10 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides an assessment of the socio-economic implications of the proposed San Tin Eastern MDC improvement work, based on available information from the Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD). Other Government departments were approached but no relevant information is available.

10.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The overall landuse of the San Tin area has been described in *Section 2.5*. The main residential areas are the San Tin Village and the area of the west. In Hong Kong, pond fish farming is centred in the North West New Territories (NWNT). At San Tin approximately 80% (~ 350 hectares) of the area comprises fish ponds, which implies an important role of pond fish farming in the villages' economic activity. Carp polyculture is practised in the fish ponds at San Tin.

The current total area of fish ponds in Hong Kong under active operation is estimated at 1,190 hectares, yielding 5,250 tonnes of pond fish per year. Based on these figures, it is estimated that approximately 1,500 tonnes of pond fish per year is yielded in the San Tin area.

However torrential rainfall during the wet season caused serious flooding in previous years, leading to mortality and loss of cultured fish. In 1995, pond fish farmers suffered an estimated total loss based on farmers' claims of 219 tonnes of fish amounting to $2,690,000 in Hong Kong SAR.

10.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The San Tin Basin is a small subsidiary (21 km^2) of the Shenzhen River Basin and comprises a number of minor tributaries to the Shenzhen River. The North Territories Circular Road (NTCR) and the Lok Ma Chau Border Link are the two main physical barriers crossing the drainage basin. The construction of road network including the NTCR, the expansion of the rural communities, the modification of the drainage system, the infilling of fishponds and the encroachment on downstream watercourses have increased the incidence of flooding in the San Tin Basin. Loss of wetland, lack of regular maintenance and local constrictions in the watercourses cause flooding in even minor rainstorms. San Tin area are most susceptible to flooding in the vicinity of the NTCR where all the major villages in the basin lie.

The construction of the San Tin Eastern MDC is to alleviate the recurrent floods in the San Tin basin. The communities in basin will benefit from the construction of the drainage channels which reduces the threat of disastrous floods and minimises economic loss and disruption to everyday life, especially during the wet season.

Within the Study Area, pond fish farming takes a significant role in the economic activity and since this improvement scheme involves the alternation of fish ponds into channels, there will be direct economic loss due to the decrease in production from culture fishery.

The approximate area of fish pond to be lost in the project (including currently abandoned fish ponds) is 7 hectares, approximately 2% of the San Tin fish pond total area and 0.5% of the total active fish pond area in Hong Kong SAR. According to the figures provided by AFD, the estimated annual income from carp polyculture in Hong Kong in 1995 was $45,000/ha. Based on this figure, the direct economic loss due to loss of fish pond area for the San Tin Eastern MDC would be in the order of $ 0.3 million per year. It is expected that most of the affected fish pond areas are private land and there will be land resumption implications of the ponds for the channel alignments.

The alignment for the Eastern Channel has been finalised and supported in previous public consultations with the Yuen Long Provisional District Board and San Tin Rural Committee.

The construction of the channel alignments may affect existing local access of the area, but it is expected that the MDC design will re-provide alternative access to minimize any disturbance.

As the channel will partly follow the existing stream, and will generally has a flat structure with embankments not dissimilar to the existing fish pond bunding, Fung Shui intrusion to the villages is not expected. This will be confirmed during the public consultation process.