

Management response for Endline Report – Cao Lanh Bridge Impact Evaluation

Project: Australia provided AUD168 million from 2011-2018 for the Cao Lanh Bridge Project (CLBP) to co-finance the design and civil works for the Cao Lanh Bridge over the Mekong River in southern Vietnam as well as interconnecting roads. The bridge was part of the Central Mekong Delta Connectivity Project (CMDCP). On 27 May 2018, the Cao Lanh Bridge and its inter-connecting roads were officially opened to public transport, directly benefiting more than five million people in the Mekong Delta region through improved access to markets and services in Vietnam. An estimated 170,000 people cross the bridge daily.

Endline report: Adam Smith International and the Mekong Development Research Institute (MDRI) was commissioned to undertake the Cao Lanh Bridge Impact Evaluation from 2016 to 2021 to evaluate the socio-economic and inclusive development impacts of the CLBP. The impacts of the entire CMDCP were also examined wherever possible. The evaluation includes a before-and-after approach with time-series and panel data to measure socio-economic benefits, and three surveys conducted in 2017, 2019 and 2021.

Management response: DFAT considers the report, finalised in July 2021, to be of high quality. It utilised a thorough mixed-method approach to integrate various evaluation methods at every stage of the evaluation process, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data for contribution and attribution analysis.

DFAT agrees with the report's findings that the CLBP was a successful investment. The Cao Lanh Bridge and the Connectivity Project have become an invaluable asset of Dong Thap and the Central Mekong Delta, including:

- the results of the endline survey indicated that the Cao Lanh Bridge and the Connectivity Project yielded positive impacts to the target provinces. The most prominent impact was the improvement of inter-provincial mobility and connectivity in Dong Thap and the Central Mekong Delta.
- the Project made Dong Thap and An Giang more attractive to investors, which contributed in rapid investment growth in those provinces in 2018 and 2019.
- the Benefit-Cost Analysis shows that the Cao Lanh Bridge brought economic benefit double that of the initial project investment.

DFAT notes the report's valuable information on longer-term impacts, and will monitor and incorporate where possible in future development programming, including:

- the Cao Lanh Bridge and the Connectivity Project acted as a catalyst for Government of Vietnam investments in road transport infrastructure in the local area. The Cao Lanh Bridge could better assist Vietnam in building resilient and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Mekong Sub-region by creating a better regional economic connectivity for facilitation of goods and trade and attracting more investments.
- the resilience of the bridge design and improvements to Government of Vietnam practices to enhance future infrastructure development were well supported by the evidence available. Based on the evidence, the benefits of the investment are likely to endure in all areas.
- investment opportunities and economic growth in the area will drive demand for skilled labour. Important for local workers, particularly female, to be equipped with the necessary skills (including through vocational training) to take advantage of employment opportunities to improve income and livelihoods.
- a follow-up survey is recommended in the next five years to, post COVID-19 containment and completion of the expressway to provide a full evaluation of the Cao Lanh Bridge