ‘asking-giving’ modality (xin cho in Vietnamese) is a specific public finance phenomenon in Viet Nam which reflects a centrally planned approach to budgeting. Thus activities are conducted only when lower-level governments request (ask) and are subsequently approved (given) by the higher-level of the authority on a ad hoc manner. This planning and allocation of public finance often leads to corruption and inefficient use of resources.
Capacity building for community groups
- To build commitment
- To introduce organizational modality
- To practice planning tool

Capacity building for commune’s People’s Committee
- To practice result-based management
- To oversee rural road maintenance in all communes

The pilot introduced a planning tool which consists of simple forms to guide and help community groups organising their road inventory, inspection and planning, maintenance and management work. The positive results from the planning exercise and road maintenance proved that the pilot procedures and tools are appropriate for commune and community organisation and work. These procedures and tools were also tested by PARU in two other provinces Ben Tre and Quang Ninh with positive results.

Recognition of the community core groups for RRM by the commune People's Committee was the key measure which was adopted to ensure the that this approach becomes institutionalised in the government apparatus. Thus the formalisation was undertaken through the commune People's Committee’s approval of the annual village plan for road maintenance and management; and agreement of all villages and commune People's Committee on Regulations on the management of the newly established community fund for RRM.

5. Advocacy for endorsement of community-based rural road maintenance by government and donor programs

Advocacy activities were designed to support the NTP-NRD which aims to promote the community’s role in rural infrastructure development and management and has potential to mainstream the model within the NRD program in the country-wide scale. This policy action research received strong support and coordination from PARU in its advocacy efforts, resulting in a number of encouraging positive outcomes that have not been expected from the outset.

- Two workshops organized with participation of the New Rural Development Program management at different levels. The NRD Program Management at the central level is ready to endorse the training on community-based RRM implementation using the guidelines produced by this research.
- PARU has successfully introduced the piloted model to the Management Board of the NTP-NRD in Quang Ninh province, resulting in eight villages in Hai Ha and Dong Trieu districts replicating community-based RRM;
- PARU tested the model in Ben Tre province, with 9 villages setting up community groups and carrying rural road maintenance. The partner organization in Ben Tre province – Ben Tre Road and Bridge Association - achieved even greater success, winning support from the provincial, district and commune authorities to application of the community-based model on their budget.
- Formed a group of resource persons and supporters from DFID, ADB, SDC, a number of NGOs, local government staff and community members.
6. Lessons learnt and recommendations

The policy action research has developed and tested a set of procedures, methods and planning tools that enable implementation of community-based RRM in practice. These include:

- The plan of the pilot of the community-based rural road maintenance model and the role of each organisation involved;
- Training Program on Community-based Rural Road Maintenance
- Template Application Form for Allocation of Village Roads to Community Groups for Maintenance and Management
- Template Regulations on Management of the Community Fund for Road Maintenance
- Template Village Annual Plan for Road Maintenance and Management

This set of documents, provided in the Appendix of this report, constitutes the core of the intended Guidelines on implementation of community-based RRM in Vietnam. Successful replication of the community-based RRM model in Ben Tre and Quang Ninh provinces by PARU using these guidelines is an obvious example of the research’s practical value. The results are now ready for replication and further up scaling.

Practical evidence through the implementation of the pilot allows us to draw a number of policy implications from the pilot which are highlighted below:

- Community-based RRM model has met the very real demand of rural population for maintaining roads that are important to them. This has been proven by very strong support from both local governments and residents
- The model can fit into the current rural road administration at commune level
- The model provides a more participatory organizational modality for rural road maintenance, promoting community self-management initiatives
- The model requires only a very low level of state budget support, combining the state and local beneficiaries’ resources.
- Scaling up community-based RRM model requires capacity building of both village communities and commune authorities. Simply focusing on communities will not yield the benefit envisaged.
- Scaling up the community-based RRM model is feasible in all rural areas where communities are ready to contribute labour to road maintenance. Application of this model will be difficult in the areas where industrial development makes unskilled labour expensive and/or where communities are unwilling to make the necessary contribution.

The research also makes recommendations to the NTP-NRD in the short-term, as follows:

- Revise and issue the Handbook on Rural Road Maintenance for the Commune Level in with specific focus on ensuring the maintenance and management of rural roads is placed within the remit of village communities.
- Encourage expansion of the Village Development Boards under the NTP-NRD to include elected members (within the community) to carry responsibility of rural road maintenance and management.
- Request projects under the NTP-NRD to prepare operation and maintenance plans from the design stage. Within these new construction activities, there should be clear policies
and measures to encourage these projects to subcontract maintenance work to local communities.

- Training of the government staff at all levels on concepts and skills that enable them to address community development issues more fruitfully.
- Consider to include training of community core members on rural road maintenance in the NTP-NRD staff training program.
1. **Introduction**

This policy action research addressed the lack of a mechanism that would enable planned maintenance of rural roads intended by the Vietnam Rural Transport Strategy 2020. The research was supported by the Policy Action Research Unit (PARU) of the Making Markets Work Better for the Poor Project Phase 2 (M4P2) initiated by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). In the time frame of 12 months, from July 2011 to June 2012, the research designed and piloted an organizational model for planned rural road maintenance based largely on participation and contribution of the village communities. Policy deficiencies and local institutional procedures that affect rural road maintenance practices and performances of road administrators were examined and addressed in order to strengthen the policy enabling environment for the operation of the community-based model.

The research inherited and consolidated lessons learnt from the Community Management Model that has been promoted and implemented by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) since 2004 in three provinces of Nam Dinh, Quang Binh and Hoa Binh. Extensive experiences of community management pilots within this program have shown that people at the grassroots level, no matter how poor they are, can become the drivers of their own development. Through community management model, communities assess their situation, needs and priorities, plan and implement responsive community-driven actions, and monitor and evaluate the progress and outcomes of their actions. In this policy action research, Community Management Model was used as an organizational modality for rural road maintenance and management at commune level. The commune selected for the pilot of community-based RRM was the homeland of 5,200 Muong ethnic minority people who were familiar with community management since 2010.

Advocacy for mainstreaming this model in the National Target Program on New Rural Development (NTP-NRD) initiated by the government was the main way to disseminate community-based rural road maintenance and foster its endorsement by government policy makers at different levels. NTP-NRD, approved by the government in July 2010, particularly encouraged local communities and private sector to take part in management and maintenance of rural road in particular. This proposal responded directly to the demand of the NTP-NRD, addressing the lack of an organizational modality to realize the program objective of promoting participation and support of the communities to program implementation. Strong support and active participation of the NTP-NRD management in this policy action research were an important condition of success.

2. **Methodology**

The goal of this study is to design, pilot and advocate a community-based rural road maintenance model which effectively contributes in increasing the participation of the poor in infrastructure services.

This study has two specific objectives:

1. To design, pilot and advocate a community-based rural road maintenance model
2. To recommend mechanism/guidelines to be adopted by the central, provincial, district, commune governments, donor, and communities to foster community-based rural road maintenance

Village community plays significant role in traditional rural society organisation. However, village community has no legal status and neither a budgetary unit in the existing state budget system. A series of policy innovative actions, therefore, are required from the local government to make community-based RRM work in the current context. This policy action research puts together both research and advocacy for policy change in one process, developing a series of policy actions that will be supported through bottom-up verification and feedback. Such participation and interaction of all partners that have common interest in rural road maintenance ensure that community-based RRM model piloted is realistic and workable.

The methodology envisages carrying following activities:

1. Legal review

This activity is intended to identify any policy opportunities and/or gaps for implementation of community-based RRM through alignment of legal settings on community management and policies and programs as well as budget channels available for rural road maintenance.

2. Institutional case study of rural road maintenance

Many policies in Vietnam do not work in practice because of inconsistencies and disconnection between the policy, on the one hand and the institutional settings and procedures routinely practiced by relevant sectoral administrations and local authorities, on the another hand. This institutional case study aims to identify any institutional failure or constraint in rural road maintenance in the province selected for the model pilot, to assess the importance of these institutional issues for implementation of the model and to seek for possible measures to avoid or reduce their adverse impacts on implementation of community-based RRM.

