

# **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN CROSS-BORDER TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE: EVIDENCE FROM THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Addressing organizational capacity in cross-border transport infrastructure (CBTI) projects is critical to reduce development gap among counterparts. Variety of bureaucratic hierarchy levels of administration is significantly mixed up with responsibilities, incentives, and benefits in both national and subregional levels. The study deals with the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) project adopted by the Greater Mekong Subregion Program (GMS), emphasizing in the quantity and quality of organizational capacity throughout the CBTI development. It examines the role of CBTI-related stakeholders towards coordinating organizational structure networks in the transport facilitation context, and discusses associated issues and challenges. Examining the National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), the study analyzes the progress of coordination between national and subregional counterparts, throughout organizational capacity framework.

*Keywords: Organizational capacity, Regional integration, Cross-border transport infrastructure, East-West Economic Corridor, Greater Mekong Subregion*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Among variety of hierarchy levels of administration in transportation planning, the organizational capacity impacts vary across structures and sectors, by the influence towards both quantity and quality of infrastructure implementation and operation. This has been generally understood as an organizational hierarchic mode of coordination, and often described as command-and-control type of planning (Kearns and Paddison, 2000). Significantly, the trend toward regional integration in Asia is expanding to highlight the importance of structural barriers throughout institutional and organizational capacity development (Brooks and Hummels, 2009). In practice, a complex interplay of multi-leveled bureaucratic organizations among counterparts is gradually influenced the scope of organizational capacity. Multinational infrastructure projects and their backward and forward

interlinkages provide an important lens to understand the nature of organizational spillover. Cross-border transport infrastructure (CBTI) is one of fundamental determinants that mixed up with responsibilities, incentives, and benefits among overall stakeholders (ADB, 2009b; Bhattacharyay, 2009; and World Bank 2009). Indeed, its framework challenges national resources, as well as overcome gap between neighboring counterparts, which influences not only absolute, but also comparative, advantages. In a dynamic context, the CBTI itself is adopted as a regional public goods that moves factors of production within and across countries, thus involving the regional integration attaining harmonized productivity. Addressing the regional integration, the research aims to examine the organizational capacity on the dimension of integrating transport facilitation throughout the CBTI mechanism. It is hypothesized herein that the degree of organizational capacity will be influenced by two levels, that is, national and regional level. The CBTI, for instance, is characterized by intensive interactions between both levels of governance. A case study of East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) project in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) program is investigated to verify the hypothesis.

The study first investigates an expanded definition of organizational capacity, clarified the efficient framework to organization's structure, which particularly identifies the functional performances between bureaucratic organizations. Section 2 provides the roles of CBTI and their importance for enhancing capacity development in the GMS context. Section 3 examines the organizational capacity in the EWEC/CBTI projects both national- and subregional-levels frameworks. Section 4 analyses the potential of the public agencies which are significant to measure with analytical frameworks to handle operational CBTI projects throughout organizational capacity development. Section 5 summarizes the findings of this paper.

## **OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY**

The GMS program is an economic assistance concept that the ADB has initiated since 1992 for the purpose of strengthening economic ties and promoting economic cooperation among six countries along the Mekong River Basin: Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. In 1994, three CBTI projects were designated as road improvement of transport priority projects, consequently adapted to economic corridors concept at the GMS Eighth Ministerial Meeting in 1998, composed of East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC), North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC), and Southern Economic Corridor (SEC), as shown in Fig. 1 (ADB, 2005a). Periodically, economic corridors are aimed at (i) extending the benefits of improved transport links to remote and landlocked locations, which have been disadvantaged by their lack of integration with more prosperous and better located neighboring areas; (ii) providing a spatial focus to GMS activities, with the backbone, growth centers and nodal points serving as catalyst to the development of surrounding areas; (iii) opening up any opportunities for various types of investments from within and outside the members; (iv) enhancing the impact of subregional activities through the clustering of projects; (v) serving as a mechanism for prioritizing and coordinating investments among neighboring countries; and (vi) generating tangible demonstration efforts (ADB, 2009a). With respect to multinational and multilevel organizations involving in the CBTI projects, the various factors are



Figure 1 – GMS Main Corridors Network-EWEC, NSEC, and SEC

Source: ADB, 2005a

coordinated by: the increasing interrelationship between stakeholders; the growing number of actors and agencies involved in development process; the overlap roles and responsibilities among actors and counterparts; and etc. Thus, these organizations not only relate to the differences in regulatory regimes of national government, but also reflect much boarder differences in values, cultures and languages (Nijkamp et al, 1990; Israel, 1998).

