

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**ON**

**INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING**

**Of The Ministry Of Agriculture And Forestry**

**(PHASES I AND II)**

**(TA Nos. 1745-LAO and 2333-LAO)**

**IN THE**

**LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

**December 1997**

## CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

### Currency Unit - Kip (KN)

	At TA Approval (for TA No. 1745, average 1992)	At TA Completion (for TA No. 2333, May 1995)	At TA Postevaluation (October 1997)
KN1.00 =	\$0.0014	\$0.0012	\$0.0006
\$1.00 =	KN716.08	KN804.69	KN1,665.00

## ABBREVIATIONS

GIS	-	Geographic Information System
HRD	-	Human Resource Development
HRDP	-	Human Resource Development Plan
MAF	-	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
NEM	-	New Economic Mechanism
POD	-	Personnel and Organization Department
PPBME	-	Programming, Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, and Evaluation
PSD	-	Planning and Statistics Division
RMIC	-	Resource Management Information Center
TA	-	Technical Assistance
TCR	-	Technical Assistance Completion Report
TOR	-	Terms of Reference

## NOTES

- (i) The fiscal year (FY) of the Government ends on 30 September.
- (ii) In this Report, "\$" refers to US dollars.

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## BASIC TA DATA

**Institutional Development and Strengthening of  
the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Phase I - TA No. 1745-LAO)**

**Implementing Division: AWAR**

Item	TOTAL TA COST (\$ '000)			Actual Cost		
	Estimated Cost			FX	LC	Total
	FX	LC	Total			
Consultants	897	137	1034	876	136	1012
Equipment	122	—	122	147	—	147
Training	34	11	45	42	23	65
Office Accommodation and Services	—	60	60	—	60	60
Contingencies	79	10	89	5	—	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1132</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>1350</b>	<b>1070</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>1289</b>

**EXECUTING AGENCY: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**

KEY DATES	Expected	Actual
President's Approval		18 Aug 1992
Invitation of Proposals		28 Sep 1992
Signing of TA Agreement		26 Feb 1993
Signing of Consultant's Contract		21 Feb 1993
Submission of Consultant's Interim Report		Dec 1994
Submission of Consultant's Draft Final Report		15 Apr 1995
Tripartite Meeting		9 Aug 1993
		16 Jun 1994
Submission of Revised Final Report	Jun 1995	22 Jun 1995
TA Completion	Sep 1995	May 1995
TCR Completion		19 Sep 1995

**CONTRACTED CONSULTANT PERSON-MONTHS**

Expertise	Person-months	Contracted	
		Expected	Actual
Agriculture Programming and Resource Management Specialist		30	26
Institutional Development and Administration Specialist		7	6
Agricultural Manpower Planning Specialist		7	13
Domestic Consultant		29	29

**TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Title of Program	Dates	Number of Participants
LOGFRAME, Chulalongkorn University/Bangkok	8-21 May 1994	12
HRD Planning, Kasetsart University/Bangkok	3-10 Jul 1994	6
Business Administration Training, at Dhakrakijpundit University	1994	10
General Management Workshop	4-10 Oct 1994	17
Project Appraisal, in association with UNDP	3-13 Oct 1994	4
HRD Planning Workshop	26-28 Oct 1994	12
English Language Instruction	Jul - Dec 1994	32
Provincial PPBME Training	6-22 Mar 1995	68

**MISSION DATA**

Type of Mission	Dates	Person-days
Tripartite	Jun 1995	

Fact-finding	24 Jan - 2 Feb 1995	10
Review / Tripartite	14-23 Jun 1994	10
Tripartite	3-13 Aug 1993	11
Inception Report Review	12-23 Jul 1993	12

**BASIC TA DATA**

**Institutional Development and Strengthening of  
the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Phase II) (TA No. 2333-LAO)**

**Implementing Division: AWAR**

**TOTAL TA COST (\$ '000)**

Item	Estimated Cost			Actual Cost		
	FX	LC	Total	FX	LC	Total
Consultants	360	78	438	367	20	387
Equipment	57	20	77	62	—	62
Training	23	12	35	21	52	73
Office Accommodation and Services	—	42	42	—	42	42
Contingencies	38	9	47	9	11	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>584</b>