3. Pilot of community-based rural road maintenance model

The pilot activity is the main component of the policy action research. In the model proposed for pilot, communities under their own management at the village level will undertake the responsibility for maintenance of rural roads in their areas based on a contract with the commune authorities, who will be overall in charge of rural road management.

The results of the legal review and institutional case study will show what policy and/or institutional bottlenecks that need to be addressed and what steps that need to be taken in order to make the community-based RRM a workable and realistic organizational modality.

4. Advocacy for endorsement of community-based rural road maintenance by the NTP-NRD

The primary target client of the advocacy activities is the NTP-NRD which particularly encourages community’s participation in rural infrastructure development and management and has potential to mainstream community-based RRM within the program in country-wide scale.
Major efforts are designed to build ownership of the NTP-NRD managers over the research and pilot process and results, such as inviting NTP-NRD management at all levels to relevant research activities and encouraging them to play a role of the main partner/owner of the process (such as host of workshops/seminars).

Other target clients for dissemination are the Rural Transport Programs funded by WB/DFID (RT3); donors supporting community management projects (such as SDC and ADB); and NGOs, especially members of Community Management network, who are interested in community management and can apply the community-based RRM in their activities.

3. Legal review

The review of the laws and policies governing rural road maintenance in Vietnam was conducted during the inception period in order to identify policy gaps and issues to be addressed in the action research and pilot. The results of the legal review were presented in the Workshop “Community-based Approach in Rural Road Maintenance and New Rural Development Program” organised by M4P2 in 21-22 November 2011. This section reports on the findings of the legal review.

3.1. The concept of rural road in the Vietnamese laws and policies

Under the Vietnamese laws and policies that govern the road traffic, rural road is a new emerging concept. The Law on Road Traffic 2008 which “prescribes road traffic rules, road infrastructure facilities, vehicles in traffic and road users, road transportation and state management of road traffic”, (National Assembly, 2008. Article 1) defines the national road facilities as follows:

“The road network consists of six systems, including national highways, provincial roads, district roads, commune roads, urban roads and special-use roads”. (National Assembly, 2008. Article 39)

Following this classification, one would expect to see rural road being a part of the commune road system. However, the Law defines the commune road in very narrow way, as follows:

“Commune roads are roads connecting administrative centres of communes with villages and hamlets or equivalent units or connecting adjacent communes; roads important to commune socio-economic development”. (National Assembly, 2008, Article 39)

Thus, many types of roads used day-to-day by rural population are not subject to the regulation of the Law. They include roads connecting villages and hamlets, paths from household to household, roads connecting villages and fields, and field sidewalks. Exclusion of
many types of rural roads from the national road network meant that until 2008 rural roads received very little attention if any from the jurisdiction and policy makers in Vietnam.

The Ministry of Transport (MOT) provides the Technical Standards on the Design of Rural Roads. According to these sectoral guidelines, the rural road network is defined as being the part of local roads connecting to the national road network and serving the agricultural, forestry and fishery sectors primarily as well as economic, social and cultural exchange of rural residents. Rural roads include roads connecting district and commune, inter-commune, commune and village, inter-village, village and field or production area. (MOT, 1992) This MOT’s document, however, has very limited legal validity as it does not clearly state responsibilities nor the mandate of various departments. Therefore, it is used as the technical guidance for local authorities in road planning and investment only. (MOT, 1992)

The concept of rural roads was formalized and emphasized by the National Target Program on New Rural Development (NTP-NRD) in 2009. This program, targeting to provide standards on rural roads to be constructed and upgraded within the program communes, has provided detail elaboration in terms of the classification of rural roads, according to four broad types of road:

1. Commune roads connecting administrative centres of communes with villages and connecting adjacent communes, excluding district roads
2. Village roads connecting villages and hamlets
3. Hamlet roads connecting households (inter-household roads)
4. Main inner field roads connecting fields and residential areas

(MARD, 2009)

In relation to the NTP-NRD, the issues related to rural road design, construction, administration and maintenance appear to have gained greater significance and importance both for the programme and in shaping the overall policy of the programme.

As an emerging concept within NTP-NRD, rural road is understood and interpreted differently by the relevant state agencies. While MARD defines rural areas as “geographical areas outside cities, towns, and managed by Commune People’s Committees”, and therefore excludes district roads (connecting district and commune administrative centres and managed by District People’s Committees) from the rural road classification of the NTP-NRD (MARD, 2009), MOT considers district roads a type of rural road. (MOT, 2011). As expressed by one manager of the Rural Transport program 3 (RT3) funded by the WB and DFID, in the transport sector “rural roads are understood as roads serving transport of the rural population and managed by authorities at district level and lower”. (RT3, 2008)

In the current Vietnamese context, the most notable issue emerging as a result of different these different definitions of rural roads is that district roads and other types of commune and village roads have become competing priorities for extremely scare public resources designated for rural road investment and maintenance. Within RT3 rural road maintenance pilot program, for example, an overwhelming majority of rural road maintenance funds have been allocated on rehabilitation and maintenance of district roads.
3.2. Decentralisation of rural road administration and maintenance

According to the Law on Road Traffic, “road maintenance means activities of maintaining and repairing roads in order to preserve the technical standards of roads currently in use”. Road administration and maintenance shall include:

- Monitoring of the conditions of road works;
- Organization of traffic;
- Examination and inspection of the protection of road infrastructure facilities;
- Regular maintenance; and
- Regular and irregular repair

(National Assembly, 2008. Article 48)

Definition of road maintenance is highlighted by the MOT in its Circular guiding implementation of the Law on Road Traffic in the areas of road administration and maintenance. This Circular defines that “Maintenance of (road) works is a set of activities aiming at maintaining normal operation and ensuring safety of the (road) use”. (MOT, 2010. Article 3) As it is commonly understood both objectives of “normal operation of roads” and “safety of road use” implies not only preserving technical standards of roads as defined by the Law, but also proper traffic organisation. Thus, the MOT implementation guidelines expand the maintenance scope and content significantly compared to the Law. This inconsistency between what is written on a legal basis and interpretation of the executive body in charge again illustrates the commonly recognized situation that road maintenance receives little attention from the Vietnamese jurisdiction and policy makers. As noted by the PARU TORs, a maintenance culture is lacking in Vietnam (PARU, 2010). This situation will be taken into account by the action research, so that working concepts will be selected and defined in a more precise and non-contradictory manner.

Decentralisation of rural road administration and maintenance is yet to be completed. The Law on Organisation of People’s Councils and People's Committees which prescribes functions and tasks of provincial, district and communes state bodies does not consider road maintenance as a specific responsibility of the mentioned local authorities. It briefly stipulates that People's Committees at the provincial and district levels shall organise management of road works as stipulated by the Laws. (National Assembly, 2003. Articles 85 and 100). For the commune level, it is the power of the People’s Council to make decision on measures of road repair, while the commune People's Committee shall organise road repair as assigned. (National Assembly, 2003. Article 29 and 113). The Law on Road Traffic has more precise decentralisation prescription that “The administration and maintenance of systems of district and commune roads shall be prescribed by provincial People’s Committees”. (National Assembly, 2008. Article 48b) However, this decentralization principle of the Law on Road Traffic is somewhat limited by the MOT’s Circular guiding the implementation of road administration and maintenance. The later instructs that technical standards on road maintenance, including rural road maintenance, shall be defined by the Administration of Road Traffic under the MOT. That Administration is also authorised by the MOT to “monitor implementation of technical standards and cost norms for road maintenance.” (MOT, 2010) It is not difficult to see that centrally setting and enforcing an integrated set of technical standards and cost norms for rural road maintenance in the context of very poor state intervention in rural road development and maintenance is an infeasible task. In fact, this MOT instruction remains on paper since there are no nationwide guidelines on routine
procedures of rural road maintenance and each province has its own regulations and procedures on this work.