Consistency with operational practice with the ADB, the definition of CBTI is broad and inclusive (Fujimura and Edmonds, 2006). While the CBTI projects often evokes images of large-scale physical projects as hard infrastructure, non-physical one is equally important as soft infrastructure, supporting environment of project procedures, regulations, and policy frameworks (ADB, 2000; Bhattacharyay, 2008; Stone and Strutt, 2009). Such frameworks particularly abides by a double track approach: (i) construction of CBTI projects; and (ii) implementation of organizational capacity development. Enhancing regional connectivity through the CBTI framework requires strong commitments and partnerships among GMS governments (ADB, 2007a). Accordingly, it is essential to examine the bureaucratic structures throughout their organizational capacity among both national and subregional levels.

## **DEFINITION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Differences between “organization” and “institution” are crucial to realization of development objectives of capacity building scheme. Broadly defined, institutions are humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction, and organizations as “groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives under institutional restrictions” (North, 1990 and Ostrom, 1993). According to the New Institutional Economics, institutions can be defined as rule of the game in a society and organizations are players or teams (Stough and Rietveld, 1997). Consequently, definitions of organizational capacity are defined and diversely classified in different approaches as: (i) traditional institutional development approach; (ii) governance approach; (iii) new institutional economic approach; and (iv) capacity development approach, as summarized in Fig. 2 (Morgan and Qualman, 1996; and JBIC, 1999). Towards the GMS program context, the organizations are predominantly prior to the government organizations, imposed by assorted dimensions as both national and subregional levels.

The study is aimed to emphasize the structure framework of organizations, which particularly play a momentous role for implementing and operating overall procedures in the CBTI projects. The analytical framework is based on above mentioned four approaches in order to coordinate the organizational capacity development in CBTI progression. The information is based on interviews with senior representatives - including heads of government and administrations - of all the CBTI belonging to both national and subregional organizations, as well as private sector groups under the GMS Economic Corridors Forum (ECF) (ADB, 2009d; Uamturapojn and Kato, 2009a). Despite the number and diversity of the stakeholders involves, their opinions shared the vision of the CBTI development as well. The study has involved a range of informal interviews with local researchers, government officials, and international consultants, for determining the scope direction of the organizational capacity development. In addition, drafts of the information have been presented in GMS regional research conference for strengthening research findings (Uamturapojn and Kato, 2009b).

## **ROLE OF CBTI IN GMS CONTEXT**

Infrastructure is one of the “three I’s,” along with incentives and institutions, that are key determinants of overall growth and the magnitude and productivity of capital inflows to liberalizing economies (Hill, 2004). It can be defined as the basic facilities, services, and installations needs for the functioning of a community, categorized into ‘hard’ infrastructure and ‘soft’ infrastructure (Brooks, 2008). Therefore, infrastructure development is essential to the realization of GMS’s goal of economic integration, playing an important role in facilitating the fundamental mechanisms. Physical connectivity through CBTI development is crucial for enhanced regional integration and economic cooperation (JICA, 2007; Kuroda, 2006). These activities include enhancing availability of adequate standard, a reliable system of legal resource and dispute resolution, an effective competition policy, and the capacity of existing human capital to process exchanges (ADB, 2008a; Straub, 2008). The CBTI is identified in two important roles towards GMS integration. First, it is a fundamental infrastructure

