

The human dignity initiative: Community-based safety nets as tools for human development



UN Trust Fund for Human Security

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Fast Facts

Country: Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Thailand; Vietnam

Duration: September 2002 to December 2003

Implementing UN Agencies: ESCAP

Budget: \$480,430

Key Words: Poverty reduction; participatory community development; health; education

BACKGROUND

The economic crisis affecting some Asian countries at beginning of the new millennium left an increased number of people vulnerable to poverty and community dislocation. In response, national and international bodies proposed and implemented mechanisms that would provide safety nets for those in need. ESCAP's experience suggested, however, that such programmes stood a better chance of success if

they rose from the needs expressed by the affected communities themselves, especially as such top-down approaches failed to address the disruption of traditional community support networks. Following a pilot initiative in Bangkok, this project took these lessons learned and implemented projects across Thailand as well as in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Vietnam.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project worked to improve the quality of life in low-income communities by enabling targeted groups to design and implement community-based development strategies. A series of workshops was conducted in each location to train community members, local Government officials, local

stakeholders and staff from the supporting organisations on the principles of the project's participatory approach. Each target community then formulated and implemented its own development action plans.

BENEFICIARIES

The project targeted 25 vulnerable communities in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. By taking a participatory and multi-sectoral approach, communities benefited from micro-credit

and income generation activities, improved access to education, improvements in healthcare, support to elderly and disabled individuals, as well as efforts to improve community solidarity.