To add to this confusion, there are other articles such as that within the Law on Road Traffic with regards to non-state roads. It sets that “roads not under state management and exploitation and roads built with non-state budget funding sources shall be administered and maintained by investors according to regulations.” (National Assembly, 2008. Article 48c). Although the Law sets aside the majority of rural roads, it would imply that in consistency with the stated legal principle rural communities shall have full legal rights on administration and maintenance of the roads developed and used by them year to year without investment from the state budget.

The rights of rural communities on making decisions regarding rural road administration and maintenance issues are recognized by the Ordinance on Grassroots Democracy of the National Assembly. The Ordinance prescribes those issues that:

- relate to common infrastructure facilities of the village or commune;
- Require full or partial contribution of the residents; shall be directly discussed and decided by the residents. (National Assembly, 2007. Article 10)

It is important to emphasize this grassroots democracy, although welcome in the context of the NTP-NRD, attempts to introduce top-down technical road standards to the rural communities. Following the Ordinance on Grassroots Democracy, introduction of any changes in road infrastructure facilities of villages is only lawful if it receives approval from over 50% of villagers. (National Assembly, 2007. Article 11).

The community-based principle of the NTP-NRD has been clearly articulated in the newly issued Decision of the Government on promulgation of the list of national target programs in the period 2012 – 2015. Regarding the NTP-NRD, the Decision defines that this program shall be implemented in the forms “that mainly promote the role of community…Specific activities will be discussed in a democratic manner, then decided and implemented by the people in villages and communes.” (Government, 2011)

Whilst a number of legislative prescriptions remain unclear as well as gaps regarding decentralisation of rural road administration and maintenance responsibilities, the overall policy provides strong support for rural communities to play a very active role in decision making for rural road maintenance.

3.3. Financing rural road maintenance

According to the Law on Road Traffic, funding for the administration and maintenance of national highways and local roads shall come from road maintenance funds which shall be formed from annual state budget allocations and revenues related to road use and other sources. (National Assembly, 2008. Article 49). This legal prescription remains to be implemented. Based on the interpretation of the MOF-MOT inter-ministerial circular guiding road maintenance financing, administration and maintenance of the national highways are to be financed from the
central budget, while other local roads are supported by local budgets, following the Law on State Budget 2002. (MOF-MOT, 2008) Regarding the majority of rural roads, which are excluded from the national road network, financing their maintenance is not foreseen. This means that maintenance of these types of roads entirely relies on contribution of the user communities.

The existing budgeting procedures are designed to cover strictly maintenance activities of the entities having a state budget plan. Thus, in order to get state budget funding for annual maintenance activities, the local transport management organisation shall prepare a plan based on the work targets approved by the relevant authorities; relevant (state) economic and technical standards; (state) cost norms; and expenditures norms approved by the relevant authorities and so on. After completion of the maintenance activities, similar documentation is required for reimbursement of the maintenance funds, such as annual budget plan for maintenance; decision of the relevant authorities to approve bidding result; contract on administration and/or maintenance work; minutes of the check and acceptance of the work done including the detailed price list of the work; approval of expenditures by the leadership of the contracting authorities and so on. (MOF-MOT, 2008). These procedures are obviously not applied to the communities and community-based maintenance activities as the communities have no legal status and there are no technical standards or cost norms for maintenance of diversified types of rural roads. Financing community-based rural road maintenance with public resources will require new budgeting procedures adapted for community groups and other non-state bodies implementing state budget financed works.

In 2011, the MOT has approved the Rural Transport Development Strategy by 2020 with the Vision towards 2030. This Strategy sets a target to have 100% of district and 45% of commune roads maintained regularly by 2020. However, there are no measures provided to address the lack of resources for rural road maintenance. Financing community-based rural road maintenance remains a bottleneck within the policy agenda.

3.4. Rural road maintenance implemented through major donor-funded programs

Rural development programs funded with donor assistance represent the main instruments for addressing rural road maintenance issues and also the main channels of finance for rural road maintenance. The most significant programs are Socio-Economic Development Program for Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas phase 2 (P135), Vietnam Third Rural Transport Project (RT3, additional funding), and other rural development projects.

The pilot of road asset maintenance and management in 11 provinces conducted by the RT3 is the largest, by size of funding, for rural road maintenance. Under this pilot, US$5 million from the WB and US$8 million from the DFID were made available in three years (2012-14) for maintenance of the district road network (including district, commune and village roads and bridges) and building Provincial Road Maintenance and Management Systems. Of these funds,
US$2 million are designated to pilot road maintenance by women in ethnic minority mountainous areas. (WB, 2011)

P135, conducted in the period 2006-2011 across 1,848 poorest communes, was the program having most significant policy innovations to facilitate maintenance of rural infrastructure facilities and encourage participation of the communities in commune infrastructure development. (McCarty and Uyen, 2010) However, community participation and infrastructure maintenance were two separate policy objectives and implemented as two components in this program, resulting in poor implementation in practice.

Within P135, the government for the first time has institutionalised Commune Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Funds with the funding from the central budget for maintenance of the infrastructure facilities used at commune and village levels. Official Letter of the Prime Minister No.1842 in 2008 approved to reserve 6.3% of the total commune infrastructure investment funds for O&M. (Government, 2008) These funds were channelled directly to the commune budget and put under management of the commune People's Committee. (Government, 2008b) According to the Program O&M Manual, it is the responsibility of the commune or village management boards to prepare a simple maintenance plan and assign the village heads to organise maintenance activities with participation of the villagers or contract the private teams to carry the maintenance works. Taking into account the nature of the community-based activities, P135 applied very simple accounting rules for O&M funds so that official invoices issued by the MOF could be replaced by the list of people’s contributions with certification of the village heads. (CEMA, 2010)

Regardless of these favourable policies, P135 could implement only 19% of the O&M funds by the end of the project and just 5-7% of the infrastructure facilities were regularly maintained (P135, 2010). Lack of participation from the communities is one of the main factors affecting the program outcome. P135 has a lot of capacity building activities for the commune authorities on participatory approaches and methods, however this is obviously not sufficient and even not the main output needed for implementation of community-based infrastructure maintenance. The lesson that can be drawn from this program is that community-based O&M funds can only be successful if the communities have their self-management capacities enhanced and are empowered to make decisions with regards to using these funds.

3.5. **Key policy issues to be addressed by the study**

Village communities traditionally play significant role in management, exploitation and maintenance of rural roads. However, this role has yet to be institutionalised by the state. With development and industrialisation of the rural areas village communities need to have their self-organisation and self-management management capabilities further strengthened to undertake their role in rural road administration and maintenance. They also need to have access to public resources designated to rural road maintenance. These are basic conditions for sustainable exploitation and maintenance of rural roads in Vietnam. Ensuring that these basic conditions are met is the same as “implementing the program in the way that promotes the role of communities” (Government, 2011) – the objective set by the government’s NTP-NRD. The community-based
rural road maintenance pilot aims to design and test the sequence of policy actions and community development activities needed to empower rural communities to undertake rural road maintenance. The lessons learned from the pilot will be used to advocate for mainstreaming community-based rural road maintenance within the NTP-NRD.

Village communities have no legal status and are not a budgetary unit in the existing state budget system. As shown by the policy review, changes to public financing procedures will be required to make it possible for community access to public resources for rural road maintenance. One issue is whether such changes are possible by the district or commune policy initiative. This issue will be explored by the action research through the institutional case study and pilot of rural road maintenance.

Over the longer term, a key issue will be how much it will cost the budget to maintain rural roads at an acceptable quality. The experiences of the WB pilot of inter-village road maintenance by Women Union in Lao Cai province show relatively high unit costs. (M4P2, 2011) The factors influencing unit costs of rural road maintenance will be examined as far as data allow for such activity.