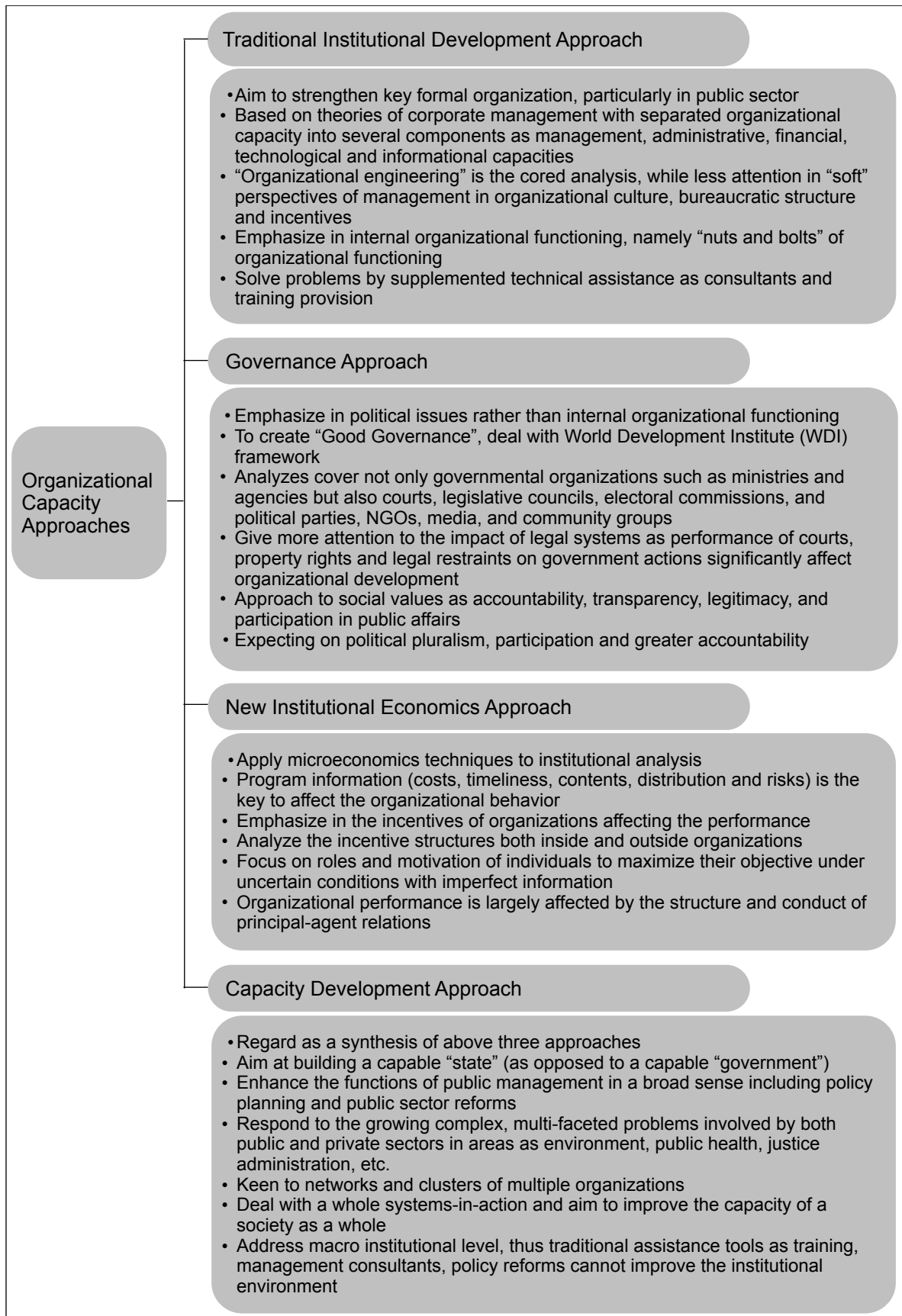


Fig. 2 - Organizational Capacity Approaches

Source: Morgan and Qualman, 1996 and JBIC, 1999.

promoting transport exchange and accessibility among member countries. Second, it basically facilitates both physical connectivity and non-physical integration as organizational structure networks and institutional development among countries (Brooks and Hummels, 2009). In particular to GMS program, the CBTI is defined as: (i) infrastructure facilities that involve physical infrastructure, and/or coordinated policies and procedures spanning two or more neighboring countries; (ii) national infrastructure projects that have a significant cross border impact, in that their planning and implementation involve cooperation or coordination with one or more neighboring governments; and (iii) infrastructure facilities that aim to stimulate amounts of regional trade, or are designed to connect to the network of a neighboring or third country (ADB/ADBI, 2009; Fujimura, 2008). Nonphysically, it is considerably involved by major roles of both public and private sectors, varying within and across sectors, organizations, countries in term of depth and breadth of regulatory systems, bureaucratic coordination, and policy making cooperation. Dealing with multinational road classification and design standards, the CBTI projects are becoming an important role for cross-national harmonization. The main obligations of project implementation are to: (i) adopt the highway network as a coordinated plan for the development of economic corridors; (ii) bring the national design standards into conformity with subregional classification; and (iii) facilitate the transformation of the transport corridor into a genuine economic corridor (Madhur et al, 2009). The pressure of more flexible and adaption governance is complimented with the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in the transport decision making process (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Since the CBTI projects are involved with multinational and multilevel organizations throughout different circumstances among and within GMS countries, the implementation process is interpretatively influenced throughout bureaucratic structured framework of traditionally centralized governments. This is manifested at multiple levels: the regional, national, and provincial (Stough and Rietveld, 1997).

