Developing drinking Water Services in Small Towns with the Participation of the Local Private Sector / MIREP & WASHOBA

Context

The population living in village clusters and small towns is increasing in Laos with the migration of families from rural areas. The access to basic services is often limited for these families and adversely is impacting on their health and productivity, perpetuating poverty. In the past, social services were provided by the central level and since the decentralization process, these are now under the responsibility of provincial authorities for a better adaptability to local contexts and for communities empowerment. Besides, the legal framework has evolved to make room to the non-state service providers (domestic private entrepreneurs) in the water sector through Public-Private Partnerships, leading to more demand responsive and efficient services.

2004-2017, more than 10 years experience

The MIREP programme was launched in 2004 upon the initiative of the Department of Housing and Urban Planning (DHUP) within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) with the objective to develop the access to water supply in small towns of Laos through small-scale piped water schemes managed under Public Private Partnership (PPP). Between 2004 and 2011, eight water supply services were established to provide drinking water in emerging small towns of Laos.

Objectives

Following the successful introduction of MIREP learning by doing approach, the objective of the new phase (2012-2017) is to consolidate the knowledge and know-how of all actors involved in the process and promote innovations in technical, organizational and financial fields while extending further the access to water.

With the planned additional water schemes, a total of 19 to 20 water supply services run under PPP shall be reached in three provinces (Bolikhamxay, Sayabouri & Vientiane).

Objectives of the project

- Extend the access to sustainable and safe drinking water services.
- Reinforce local stakeholders’ capacities to plan, manage and regulate safe water services.
- Set-up inclusive governance and financial models for drinking water service in small towns.
- Encourage technical and

The project in figures

- Period: 2004 – 2017
- 4 provinces targeted
- 11 water services in operation, 7 new on-going projects
- Population currently covered: 4,000 households (24,000)
Building partnerships between public authorities and the private sector

> Encouraging public leadership
MIREP contributes to building partnerships between the public and the private sectors. Small enterprises are selected by public authorities through transparent tendering process and contracts are established to facilitate the regulation of the services at local level.

> Strengthening capacities
To become collectively more effective and more relevant, building the capacities of individuals and organizations is essential. GRET is providing trainings to water supply private operators on operation and maintenance (O&M) and to public authorities on water public service management through PPP and water services regulation.

> Promoting service users rights
Involvement of the population as key stakeholders of the project is encouraged. Community consultations are organized during and after project implementation, and users rights and obligations are promoted via representatives, heads of villages and heads of units.

EXPECTED RESULTS
- Over 80,000 people have access to safe drinking water including poor-households, schools and temples.
- 15 to 20 Build Operate Transfer (BOT - concession) 25-years contracts are signed between the local authorities (project owner) and local enterprises.
- A sound regulatory scheme is in place for the monitoring of drinking water services performances and to assist the project owner in regulating the BOT contracts and the water tariff.
- The MIREP approach is promoted countrywide and the provincial authorities are encouraged to develop small-scale water supply services managed under PPP.

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Active in Lao PDR since 2004, GRET is an International development NGO that has been actively fighting poverty and inequalities for 38 years on all levels and in a broad range of subjects.