The policy review shows that differences and gaps remain in sectoral policy makers’ views with regards to the classification of rural roads, content of road maintenance and decentralisation of the rural road administration and maintenance authorities. These issues can affect the pilot and advocacy for community-based rural road maintenance in terms of the relevance or applicability of the pilot. These issues will be mitigated by selecting and applying clearly defined and well understood concepts and principles in the action research.

4. Institutional case study of rural road maintenance

The methodology envisages an institutional case study to explore institutional gaps and/or weaknesses of the road administration system that need to be addressed by the community-based RRM model. This institutional case study should be carried in the province selected for the model pilot.

The action research is built on community development experiences and legacy of the Community Management Project supported by Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) in three provinces Nam Dinh, Quang Binh and Hoa Binh. During the inception period exploration trips were conducted for pilot site selection and Hoa Binh province was selected for its typical rural conditions and high demand for rural road maintenance. Thus, the institutional case study was carried in Hoa Binh province.

Research activities focused on the role that local administration of each level plays in implementing rural road maintenance budget and the role of the village communities within the maintenance process. The institutional case study sets to answer the following questions:
1. How is system of planning and management of rural road maintenance organised? How does it function at provincial, district and commune level? Are there workable procedures for decision making in regards to budget allocation for rural road maintenance?

2. How serious is the shortage of budget for rural road maintenance in the selected district? What are the factors influencing availability of budget for rural road maintenance? What have been done about this budget shortage?

3. What is the technical and managerial capacity available at provincial, district, commune authorities and in communities for rural road management? How can capacity gaps (if any) be reduced?

4. Are there any existing channels for cooperation between the road authorities and local communities? How do these partnerships (if any) work?

The institutional case study was undertaken with support and facilitation of the transport administrators at the provincial, district and commune level. Between December 2011 and March 2012, a series of interviews and discussion were conducted with the staff in charge of rural transport at the Department of Transport under Hoa Binh provincial People's Committee; Infrastructure and Economy Section of Ky Son district People's Committee, transport staff of Mong Hoa commune, leadership of the district and commune People's Committees. Data was collected on road infrastructure, road maintenance and budget allocation for rural road maintenance throughout Hoa Binh province. Provincial policies, job descriptions of the relevant administrations and staff, and other related documents were reviewed.

The results of the institutional case study were shared for review and comments at the advocacy workshop organised by PARU in Ha Long city early June 2012. Most significant findings of the study are presented below.

**4.1. Planning and management of rural road maintenance**

Consultation with transport administration at all levels has confirmed that planned maintenance of rural roads is not carried by any level. Hoa Binh Department of Transport (DOT) has a rural infrastructure management division with three staff who are responsible for rural road maintenance. The responsibility of the division is limited to simply gathering the reports from the district road administrations on road construction and maintenance, and then to assemble them into a provincial report. According to the law, maintenance of the district roads shall be financed by the district People's Committee budget and DOT has no involvement in decision making process relating to the road maintenance budget. However, Hoa Binh is a budget-deficit province which means the majority of district within the Province need additional support from the provincial budget for road development and maintenance. Thus, DOT has a power to propose

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2 Public expenditures for the provinces are approved by the central government, based on a complicated criteria and procedures. If tax revenues exceed the approved spending, the province is in budget-surplus position. If tax revenues cannot cover all approved spending, the province is in budget-deficit position and the central government has to finance the gaps. Out of 63 provinces, only 15 are in budget-surplus position. The same concept (budget-deficit) is applied to district level.
the amount of budget support that the provincial People's Committee transfers to district People's Committee for maintenance of district roads.

The provincial budget support for road maintenance is considered as a bonus rather than a regular financial source to be included in the district plan. The size of this bonus is defined based on district achievement in “rural transport performance” (thi dua) that assesses district performance in all areas of rural road transport including rural road management, maintenance, investment, transportation performance, transport safety and timely reporting to DOT. The criteria of this performance assessment in the areas of rural road maintenance have shown that DOT is well aware of and encouraging the maintenance modality similar to what this study is trying to develop, though in the current situation these criteria look ambitious and unrealistic. Thus, the first criteria in terms of performance assessment is:

“Having model for effective management and regular maintenance of rural roads such as maintenance groups, sub-contract to household or group of self-managed households;”

While DOT awareness of the needs and support for community involvement in implementing maintenance of rural roads is an encouraging finding, its attitude of considering maintenance budget as an irregular bonus shows that it will be not easy to introduce planned maintenance to provincial transport administrators. Hoa Binh People's Committee has not yet issued the regulations on rural road maintenance, though the draft document has been completed several months ago, according to the Rural Infrastructure Management Division.

Ky Son district is amongst the budget-deficit districts of Hoa Binh province. According to the local Infrastructure and Economics section responsible for road management and maintenance, the district has never carried planned maintenance of roads. Road repairs are done sparsely subject to the budget support made available by provincial People's Committee. For some years Ky Son district roads were not maintained at all because there were no support (“bonus”) given. The provincial DOT explained that the bonus is cut when district transport section does not submit reports on maintenance in a timely manner.

Mong Hoa commune People's Committee gives instruction on road maintenance every year in April and October. However, enforcement of this instruction seems poor, since the commune never had any budget for road maintenance. Villagers repair roads themselves only when road deterioration reaches to such a level that transport becomes impossible.

4.2. **Budget for rural road maintenance**

Table 1 presents some data on road development and maintenance budget of Ky Son district in three year period 2008-2010. The district road statistics record 37 kilometres of roads including asphalt, concrete and earth-based roads. This means that in 2008, there were 2.9 million VND (around $150) available for maintenance of 1 kilometre of road. This amount increased to 16.2 million VND in 2009. This budget norm is subject to the condition that all district budgets shall be spent on road maintenance. This regulation has often been however violated. The data confirm that in 2010 the district budget for road maintenance was absent.
Thus, budget data again confirm the finding that transport administrators at both provincial and district level do not consider nor carry out road maintenance regularly, but rather more in line with an investment project activity. This situation if it continues it will be an serious obstacle for introducing community-based planned maintenance of rural roads.

Table 1. Road capital development and maintenance budget of Ky Son district, 2008-2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget line</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital investment in roads</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>24,600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program on building concrete rural roads</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>2,627</td>
<td>1,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District budget (for maintenance)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People contribution</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>755</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>507</td>
<td>8,627</td>
<td>26,960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Hoa Binh DOT, 2012*

Moreover, the RRM financing mechanism is mainly through a system of requests or ‘asking-giving’3 (*“xin cho”* in Vietnamese). This means that when district finds an urgent need of road repair (due to floods, typhoon and so on), they make a request for assistance and the province gives the support. A negative impact of the ask-give budgeting mechanism is that it discourages responsibility and the planning of maintenance efforts. With such a financing mechanism, the district road administrator has less incentives or management responsibility for the overall quality of roads. Instead, they are waiting for new opportunities to ask for new projects.

Table 2. Mong Hoa commune budget accessible for infrastructure maintenance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All sources that can be used for commune infrastructure maintenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commune budget for socio-economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Mong Hoa commune People's Committee, 2012*

Table 2 presents all budget sources that can be mobilized for commune infrastructure maintenance in emergency cases. According to commune People's Committee, none of commune budget has been spent on commune road maintenance so far. The first reason is that the budget was never sufficient for maintaining commune small irrigation schemes and dams. And the

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3 “Asking-giving” is a specific public finance phenomenon in Vietnam which reflects a centrally planning feature when activities are conducted only when a lower-ranking level requested (ask) and approved (give) by the higher-ranking level of the government on a ad hoc manner. This planning and allocation of public finance often lead to corruption and inefficient use of resources.
second reason is due to the ask-give mechanism. Officially, the commune does not have any budget for infrastructure maintenance. When needed, they have to prepare a proposal to ask permission of the district People's Committee on transferring different budget line to maintenance purpose. Among three budget sources accessible for infrastructure maintenance, only budget line for socio-economic development and contingency provide a relatively stable income stream. The third source – over collected tax revenues – shows high levels of variability depending on the performance of the businesses in the commune.