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IN EWEC/CBTI PROJECTS**

In the GMS context, governance has long been dominated by national governments. Efforts to align organizational capacity through CBTI implementation come at the expense of domestic administration and unilateral liberalization among members (ADB, 2007b). Throughout different circumstances of organizational capacity in economic corridor development, particular to the EWEC, the CBTI projects are involved with diverse characteristics in both national in-line ministries and coordinated organizations among Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam (alphabetized by country). Coordination and cooperation of CBTI projects particularly create direct and indirect externalities involving organizational culture, management, standard, and communication. Consequently, pressure of compatibility in CBTI implementation process is complimented with the involvement of a wider range of organizational capacity development. Yet, the organizational capacity differences between bureaucratic agencies remain substantial (ADB, 2009c; Uamturapojn and Kato, 2009b).

### *Lao PDR*

With recognition of the obstacle of the land-locked location, together with the GMS program, the Government of Lao PDR has introduced a land-linked strategy as a tool to overcome and

perceive the regional integration opportunity (Oraboune, 2008). The Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) is directly responsible for the development of national roads in the whole country, concurred with the national land-linked strategy by the Department of Roads, which are particularly key benefits in cross-border transportation (ADB, 2008b). In November 2007, the MPWT was reorganized from the Ministry of Communication, Transport, Post, and Construction (MCTPC), which was lack of clarification of roles and responsibilities of civil servants. Although the government policy framework basically adapts for fostering decentralization, several impediments persist, including lack of coordination at the decision making level; the centralization of the early 1990s, which led to dominance by the center in policy making and budget allocation; the absence of transparent conflict resolution channels; and the hindrances to efficient service delivery created by numerous bureaucratic layers (Warr, 2005; Oraboune, 2008). In order to construct and implement the CBTI projects respecting the EWEC plan, beside budget, the MPWT has essentially developed number of cooperation with international agencies for technical assistances. An essential challenge associated with the CBTI projects is to balance bureaucratic powers and coordinate organizational capacity mechanisms.

### *Thailand*

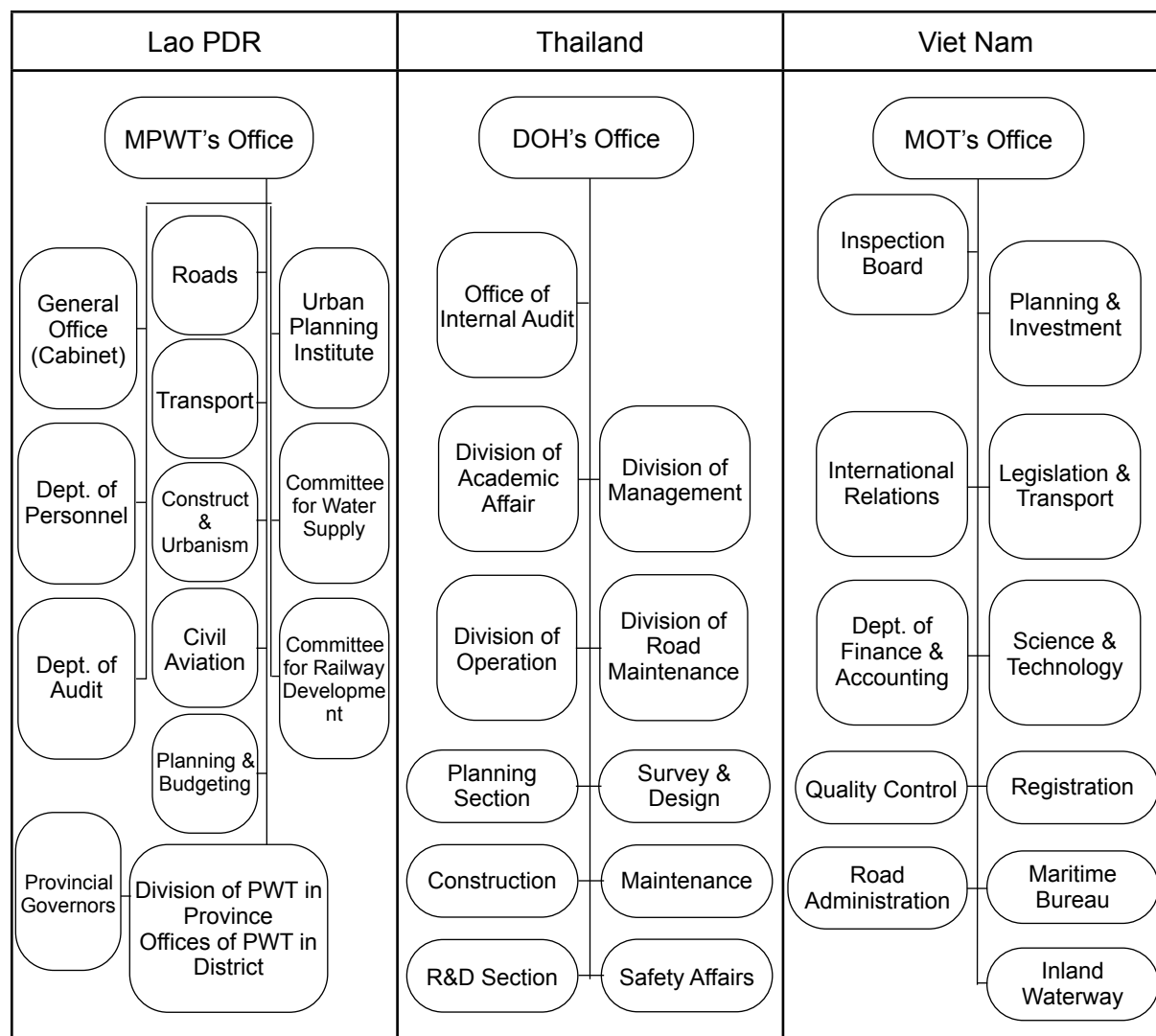
The Department of Highways (DOH) under the Ministry of Transport (MOT) is entirely responsible for interurban roads and highways, including CBTI projects. The DOH is the executing agency, assisted by a number of offices within and outside the Department, starting with the Project Management Office (PMO) to facilitate the conduct of the GMS highway expansion projects (ADB, 2005b; DOH, 2009). Two initiatives are critical for improving efficiency and enhancing service delivery in the CBTI projects: (i) rationalizing functions and streamlining organizations both within and between departments; and (ii) reducing the scope of central government intervention in the provincial performance. Besides, coordinated planning and implementation in the CBTI projects are particularly shifting towards improving standards throughout GMS agreements. Within key performances, the DOH's organizations whose respective mandates concerning CBTI implementation, are structured with functional lines, whereas the CBTI works typically crosses functional boundaries (ADB, 2006; Ishida, 2007).