**EXECUTING AGENCY:**

**Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**

**KEY DATES**

	Expected	Actual
President's Approval		22 May 1995
Invitation of Proposals		13 Jun 1995
Signing of TA Agreement		31 Aug 1995
Signing of Consultant's Contract		10 Jul 1995
Submission of Consultant's Training Report		May 1996
Submission of Consultant's Draft Final Report		21 Jul 1996
Tripartite Meeting		31 Jan 1996
		Aug 1996
Submission of Revised Final Report		25 Sep 1996
TA Completion	Sep 1996	Sep 1996
TCR Completion		6 May 1997

**CONTRACTED CONSULTANT PERSON-MONTHS**

Expertise	Contracted	
	Expected	Actual
Agricultural Institutional Development and Programming Specialist	12	12
Human Resources Development Specialist	6	6.5
Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Specialist (domestic)	18	0
Data Processing/Analyst Specialist (domestic)	3	0

**TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Title of Program	Dates	Number of Participants
PPBME Training for 18 Provinces	27 Feb-8 Mar 1995	36
HRD Planning	13 Nov 1995	6

Job Description Seminar	18-22 Nov 1995	17
Study Tour on Management, Laos and Thailand	19-24 Feb, 18-23 Mar 1996	3
PPBME Training for 5 Provinces, in Khammouane	20-30 Mar 1996	15
Public Administration Systems in Agriculture Vietnam	1-7 Jul 1996	4
Civil Service Commission, Thailand	14-21 Jul 1996	4

#### MISSION DATA

Type of Mission	Dates	Person-days
Review (together with other projects)	May - June 1996	
Review	15-26 Jan 1996	12
Tripartite	23 Jan - 1 Feb 1996	10

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two technical assistance (TA) grants for Institutional Development and Strengthening of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) (effectively considered as phases I and II) were funded by the Bank. Phase I was approved in August 1992 for \$1.29 million, and Phase II in May 1995 for \$597,000.

The main objective of Phase I was to assist MAF in establishing an appropriate administrative framework for national agricultural programming. Phase II objectives were to (i) create a more cohesive agricultural administration by establishing a more extensive system for planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation (PPBME); and (ii) design long-term human resource development strategies to enable MAF staff to deliver agricultural support services. The justification for having Phase II was to build on the achievements of Phase I and to extend institutional development efforts to selected provinces.

Implementation of the two TAs taken as a whole was generally satisfactory. The two-pronged approach of combining on-the-job training with formal training programs was appropriate in raising the capabilities of MAF staff. Training of trainers was a key element in continuing further training after TA completion. Initial difficulties were met in the commitment of counterpart staff during Phase I, but Government commitment improved over time. Physical inputs—comprising vehicles, office supplies, and computers—were generally adequate.

The terms of reference of the consultants were generally comprehensive, although in the case of Phase I they were overly ambitious. The consultants for Phase I were selected on the basis of competitive bidding. Direct selection on the grounds of continuity and avoiding loss of momentum in the effort to strengthen the capability of MAF staff was opted for in Phase II. In Phase II, instead of the domestic consultants, MAF staff who had been trained during Phase I provided training to other MAF staff but were not engaged as consultants by the Bank. This approach was beneficial, as it served to further enhance the capability of the MAF trainers.

The independent implementation of the planning and budget component and the human resource development component resulted in limited linkage between the two major components and also limited interaction among the consultants and MAF staff. A stronger linkage would have enhanced the quality of proposals from both components as a result of cross fertilization of ideas among consultants and local staff. Wider interaction of consultants with MAF staff would have increased the breadth of knowledge transferred. The management style of the consultants was a contributing factor to the independent implementation of the components and limited interaction with local staff. Training workshops were well attended but often became overcrowded, resulting in lower levels of absorption of knowledge. Scheduling was generally appropriate, with flexibility maintained during implementation.

The quality of documents prepared was generally good. They were used by MAF staff after TA completion. The Human Resource Development Plan (HRDP),

however, would have been more useful if it had included realistic, time-phased steps for implementation. With TA completion and establishment of PPBME, MAF now has a system for information management, although the capacity for monitoring and evaluation remains weak.