Thus, the most important finding regarding the budget is that there is in reality no budget and / or budget arrangements that do exist are all intended for rural road maintenance at the commune level. Expectation that commune People's Committee will contribute resources to maintain the community-based model may not be realistic in typical rural communes of the Province, given their relative poverty levels and competing demands for very scarce funds. Thus the policy on rural road maintenance will need to change to allow some flow of budget funds for road maintenance if such a system is likely to develop. And this change in budget allocation needs to start from the provincial People's Committee which has the authority to define the budget allocation to maintenance of infrastructures at the commune level.

4.3. **Technical and managerial capacity**

The institutional case study found that villagers who carry the main workload of rural road development and maintenance often lack technical expertise. As a result, rural road has been constructed with a lot of technical defects leading to high costs of maintenance. For example, the majority of roads in Mong Hoa commune lack side drains and culverts. The demand for transportation is increasing recently, expressed in increased number of four-wheeled vehicles which puts pressure on rural roads covered with thin cement concrete surface. The communities have a strong interest in managing road utilization, but they lack authorization and capacity to organize the work. The community-based RRM model will be successful only if it addresses the lack of technical and managerial capacity.

Mong Hoa commune People's Committee lack trained staff that has the necessary background or skills on transport or road maintenance. Working under the Vice-Chairman who is responsible for economic and infrastructures, there is one part-time contracted staff who takes care of three areas – road, irrigation and forestry in 17 villages. With the monthly salary of VND 830,000 (about $40) this officer works one afternoon per week. The serious shortage of both human resources and technical expertise for management of infrastructure at commune People's Committee highlights the importance of community empowerment and self-management for affective use and maintenance of communal infrastructure.

Ky Son district People's Committee has two officers that are responsible for transport – one transport officer and one accountant for all infrastructure within the District. The district transport officer who has the background of road engineering and is experienced in road construction and maintenance can be an essential source of expertise for rural road maintenance. However, the current labour division of the district seems to exclude rural road maintenance from the job description of this officer. He is member of three district commissions – on capital
construction, traffic safety and construction of cement concrete rural roads. In addition, he is also active in other ad hoc activities such as avian influenza protection or clearance of illegal open markets on national highways. This mismatch in labour division at the district level has taken away a significant technical resource that could benefit the communities via training or coaching in rural road maintenance and construction.

4.4. Existing mechanism for cooperation

The rural communities and Mong Hoa Commune People's Committee have cooperated successfully in the past and currently in the implementation of the government program on construction of cement concrete roads. In this program, the government provided in-kind cement whilst villagers contributed labour and other materials for construction the of concrete roads. This cooperation provides a good foundation to build on for the pilot.

4.5. Implication of the institutional case study

The findings of the institutional case study pointed out that the pilot will have to address important gaps and capacity building needs, as follows:

- Village community needs to have technical and organizational capacities built so that they will be able to prepare and carry a plan of rural road maintenance and management for their village. In addition, an organizational modality for road maintenance is necessary.
  - Form small groups of people who are aware of the needs and ready to take responsibility for road maintenance
  - Empower them to involve others in road maintenance

- Commune People’s Committee needs to have capacity to practice and undertake result-based management of road maintenance.

- Community needs to have access to resources that are necessary for rural road maintenance

- To be sustainable, there will be need to change job descriptions of the district transport specialist to include supporting rural road maintenance

5. Pilot of Community Management and Maintenance of Rural Road model

5.1. Pilot as a capacity building process

Proposed community-based rural road maintenance pilot is a model of self-managed communities at the village level undertaking responsibility for maintenance of rural roads in their areas based on a contract from the relevant authorities in charge of rural road management.
Following the conclusion of the institutional case study, two parallel capacity building processes were envisaged in this model. The first was to build capacity of the communities so that they have commitment to maintenance of roads, be familiar with the community management as the organizational modality for carrying maintenance, and can use an annual planning tool for management of maintenance work. The second was building capacity of the commune transport administrators so that they will be able to carry result-based management of the maintenance work and oversee road maintenance in all communes. The pilot therefore required full participation and ownership of the commune People's Committee along with the community participation.

In order to build local ownership of the pilot, from the very beginning an action research team was formed with the members being the research team from Socio-Economic Development Centre (SEDEC), Ky Son district People's Committee, Mong Hoa commune People's Committee and the Centre for Research on Community Development Initiative (RIC) which supports the community development program in Ky Son district. Members of the research team apply principles of transparency and participation in all planning and budgeting processes. Four organizations have developed an agreed plan, with the role of each organization clearly defined and activities and milestones established. As shown in the later development of the pilot model, initial organizational arrangement played critical role in the success of the pilot. This plan of the pilot is included in this report as an Appendix 8.2.

The pilot started in February 2012. The first consultation with village heads and key members of the community management project was held to inform about the pilot and get comments and advice from the villagers. After that, village heads held a village assembly meeting where research team members presented the rural road maintenance issue and the benefits of planned road maintenance and asked villagers whether they like to join and how they like do to carry on this activity. The research team accepted that some villages might select not to join, because the pilot requires a significant labour contribution from villagers. However, all 17 villages of Mong Hoa commune voted to join, to some extent showed that there was real demand for rural road maintenance in the commune. Once the village assembly opted to pilot, they would follow up with selecting the Village Core Group of several members for road maintenance and management. Most village assembly meetings selected people who are considered reliable and well respected, have some skills and knowledge of road construction or money management and also those who they think can form into viable core groups. Selection of the village heads to the core group were not considered compulsory, although in a number of cases, they were selected anyway. The village assembly also selected the leader of the core group and an accountant/cashier. Overall, 105 members of Village Core Groups were selected by villagers to represent 17 villages of Mong Hoa commune. The names of these members were listed in Appendix 8.3.

In March 2012, three two-day training courses on rural road maintenance techniques and planning were organised for the village core groups. At that moment, the commune People's Committee also formed the Management Board to oversee road maintenance and all these members of the Board attended training. At the training, villagers were introduced with the crucial technical knowledge of the road infrastructure, its defects and maintenance techniques. They also undertook practical assignments including carrying out a road inventory and
inspection. A simple template village plan for rural road maintenance was adapted and made available to provide villagers with a tool to make their work more organised and practical. For more information about the training program, see Appendix 8.4.

The rural road maintenance planning process took the subsequent month. Village core groups were guided to actually measure, inspect and assess the village roads, detect the defects and develop plans for regular maintenance and repair. The research team, particularly community development specialists from RIC, provided advice and coaching the planning process while the district and commune transport administrators undertook the role of peer reviewer. After completion of the plan, each core group defended their plan before the reviewer group consisting of representatives of the district and commune People's Committee, RIC and SEDEC.

Not all the community core groups found the planning exercise easy. Only 50% of the core groups could develop a sound and reasonable plan at the first attempt. Another half took one or two more weeks to revise and complete it. The planning exercise, however, has shown that the tools were useful and simple enough for the community planning. It also proved to be a useful instrument for the communities and the commune authorities to discuss, negotiate, interact and build their commitment on the maintenance and management of roads.

Result-based management of rural road maintenance requires the commune People's Committee to shift its attention and procedures from piecemeal approval of every repair activity conducted by villagers to clearly defining accountability for annual results, setting up systematic monitoring based on the annual village road maintenance plans, and conducting assessment and progress reporting. Result-based management capacity building of the commune People's Committee was carried through working together, discussion, advice, technical assistance provided in preparation of monitoring plan and mentoring. The pilot has shown that building capacity for result-based management is a long process that would require a lot of mentoring efforts from the researchers. This process has just started in Mong Hoa commune and is expected to be continued.