### *Vietnam*

Transport infrastructure in Viet Nam is predominantly financed, built and operated by the public sector, either directly through the government or by quasi-independent state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The administration of the road sector is complex with different agencies responsible for the financing and implementation and others for investment and maintenance (Nogales, 2004). For the CBTI projects, investment finance is approved by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the implementation is the responsibility of the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Ministry of Transport (MOT), and maintenance is undertaken by the Viet Nam Roads Authority (VRA) with funds channeled through the Ministry of Finance (MOF) (World Bank, 2006). The implementation process is particularly dependent on the capabilities of the MOT in line departments as shown in Table 1.

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Table 1 - Organizational charts of main ministries and departments in the EWEC/CBTI projects



Source: Oraboune, 2008; DOH, 2009; Nogales, 2004.

Remarks: Lao PDR-MPWT was reorganized from the Ministry of Construction, Transport, Post and Communication (MCTPC) in November 2007 (Oraboune, 2008); and Thailand-DOH was planned to reorganized under the reformed Ministry of Transport's framework (Snitbhan, 2002).

Based on the interviews with senior representatives, the CBTI projects are amalgamation with capacity and capability among the MPWT, DOH and MOT, who are centralized to national governments, with coupling responsibilities between national and subregional frameworks. Indeed, essential organizational capacity remains lack of accountability and results in gap between counterparts. Their organizations are addressed and affected by the GMS structure, focused on motivation of country members to concentrate on the provision of seamless transport network (Uamturapojn and Kato, 2009b). Accordingly, the National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) were initiated for playing a crucial role on mandate for inter-ministerial coordination as a standing committee to ensure that: (i) there will be substantive and regular participation by all relevant ministries and agencies; and (ii) concerns of various affected interest groups are adequately addressed (ADB, 2009c). Particularly, the NTFCs respond in subsequent to provisions of the cross-border transport



agreements involving relevant ministries/agencies. They are charged with liaison with monitoring and evaluation of the CBTI implementation, involving the private sector in proactively consolidating the agreements into logistics operations. Therefore, they particularly replicates among line ministries and departments to incorporate the CBTI implementation and agreements into the national legal and regulatory framework, while crossing functions among administrative boundaries.