Key issues comprise (i) the need to deepen the data management systems and to ensure system sustainability, and (ii) the necessity of upgrading monitoring and evaluation capability. Overall, the two TAs are rated as generally successful. Lessons learned include the desirability of clearly defined outputs to elicit greater cooperation from counterpart staff, the difficulty of ensuring committed counterpart staff participation in a situation with limited qualified staff, the necessity of training needs assessment and learning reinforcement to sustain training benefits, the desirability of having a training-of-trainers approach, and the benefit of using counterpart staff in place of local consultants. Donor assistance is needed to support further institutional strengthening of MAF and for implementation of the HRDP. A recommendation for the Government is that further steps should be taken to deepen the adoption and use of the PPBME system and to ensure that the database is updated.

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. Introduction

1. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's (MAF's) revised mandate under the Lao People's Democratic Republic's New Economic Mechanism (NEM), launched in 1986, calls for a reoriented approach to provide support services for agricultural development and to facilitate private sector development through the removal of structural constraints to agriculture sector growth and development. Two technical assistance (TA) grants for Institutional Development and Strengthening of MAF were financed by the Bank.<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this Report, the two TAs are reviewed as an integrated package of Bank assistance to develop and strengthen MAF.

### B. Rationale, Objectives, and Scope

2. The rationale and objectives of the two TAs were similar and closely linked. Effectively, the TAs have been known as Phase I and Phase II. To achieve NEM objectives, it was necessary to strengthen MAF's capabilities for programming, planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation (PPBME). Phase I was designed to assist MAF in establishing an appropriate administrative framework for national agricultural programming by (i) increasing MAF staff knowledge and capacity for using modern planning tools and equipment; (ii) developing information systems for managing agricultural resources and personnel; (iii) strengthening MAF's planning and budgeting systems; and (iv) establishing the basis for a manpower development plan encompassing national, provincial, and district level offices.

3. The justification for Phase II was to (i) strengthen institutional development aspects that could not be fully covered during Phase I such as the weak capacity in monitoring and evaluation; (ii) build upon Phase I accomplishments such as refinement of the Human Resource Development Plan (HRDP); and (iii) extend capacity building to include provincial level MAF offices for designing, implementing, and monitoring programs and projects. Phase II aimed to (i) create a more cohesive national agricultural administration by establishing an annual PPBME system beginning at the headquarters and in selected provinces, and (ii) design long-term human resource development strategies for realigning and retraining MAF staff to deliver agricultural support services. The first objective of Phase II is significant, given the new system of jurisdiction by the provincial authorities over the activities of the provincial agriculture and forestry services offices (Appendix 1). In the past, provincial authorities had direct control of provincial and district offices of MAF.

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<sup>1</sup> TA No. 1745-LAO: *Institutional Development and Strengthening of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests*, for \$1.29 million, approved on 18 August 1992; and TA No. 2333-LAO: *Institutional Development and Strengthening of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Phase II)*, for \$597,000, approved on 22 May 1995.

4. The first TA included (i) an international consultant team of three people for a total of 44 person-months to design the framework for managing information systems and provide on-the-job and external training in national agricultural planning, management, and administration; (ii) domestic consulting services totaling 29 person-months; and (iii) vehicles and computer procurement to support the administrative capacity-building activities. The second TA comprised 39 person-months of consulting services—18 person-months of international consultants and 21 person-months of domestic consultants—to (i) train MAF staff through short workshops and regional study tours, (ii) institutionalize a PPBME system, and (iii) move forward with human resource needs analysis and planning. It was designed to extend training to staff at the provincial level. Procurement included motorcycles and office and computer equipment to support the MAF capacity-building activities.

5. The Technical Assistance Completion Report (TCR) for Phase I was circulated in September 1995. No rating on the TA was given, but the TCR indicated that the TA had accomplished or made significant progress towards accomplishing all of its major tasks. The lesson learned was that the Bank must commit itself to a long-run, flexible program of assistance to achieve sustainable capacity building. A second-stage effort to continue institutional strengthening assistance was recommended. The TCR for Phase II was circulated in May 1997. It rated Phase II as generally successful. The lesson learned was that the HRDP finalized in Phase II could have been incorporated as part of the ongoing civil service reform (thus avoiding funding problems) had policy makers from the Prime Minister's Office and other relevant departments been involved in its formulation.

## **II. ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION**

### **A. Design of the TAs**

#### **1. Appropriateness of Concepts and Approaches**

6. Conceptually, the two-pronged approach used under both TAs of combining on-the-job training along with more formal training programs was appropriate in raising MAF staff capabilities in a transition economy. The approach of using a core group of MAF staff as trainers was instrumental in sustaining the interest of MAF in continuing training after TA completion. However, having consultants to set up an agricultural database and the PPBME system without ensuring full participation from a wider spectrum of MAF staff apparently contributed to instances of lack of ownership by MAF.