5.2. Planning tools used for building capacity and commitment

The commune rural road network was a complex communal asset. According to the results of road inspection by community groups in Mong Hoa commune, the rural road network consists of 19.3 kilometres of cement concrete roads; 5.7 kilometres of earth roads; 1.3 kilometres of asphalt; and approximately 1 kilometre of road with macadam surface (Single-sized aggregate layers of stone with a coating of binder as a cementing agent are mixed to form these roads). The road width varies from one to four metres. In addition, there are several kilometres of inter-field roads that become narrower over time due to the increasing pressure for farming land. The demand for management of the commune road network is multiplied by the fact that the commune People's Committee neither maintains systematic information and data on the size nor quality of the roads. The lack of human resources makes this task infeasible.

The objectives of introduction of the Village Plan for Road Maintenance and Management to the Village Core Groups were twofold. Firstly, it represents the instrument that helps the village
road managers to assess and to record the conditions of the road assets, and to organise their maintenance and management activities. Secondly, it serves as the background document for the villagers and the commune authorities to discuss and to negotiate accountability and commitment with regards to road network maintenance and management.

The planning tool was adapted from the Handbook on RRM for the Commune Level issued by the MOT in 2003. The Handbook was intended for the professional transport administrator(s) employed by the commune People's Committee. However, in reality, commune authorities do not have the technical level of employees envisaged; therefore the MOT guidelines remained unimplemented since 2003. With the community groups empowered to undertake management and maintenance of the commune road network, technical guides produced by MOT have now found a relevant audience and become feasible and useful. To make the technical guidelines an active management instrument for the self-managed communities, several new forms were added such as listing four-wheeled vehicle users for the management of road utilisation and in terms of contributions to and management of the community fund for RRM.

The pilot has shown that the community groups can use the planning tool for organizing their work and most of them find it simple and relevant. It is worthwhile to note that most of the community group members in Mong Hoa commune are Muong ethnic minority. The Template Village Plan for Road Maintenance and Management is included as Appendix 8.7.

Figure 3: Rural road network of Mong Hoa commune, inspected and mapped by community groups
5.3. Institutionalisation of community-based RRM

The recognition of the community core groups for RRM by the commune People's Committee was one of the main ways that the model began to be institutionalised into the Government system. This was formalised in the form of commune People's Committee’s approval of the annual village plan for road maintenance and management.

The pilot envisages that the core groups will advocate and mobilize their villagers to carry out the maintenance plan, with some seed funding provided through the research grant to enable them to purchase materials such as cement, stones, sand, etc. The village core group was asked to propose their plan for fund management. Based on the group suggestions provided in the Village Annual RRM Plan, the Regulations on Community Fund for RRM have been drafted. The draft was discussed with all members of the RRM groups and agreement had been taken into account and integrated. The final version of the Regulations on Community Fund for RRM agreed by all RRM groups and approved by the Commune People's Committee is included in the Appendix 8.6. The commune People's Committee found the Regulation on Community Fund useful and endorsed this document, with the expectation of making contributions to the fund community.
based maintenance in subsequent years. It should be noted that the seed budget provided by the research was much lower than labour contribution that villagers had to make to the maintenance plan.

The pilot of community-based RRM maintenance will be continued, based on continuation of the work of the research team (after PARU financing is finished) and support from SEDEC and other organizations.

6. Advocacy for endorsement of community-based rural road maintenance by government and donor programs

The ultimate objective of this policy action research was to adopt a community-based rural road maintenance model with associated supportive policies by the government and donor programs concerning rural road maintenance. Advocacy activities were designed to support the NTP-NRD which particularly targets to promote the community’s role in rural infrastructure development and management and has potential to mainstream the model within the program on a country-wide scale. This policy action research received strong support and coordination from PARU in its advocacy efforts, resulting in a number of encouraging positive outcomes that have not been expected from the outset.

During the pilot, all information and intermediate research products, including pilot procedures, job description for partners to be involved and planning tools were shared with the NTP-NRD management at the central level via regular consultations with PARU. Based on the interim results, the action research received visible support and encouragement from the NTP-NRD management. Owing to NTP-NRD management support, PARU has successfully introduced the community-based RRM model to the Management Board of the NTP-NRD in Quang Ninh province, resulting in eight villages in Hai Ha and Dong Trieu districts replicating community-based RRM in June 2012.

The community-based RRM procedures and tools develop in Mong Hoa commune, Hoa Binh province were also tested by PARU in Ben Tre province, with 9 villages setting up community groups and carrying rural road maintenance. The partner organization in Ben Tre province – Ben Tre Road and Bridge Association - achieved even greater success in winning support from the provincial, district and commune authorities to application of the community-based model on their budget.

The initial success, as well as issues facing communities and local authorities, and lessons drawn from the pilots were shared frankly and positively at a workshop organised in early June 2012 by PARU in Ha Long city, Quang Ninh province and with active participation of the NTP-NRD Management Board at all levels. Most positive results of the workshop were that the Program Management at the central level is ready to endorse training on community-based RRM implementation using the guidelines to be produced by the research team. At the workshop, several district and commune government representatives expressed willingness to contribute budget for scaling up.
7. Lessons learnt and recommendations

This policy action research has developed and tested a set of procedures, methods and planning tools that enable implementation of community-based RRM in practice. This set includes:

- The plan of the pilot of the community-based rural road maintenance model and the role of each organisation involved;
- Training Program on Community-based Rural Road Maintenance
- Template Application Form for Allocation of Village Roads to Community Groups for Maintenance and Management
- Template Regulations on Management of the Community Fund for Road Maintenance
- Template Village Annual Plan for Road Maintenance and Management

This set of documents, provided in the Appendix of this report, constitutes the core of the intended Guidelines on implementation of community-based RRM in Vietnam. Successful replication of the community-based RRM model in Ben Tre and Quang Ninh provinces by PARU using these guidelines provides further evidence of the research’s practical value. Thus the activities of the research are ready for replication and scaling-up.

The pilot of Community Maintenance and Management of Rural Road model has been implemented for just less than half a year. Significant lessons are to be expected. However, practical evidence allows us to draw a number of policy implications from the pilot, as highlighted below:

- Community-based RRM model has met the very real demand of rural population for maintaining roads that are important to them. This has been proven by very strong support from both local governments and residents
- The model can fit into the current rural road administration at the commune level
- The model provides a more participatory organizational modality for rural road maintenance, promoting community self-management initiatives
- The model requires only a very low level of state budget support, combining the state and local beneficiaries’ resources.
- Scaling up community-based RRM model requires capacity building of both village communities and commune authorities. Simply focusing on communities will not yield the benefit envisaged.
- Scaling up the community-based RRM model is feasible in all rural areas where communities are ready to contribute labour to road maintenance. Application of this model will be difficult in the areas where industrial development makes unskilled labour expensive and /or where communities are unwilling to make the necessary contribution.

The policy action research also makes following recommendations for the NTP-NRD consideration and action taking in the short-term:
- Revise and issue the Handbook on Rural Road Maintenance for the Commune Level in with specific focus on ensuring the maintenance and management of rural roads is placed within the remit of village communities.

- Encourage expansion of the Village Development Boards under the NTP-NRD to include elected members (within the community) to carry responsibility of rural road maintenance and management.

- Request projects under the NTP-NRD to prepare operation and maintenance plans from the design stage. Within these new construction activities, there should be clear policies and measures to encourage these projects to subcontract maintenance work to local communities.

- Training of government staff at all levels on concepts and skills that enable them to address community development issues more fruitfully, such as:
  - Result-based management
  - Community management
  - Leadership

- Consider to include training of community core members on rural road maintenance in the NTP-NRD staff training program.
8. Appendix

8.1. References


PARU (2010). Final TORs PPP for Rural Road Maintenance, PARU, M4P2


Nam Dinh People's Committee (2004). Decision No.2771 dated 29/10/2004 of the People's Committee of Nam Dinh province on issuance of Regulations on Management and Use of Rural Road Maintenance Fund.