#### *Lao PDR*

The Lao PDR National Transport Committee (NTC), was created in 2002, acts as the NTFC for the purposes of cross-border transport agreement, which is a non-standing committee headed by the Minister of MPWT. Membership of the NTC includes: (i) Deputy Minister of Ministry of Industry and Commerce; (ii) Deputy Minister of Ministry of Finance; (iii) Director of Immigration Bureau; (iv) Director General of Quarantine Bureau; and (v) Director General of Foreign Affairs Bureau. Private sector representatives from the Lao International Freight Forwarders' Association, the Passenger Transport Association, and insurance companies are included. The NTC has four working groups on customs, transport, immigration, and quarantine (UNESCAP, 2005).

#### *Thailand*

The Thailand's NTFC is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, which is also non-standing committee. Membership is generally composed of senior officials at the Director General or Secretary General level. It is not a standing committee but meets on an ad hoc basis with secretariat arrangements, consisting one staff member from the International Affairs Bureau of the MOT and one from Department of Land Transport (ADB, 2009c).

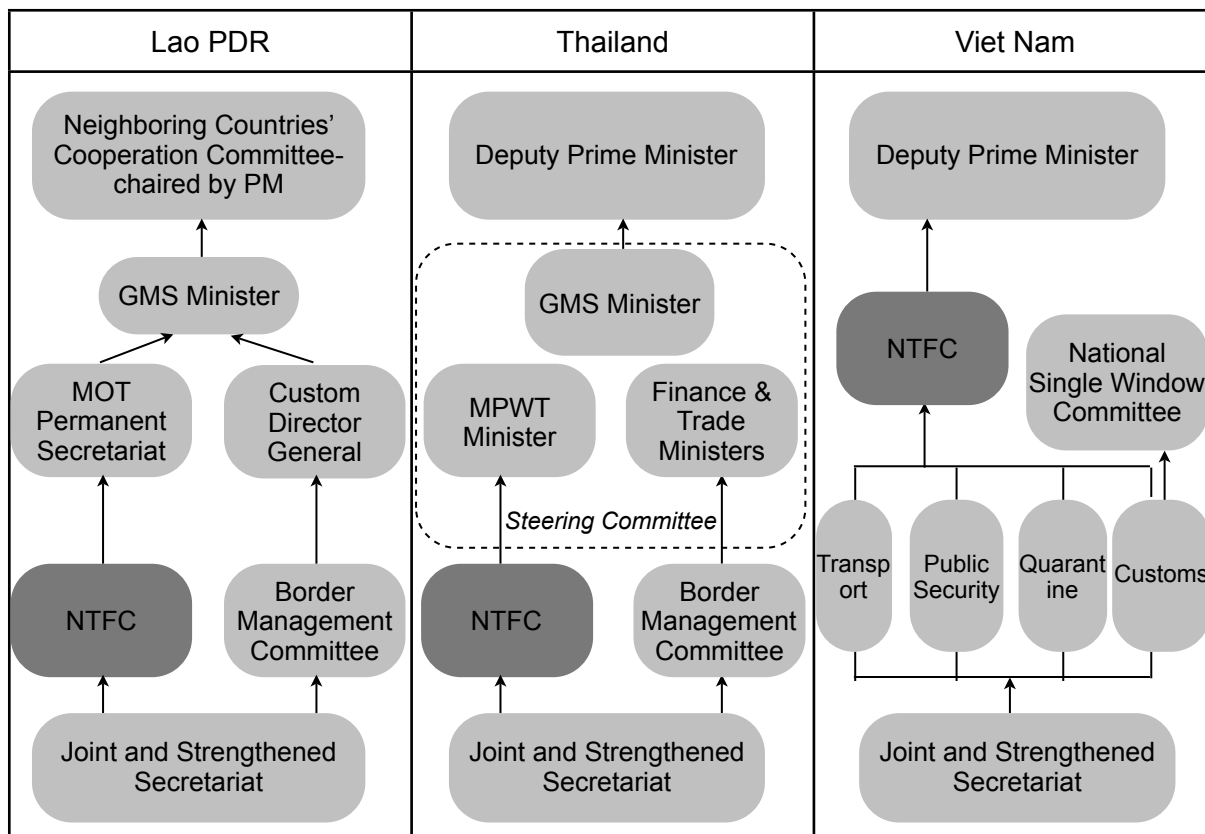
#### *Viet Nam*

The Viet Nam's NTFC, created in 2001, is chaired by the Vice Minister of MOT. The membership extends to following ministries/agencies: (i) Transport (including the Viet Nam Road Administration); (ii) Finance (Customs); (iii) Planning and Investment; (iv) Agriculture and Rural Development; (v) Health; (vi) Foreign Affairs (Immigration); (vii) Public Security (Border Control); and (viii) the Viet Nam Automobile Transport Association as private sector association representing some 700 trucking companies (ADB, 2009b; ADB, 2009c).