7. A comprehensive long-term plan for MAF's institutional development was not evident. In effect, TA outputs, especially the HRDP, would help in the design of such a long-term plan. The TAs, recognizing the long-term nature of institutional development, were aimed at providing a catalytic level of institutional strengthening.

Such an approach is practical. Further institutional development efforts would have to depend on MAF's efforts to maintain the momentum generated and the resources at its disposal to determine the extent and speed of such development.

## **2. Degree of Executing Agency Involvement in the Designs**

8. The extent of MAF staff involvement in the original TA design was not apparent for Phase I. But the change in scope to devote more consultant resources to manpower development was in response to MAF's request during the second tripartite meeting. Phase II design was influenced by an MAF request for further assistance in program monitoring and evaluation and in strengthening planning and programming capabilities at the provincial and district levels. Nevertheless, the importance of program level staff involvement in TA design was obvious. There were instances of senior staff involved in TA implementation without being clear on the final output expected of the TAs.

## **3. Quality and Adequacy of Physical Inputs Provided**

9. Vehicles, office supplies, and computer equipment procured under the TA were adequate, apparently reasonably maintained and in active use in MAF and in the province visited by the Postevaluation Mission. The inputs were generally supportive of institutional strengthening objectives, and were delivered on a timely basis during the course of the two TAs.

## **4. Terms of Reference of Consultants**

10. The terms of reference (TOR) for the consulting services, for both TAs, were comprehensive. The TOR of Phase I was overly ambitious, as noted by Bank review missions. The TOR for Phase II was more narrow in focus, though vague in specifying an approach to deepen the PPBME system. The consultants probably would have benefited from tighter definition of the nature of the database outputs to be developed.

## **B. Engagement of Consultants**

11. The consultants for Phase I were engaged in accordance with the Bank's *Guidelines on the Use of Consultants*. Domestic consultants were also engaged, primarily to overcome language difficulties. For Phase II, the same international consultants were engaged through direct selection. In place of the domestic consultants from Phase I, MAF staff took over the function of training which would have been done by the consultants (but these staff were not engaged as consultants by the Bank). The direct selection process was justified by the need for continuity and the fact that the second TA was a continuation of the first. The use of MAF staff in place of domestic

consultants was the result of the falling out between the international consulting firm and its domestic associates from Phase I. While there could have been a case of conflict of interest among the MAF staff, this approach helped to reinforce the transfer of skills made earlier and further upgrade the capability of MAF staff.

### **C. Organization and Management**

12. The independent implementation of the planning and database component work with the Planning and Statistics Division (PSD) and the human resource development (HRD) component work with the Personnel and Organization Department (POD) may not have been intended in the TOR but did emerge. The establishment of an information management system from the planning and database component would have staffing implications in terms of their number, quality, and timing of recruitment. Close linkage between the components would have ensured that such staffing implications would be considered in the preparation of HRD proposals. At the same time, the pace of development and sophistication of the information management system would be more in line with staffing constraints identified in the HRD component. The management styles of the international consultants apparently were a contributing factor resulting in limited linkage among the components and the apparent lack of interaction of the consultants with training participants and counterpart staff, save for a very few who had acted as trainers. Frequent consultations and cross fertilization of ideas among all consultants and staff involved in the two components would have added to the quality and workability of TA outputs. Interaction with a wider circle of MAF staff would have nurtured more extensive knowledge transfer and general capacity building and provided greater assurance of skills retained within MAF in an environment of frequent staff changes.

13. Training workshops were well-attended because of the high motivation among MAF staff for such training, though they often became overcrowded. This affected the quality of training somewhat, as equipment (such as hand calculators) and individual interaction with the trainers were inadequate. Training activities would have benefited from further advance planning, needs assessment, participant tracking, phased repetition, grouping of participants by skill levels, and more post-training interaction between consultants and trainees.

### **D. Implementation Schedule and Financing Arrangements**

14. The schedule adopted for the implementation of the TAs was generally appropriate. Flexibility was maintained, and there were schedule adjustments made over the two TAs. A major shift in person-months from the team leader to the manpower planning specialist accelerated the completion date of Phase I by four months. Phase II was completed on schedule, notwithstanding the additional 0.5 person-month extension. The actual cost incurred for Phase I was \$1,226,776 while that for Phase II was \$542,473, yielding a total savings of \$117,751. The savings arose from the reduction in the team leader's time and from the switch to MAF staff in place of domestic consultants. Counterpart funding was provided mostly in kind.