8.2. The plan of the pilot of the community-based rural road maintenance model and the role of each organisation involved

1. Purposes
The purposes of the pilot carried out in Mong Hoa commune are:

1. Pilot the community-based RRM model
2. Draw lessons on the process of implementation of community-based RRM model, and contribute recommendations on the mechanisms appropriate for rural road maintenance in the New Rural Development programs

2. Pilot plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of activities</th>
<th>The roles of the members of the research group</th>
<th>Time line proposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Carrying out assessment of the current process of maintaining village roads</td>
<td>• Team Leader has the main responsibility • District Transport Officers supports • Commune Transport Staff supports</td>
<td>February-March/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Meeting of the PCMM Core Group Members and Village Heads to inform about the pilot and get comments and contribution</td>
<td>• Team Leader has the main responsibility • RIC and Commune People's Committee support</td>
<td>March/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Village assembly meetings: • To inform about the pilot; • To get comments, ideas and ASK whether they want to join. • For villages that decide to join: villagers elect the Village Core Group for management of road maintenance activity</td>
<td>• RIC and Commune People's Committee have the main responsibilities • Other members of the research team participate</td>
<td>Week 1-2 of March/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organization of 3 training courses (2 days each) on: • Road inspection and maintenance techniques • Maintenance planning for the Village Core Group members and commune leadership</td>
<td>• District Transport Officer is responsible for session on Road Inspection and Maintenance Techniques • Team Leader is responsible for session on Maintenance Planning • RIC is responsible for session on</td>
<td>Feb – March 2012: preparation Week 3-4 of March/2012: training</td>
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<td>Description of activities</td>
<td>The roles of the members of the research group</td>
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| and staffs that will involve in monitoring RRM | Community Fund Management and Fund Raising  
  • Commune People's Committee monitors to ensure that both the training contents and the participants are suitable for the local conditions. | | |
| **5.** Village Core Groups carry road inventory and inspection. Prepare maintenance and management plan |  
  • Village Core Groups have the main responsibilities  
  • RIC and Commune officers support  
  • Team Leader supports when available | March to 1st week of April/2012 |
| **6.** Dialogue to negotiate the Village Management and Maintenance plans; and make decision on allocation of Community Funds |  
  • Team leader has the main responsibility  
  • Core Groups present their plans  
  • Transport Experts (of the district and commune) assess the technical side (regular maintenance activities, small repairs, major repairs, costs)  
  • Commune People's Committee and District People's Committee assess management, monitoring & maintaining of Community Fund  
  • Partners in the M4P projects (M4P consultants, 2 research teams in RRM group) may participate and share ideas and comments | 2nd and 3rd week of April/2012 |
| **7.** Allocation of commune & village roads to community group for maintenance and management |  
  • Commune People's Committee has the main responsibility.  
  • Community Core Groups commit.  
  • Team Leader ensures disbursement of Community Fund  
  • Research Team supports in drafting necessary documents if needed  
  • District People's Committee supports commune People's Committee to report to commune People's Council if needed | 4th week of April/2012 |
| **8.** Communication and education provided to villagers to raise awareness and enhance skills in rural road maintenance and management |  
  • Village Core Groups have the main responsibilities  
  • RIC and the Commune People's Committee support  
  • District Transport Officers supports | Along the whole implementation process |
| **9.** Implementation of the road management and maintenance |  
  • The Village Core Groups have main responsibilities | April-June/2012 and up to the |
### Description of activities

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<th>Description of activities</th>
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| contracts                                                                                | • RIC and the Commune People's Committee monitor  
• Team Leader keeps observation, carries annual evaluation and costing                                        | end of 2013         |
| 10. Participation in workshops and exchange activities with the NTP-NRD, PSARD, RT3, 2 action researches on RRM and other partners | • Team Leader has the main responsibility and is also responsible for supporting other reports in terms of contents and methods.  
• Members from the District and Commune prepare and present report to share the experiences and lessons learnt.  
• RIC supports in preparation of reports for experience sharing – including making comments on the contents, support in typing, printing, circulating papers and logistic arrangement of travel to the workshops. | April-June/2012    |
| 11. Monitoring and maintaining Community Fund and implementation of the Village Road Management and Maintenance Plan | • Commune People's Committee  
• RIC                                                                                                                     | April/2012 and after |

### 3. Expected Outcomes

1. Contract on village road maintenance between the commune People's Committee and different community self-managed groups developed and signed. Components of this outcomes are:  
   • Plan on regular/periodic maintenance prepared;  
   • Regulations on Community Fund for Maintenance agreed;  
   • Monitoring and evaluation system in place for operation
2. Community maintenance plan implemented at least in 2 years, evidenced by base-line and monitoring reports
3. Community Fund maintained at least for 2 years
4. Lessons on the mechanism for implementation of the model drawn and communicated to the NTP-NRD program at different levels.

### 4. The responsibilities of different parties participating in the research group

To ensure the success of the pilot, with the responsibilities of the participating parties as mentioned in section 2, the organizations - members of research team agree to take following responsibilities:

**Socio-Economic Development Centre (SEDEC)** represented by Dr. Vu Ngoc Uyen, also the research Team Leader:

- Ensure mobilisation of adequate human resources who have the right expertise from the member organizations to carry out the pilot.
- Ensure disbursement of necessary financial resources to member organizations as agreed.
- Carry the communication and coordination between M4P project of the Ministry Planning and Investment and other members of the research group in order to achieve all the objectives.

**Ky Son District People's Committee** represented by Mr. Dinh Dang Dien, Chairman of the People's Committee

- Appoint two suitable staffs to be in charge of this research. One staff in charge shall be Transport Specialist and one shall be from the leadership of the People's Committee. The leader in charge of the NTP-NRD program is favourable.
- Facilitate the research group to work with different sections of the district People's Committee and support Mong Hoa Commune People's Committee if needed.
- Learn all the information on the pilot activities and keep the Management of the district NTP-NRD updated about this pilot.

**Mong Hoa Commune People's** represented by Mr Nguyen Dang Dung, Chairman of the People's Committee

- Appoint suitable staffs to be in charge of this research. The staffs in charge shall include at least one representative of the leadership and one transport officer.
- Ensure that the Commune People's Committee participate fully and adequately in the process of road allocation to the Community Groups for management and maintenance, in consistency with the responsibilities of the Commune People's Committee.
- Take main responsibility in the road allocation contract and monitoring implementation and management of the Community Fund.

**The Centre for Research on Initiatives of Community Development (RIC)** represented by Mr Le Van Hai, Director

- Appoint two suitable staffs to be in charge of this research. One staff shall be the PCMM project officer in Mong Hoa commune and one shall be from RIC leadership.
- Provide administrative and accounting assistance to the research group.
- Provide information and ensure that the key community members of the PCMM Project participate actively in the pilot of the Community-based RRM model.
- Learn all the information on the pilot activities and keep the Community Management network of NGOs updated about this pilot.
### List of members of Community Rural Road Maintenance Groups in Mong Hoa Commune, Ky Son district, Hoa Binh province

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<th>Village No.</th>
<th>Village Name</th>
<th>Member No</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Nguyen Thi Thieu</td>
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</table>
8.4. Training Program on Community-based Rural Road Maintenance

Training objective: To enable the members of Village Core Groups to prepare and implement Annual Road Management and Maintenance Plan for their village.

Introduction:
Why is community management and maintenance of rural roads important?
☑ Sharing experiences in implementation of Operation & Maintenance Fund in the Program 135 Phase 2;

Part 1. Main features of roads and bridges
☐ Roads
☐ Culverts
☐ Drainage system
☐ Bridges
☐ Road reservation

Part 2. Condition assessment of roads, bridges, culverts
1. Measure cross fall
2. Condition assessment of side drains and road shoulders
3. Condition assessment of road surface
   ☐ Earth roads
   ☐ Penetration macadam
   ☐ Asphalted roads
   ☐ Cement concrete roads
4. Group work: Condition assessment of road surface

Participants divide into 3 groups to assess conditions of different roads – earth, cement concrete and asphalted. Each group appoints one leader and one secretary to write down the results and comments. Other members carry measurement and assessment.
   ☐ Instruments: measuring tape, nivo, pens and A0-size papers

Tasks include:
☐ Measuring cross fall
☐ Assessing conditions of side drains and road shoulders
☐ Assessing conditions of road surface
Report the results in paper of size A0 and present to the class for comments.