Regarding project implementation process, in ministerial and departmental basis, the organizational capacity development via the NTFCs framework is consolidated to achieve in the fundamental reform of administrative procedures. It plays as a key support to overcome diversity of bureaucratic organizational capacity, which the ADB carried out a diagnostic assessment on the national institutional arrangements for benchmarking the CBTI mechanism (ADB, 2009a). To strengthen the NTFCs capacity, while recognizing that the national organizations are determined on a country-by-country basis on sovereign choices, it is considered as: (i) a standing committee meeting at formally regular intervals in plenary sessions with an established agenda rather than an ad hoc arrangement; (ii) high-level representation from all ministries; (iii) a coordination mechanism; (iv) a strengthened secretariat; (v) involvement of local authorities and agencies at the border; and (vi) greater

involvement of private sectors. Addition to transform the EWEC into a productive economic corridor, the NTFCs are shifted the practical initiative for generating combination of transportation and trade facilitation (TTF) (ADB, 2009d). Proposed the modified organizational arrangements in the EWEC projects arising from the ADB consultation as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Purposed the organizational arrangements



Source: ADB, 2009d

Remarks: The Chairs of the NTFCs in the GMS six countries, constitute the cross-border transport infrastructure and agreement, met twice (first time in Phom Penh, Cambodia 2004 and Beijing, PRC 2007). By planned, the strengthened NTFCs and subregional secretariats will be approved in 16th GMS-MM, 2010.

In address concerns of overlapping mandates, interagency areas of activity are significantly focused on cross-checking among ministerial alliances as shown in Table 2. The NTFCs are responded to enhance the degree of collaboration and coordination both among different levels of government and among different agencies (ADB, 2009d). The organizational framework of the NTFCs encompasses public and private stakeholders, as well as a number of development partners, which together operate through between national and subregional organizations as shown in Fig. 3. This refers to the task of creating organizational capacity conditions for collaborative action. It draws attention to the communicative and interaction aspects of governance.