Part 3. Maintenance techniques
☐ Definition of road maintenance. Differences between road maintenance and road construction
☐ Defect 1: High vegetation
Part 4. Planning village road maintenance

1. Annual planning process
2. Mapping village roads
3. Listing roads, bridges and culverts
4. Listing four-wheeled vehicle users
5. Carrying annual road inspection
6. Planning resources and raising funds
7. Management and maintenance of Community Fund for RRM
8. Group work: Prepare village maintenance plan

Participants divide into 3 groups to prepare maintenance plan for three roads – earth, cement concrete and asphalt that have been inspected in previous exercise.

- Instruments: printed forms for each group, pens and A0-size papers

Tasks for each group:
- Prepare a road map
- Measure and list road, bridges and culverts (if any)
- Describe road users
- Assess condition of the road
- Prepare an annual maintenance plan
- Prepare plan for management and maintenance of Community Fund for RRM

Report the results in paper of size A0 and present to the class for comments.
8.5. **Template Application Form for Allocation of Village Roads to Community Groups for Maintenance and Management**

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence-Freedom-Happiness

Application Form for Allocation of Village Roads to Community Groups for Management and Maintenance

**TO:** Commune People's Committee

1. Core Group name (Village): ...............................................................
   And address: ....................................................................................

2. Family and First names of the Representative of the Core Group (in capital letters)
   ........................................................................................................
   ID number....................................................................................... 

After discussing and agreeing with people in the village, with the Road Management and Maintenance Plan attached to this application, the Village Core Group would like to request the Commune People's Committee to allocate village roads to village community as follow:

3. Address of the roads requested to allocate ............................................................

4. Total length of the roads is..........km, in which
   Asphalt roads: total length is..................; width of the road is .................
   Concrete roads: total length is .....................; width of the road is....................
   Earth roads: total length is......................; width of the roads is .................

5. The purpose of allocation is management and maintenance of roads in order to effectively use and increase the life time of the road system.
   
   We commit to carry out the Annual Management and Maintenance Plan (attached) and follow the Regulations on Rural Road Management and Maintenance Standards.
   
   ............... date...month...year 2012
   
   The leader of the Village Core Group
   Signature

**Approval of the Commune People's Committee**

Based on the needs and the capacity of the village community to manage and maintain the rural road system, Commune People's Committee agrees to allocate the roads of the village (name)...................... to the Village Core Group for management and maintenance according to the agreed plan (attached).
The Leader of the Core Group is responsible for reporting to the Commune People's Committee on the performance of the management and maintenance plan as well as the compliance of the Regulations on Village Fund Management (attached)

......date ..... month......year.

On behalf of the People's committee
Chairman (Sign and seal)

8.6. Template Regulations on Management of the Community Fund for Road Maintenance

Regulations of the Village Road Maintenance Fund
Agreed by villagers to be applied in .... commune, .... district, ..... province.

1. Village road maintenance fund (the Fund in short) is established from the following sources
   - Initial assistance from M4P project as part of the Community Management and Maintenance of Rural Road pilot model
   - Household contribution
   - Commune People's Committee’s budget
   - Fund that the communities raise from road users, local businesses and projects, donation of the successful relatives and others.

2. The fund shall be used for maintenance of the village roads and in accordance with the decisions of the villagers. All adult members of the village have the right to make suggestion in regards to the revenues and expenditures of the Fund to be discussed at the village meetings. Acceptance and rejection of a suggestion shall be based on the democratic voting results. A suggestion will only be accepted if it being voted by more than 50% of the people participating in the village meeting.

3. The fund is managed directly by the Village Core Group. The fund should be kept in the bank under the name of 2 members of the core group who are the leader and the accountant (also cashier)

4. The core group has to report on the revenue and expenditure activities of the Fund at least once every 3 months in the village meetings.

5. The core group has to have an income and expenditure book for the Fund. All the receipts on income and expenditure have to be kept for at least 2 years from the time the transactions take place. All the account, books, receipts should always be available for any public interests.

6. The leader of the core group has to report to the Commune People's Committee on the compliance of the Fund Regulations. The Commune People's Committee has the rights and responsibility to supervise the revenue and expenditure activities of the Fund to ensure the benefits and the rights of the villagers. The Commune People's Committee acts as the referee.
in the case of disagreement or complaint in regards to the revenue and expenditure of the Fund.

(These Regulations have to be shown publicly at the Village Cultural House)

8.7. **Template Village Annual Plan for Road Maintenance and Management**

Road Management and Maintenance Plan

of ....... Village

..... commune, ... district, ... province
Prepared in .....(month) ..... (year)
TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction of the Village Core Group .........................................................

A. VILLAGE ROAD INVENTORY

A1. Village road map ..............................................................
A2. List of roads, bridges and culverts ..............................................
A3. List of four-wheeled vehicle users .............................................
A4. Annual road inspection ...........................................................

B. ANNUAL ROAD MAINTENANCE PLAN

B1. Work plan and milestones ......................................................
B2. Cost estimates .................................................................
   B2.1 Regular maintenance work .............................................
   B2.2 Irregular repairs ............................................................
   B2.3 Total costs and sources ................................................
B3. Management of Community Fund for Road Maintenance

C. INOVATION OF THIS PLAN .....................................................
# INTRODUCTION OF VILLAGE CORE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBERS</th>
<th>Telephone number (if available)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Leader:</td>
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</table>

We represent ....... Households of ................... village, Mong Hoa commune, with total population of ......... people.

Village road network is .......... Kilometres.
A. VILLAGE ROAD INVENTORY

Village .........................
A1. VILLAGE ROAD MAP

Village ............................................

Symbol:
TABLE A2. LIST OF ROADS, BRIDGES AND CULVERTS

VILLAGE: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name of Road</th>
<th>Length (m)</th>
<th>Surface</th>
<th>Width (m)</th>
<th>Bridges &amp; Culverts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE A3. LIST OF FOUR-WHEELED VEHICLE USERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Vehicle user</th>
<th>Description of vehicle (loading capacity)</th>
<th>Transport purpose</th>
<th>Transport frequency</th>
<th>Vehicle user address</th>
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</thead>
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</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE A4. ANNUAL ROAD INSPECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VILLAGE:</th>
<th>NAME OF ROAD:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length:</td>
<td>Surface:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ROAD DEFECTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road section</th>
<th>Description of defects</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(From A household to B household, or A and B on village road map)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(defects need for urgent repair, causes of defects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENT / ASSESSMENT: (urgent repairs; defects that need for continuous attention and gradual repair, causes of defects)</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<th>INSPECTORS:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
B. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE PLAN 2012

Village ..........................
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Inspected village roads and prepared plan for road maintenance</td>
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<td>PERMANENT WORK</td>
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<td>1) Clearing vegetation and removing them</td>
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<tr>
<td>REPAIR</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## B2. COST ESTIMATES

### B2.1. PERMANENT WORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Work-day</th>
<th>Tools, materials (if needed)</th>
<th>Money (if needed)</th>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
B2. COST ESTIMATES

B2.2 REPAIRS

ACTIVITY:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

DESCRIPTION OF WORK METHOD (may include drawings, tables):

COSTING:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Unit of measurement</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Unit price</th>
<th>Total costs</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

TOTAL
## B2.3 TOTAL COSTS AND SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total costs</th>
<th>Expected contribution from different sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work-days</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Fund</td>
<td>People's Committee</td>
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</table>
B3. COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

How do you plan to manage community fund for RRM to ensure transparency and accountability to villagers?
Do you have any plan to raise funds for RRM?

B4. WHAT IS INNOVATIVE IN THIS PLAN?