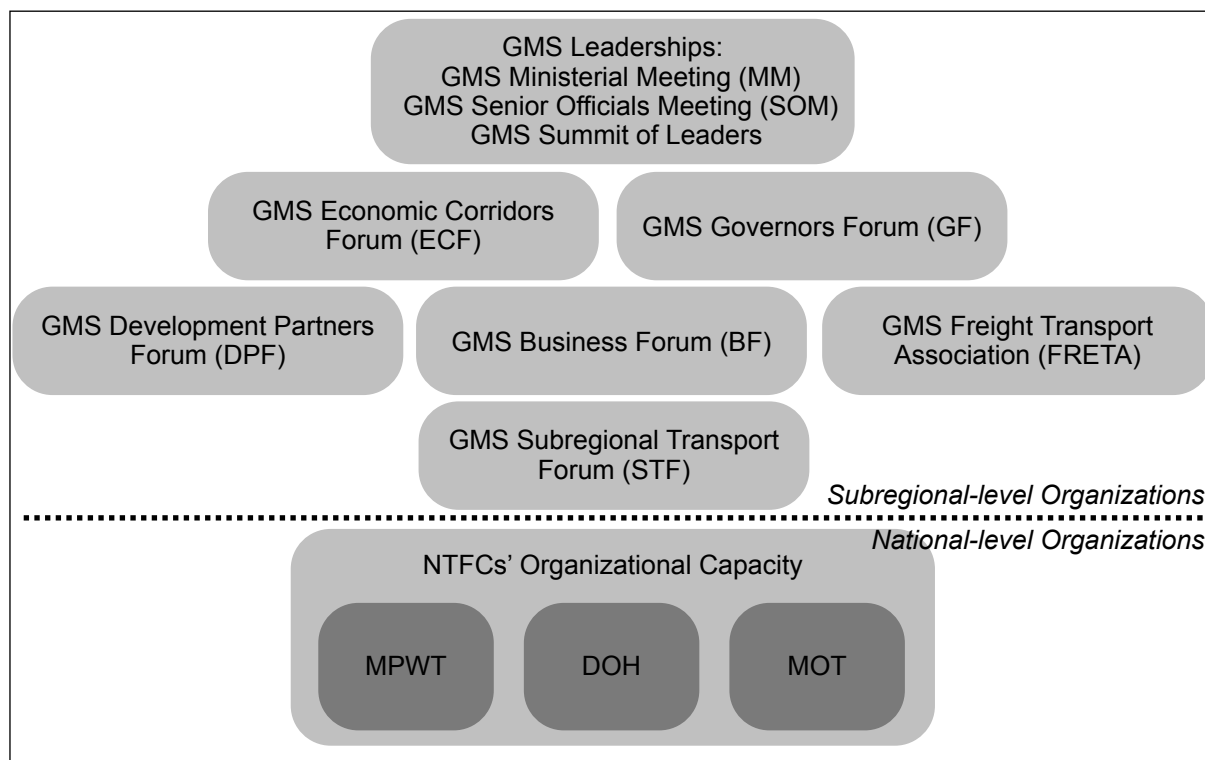


Figure 3 - Organizational capacity development framework of the NTFCs

Remarks: MM-the highest decision making and coordinating body, held yearly; SOM held twice yearly; SOLs held once every three years; ECF-the main advocate of the economic corridors development, serving to ensure the collaboration among forums and working groups; GF-the cooperation with the ECF securing commitment of the governors along the economic corridors development; DPF-the bilateral and multilateral development partners, identifying complementarities and potential areas of convergence and collaboration among the development partners; BF-the main advocate of private sector participation in the corridors operating as an independent non government organization through the joint initiative of chambers of commerce; FRETA-the private sector’s establishment within the BF mainstreaming the private sector’s role in the implementation of the cross-border transport agreement; and STF-the working groups dominantly handle operational issues and to oversee the implementation of CBTI projects and initiatives.

## ANALYSIS

Differences between countries in the quality of infrastructure services help to explain differences in total factor and actor productivities. On the organizational capacity, the GMS strategic framework as well as country strategies continue to depend on national bureaucratic organizations for implementing CBTI projects. Overall organizational capacity approach is tilted toward addressing national constraints rather than developing regional arrangements (ADB, 2008c). Under these GMS structured framework, the NTFCs are recognized as the fundamental key organization, playing a crucial role to strengthen the organizational cooperation among stakeholders. As shown in Fig. 3, the NTFCs remain at the heart of the process of regional cooperation, which are intermediately positioned between national- and subregional-level organizations. Therefore, the NTFCs are being pursued by both bilateral and multilateral frameworks through both (i) GMS member countries’ own initiative; and (ii) the initiatives of regional infrastructure cooperation programs. Yet, the NTFCs are heavily dependent on the beneficiary participation among ministries.

Towards the traditional institutional development approach, the NTFCs are particularly in public sector standing as a core bureaucratic structure and incentives. Furthermore, they are expected on multilateral participation between in-line ministries to handle operational CBTI projects throughout the process of developing the Strategic Framework for Action on Trade Facilitation and Investment (SFA-TFI), with the linkages of border management, customs, and quarantine within the CBTI projects (ADB, 2009c). Attention to greater participation in public affairs, the NTFCs are creatively acted in governance approach. Their organizations are differently structured and determined on a country-by-country basis based on sovereign choices, regarding their own incentive structures. Towards the new institutional economics approach, the NTFCs are mainly performed to meet various bureaucratic objectives, particular to economic benefits and social security. Being pursued through GMS members' bureaucratic structured frameworks, the major challenges of NTFCs organizational capacity development approach included: (i) assignment between local counterparts with various organizations; (ii) qualified communication channels between counterparts; (iii) establishment of regional standards; and (iv) timeline of project implementation and management. Intended through different standardized capacities, the degree of managerial accountability among the DOH, MPWT, and MOT are particularly influenced towards cross-checking practice. Where responsibility of project implementation and operation has been formally decentralized, the varying strengths and weakness of the NTFCs' organizations between countries significantly coordinate and develop the CBTI projects. Both frameworks for implementing CBTI projects and modifying responsibilities of national bureaucratic agencies, shared common principles, require investigating linkages throughout developing process. These two frameworks are to be worked in parallel, timing is to be consistent in between. As well, they both fall at the intersection between national and subregional levels.

## **CONCLUSION**

Being challenging by regional integrated dynamics, the GMS program is represented through various interrelated elements, particular in organizational capacity, for which there are several bureaucratic and/or semi-governmental bodies implementing, operating, and integrating. Hence, interests and priorities of national- and subregional- stakeholders throughout CBTI projects set the stage for organizational capacity development trends, which stimulated the efforts to improve coordination among bureaucratic framework via organizational capacity development. The formation of NTFCs illustrate the progress of coordination in-between national and subregional task forces, throughout new organizational capacity framework, incentively providing compatibility in initiated regional cross-border cooperation.

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