## **E. Supervision**

15. The two TAs were adequately supervised by the Bank. Close supervision by Bank staff helped to ensure a process approach to TA implementation, which was particularly important during the early stage of Phase I implementation when MAF staff commitment was less forthcoming. Eight review missions were mounted including those implemented in connection with other projects: five for Phase I and three for Phase II. MAF commitment evolved and improved with time. It assigned two project directors (one for each component), each with deputies. The cadre of MAF staff working with the consultant team was small but collaborative. Office facilities appear to have been well provided.

## **III. EVALUATION OF OUTPUTS AND IMPACTS**

### **A. Adequacy and Quality of Reports and Services Provided**

16. Comprehensive final reports were delivered at the completion of the TAs. The major consultant deliverables under Phase I included training manuals, reports on baseline agroecological work and geographic information system (GIS) database development, and a document on HRD proposals based on sample provincial manpower surveys (Appendix 2). The logical framework methodology introduced was an appropriate tool and was applicable in both computerized and handwritten planning exercises. The baseline work in GIS database development applied sound statistical techniques to verify data, while the provincial manpower surveys applied rapid appraisal techniques. Construction of the GIS was done largely by international consultants, and MAF staff were trained to use the system.

17. The output from Phase II comprises a series of training manuals in the Lao language, revisions to the HRDP, and briefs on a range of organizational and management issues directed mainly for the use of POD. Close consultation by the consultants with a larger group of MAF staff would have improved the practical application of the refined HRDP. The HRDP remained essentially a blueprint, lacking specific realistic time-phased steps, and was not adapted to fully match the resources and manpower available in-country for successful implementation. Nevertheless, it was used as a reference for long-range planning. The training manuals on planning subjects (especially on the logical framework) were very useful, though wider dissemination, especially to nontrainees, would have improved the impact. Tables and charts from the HRDP were being used in district and provincial workshops, though a system for updating training goals against annual achievements had not been established. The Final Reports of both TAs continue to be used as reference documents for a number of managers with English language skills.

### **B. Training**

18. Training was a key component of both TAs. Consultant records indicated a series of workshop sessions and their participants. A total of 246 staff from MAF and other line agencies were trained under the two TAs. The training materials prepared and the MAF trainers upgraded under the TAs enabled further training under MAF to continue, especially upon request from the districts and provinces.

19. The level of skills imparted varied with the background of the trainees. A number of them, particularly the MAF trainers, had some prior training in project management, funded by other aid agencies, and were able to enhance their skills and knowledge. For the rest who were exposed to the concepts of project appraisal, planning, and administration, and personnel administration for the first time, the level of skills achieved was considered to be basic and would require further reinforcement and upgrading. For a smaller group, technical skills imparted in the use of computer hardware and related software, and in statistical methodology, were appropriate for the academic background of the trainees.

### **C. Institution Building**

20. With the completion of the two TAs, MAF has in place a system for information management as exemplified in the GIS and the database systems for managing agroecological information and for simple project planning and budgeting. Phase I also provided staff development and equipped a Resource Management Information Center (RMIC) within PSD. Following completion of the two TAs, briefings by MAF staff to other agencies, including the National Statistics Center and the Soil Classification Center, provided the impetus for current efforts to link the database in MAF with the databases in these two centers, thus laying the groundwork for further strengthening MAF's database system in collaboration with other Government agencies. Nevertheless, sustainability of the RMIC, and its associated activities could remain an issue with inadequate budgetary and staff support as well as fundamental gaps in the district and provincial level data collection system. But this issue is not pressing in view of the ongoing and proposed assistance from aid agencies to continue strengthening MAF.<sup>2</sup> The database to document foreign-assisted project activities, supposedly set up under Phase I within PSD, was not active, and information on foreign-assisted projects was not readily available. But a parallel database is now with the International Cooperation and Investment Division of MAF. The database on personnel profiles has increased the efficiency of POD operations, though further expansion and enhancement of the system will be highly dependent on greater computer capacity. A system for updating the information at both the RIMC and the manpower database needs to be developed to ensure operational relevance of the information system.

21. The planning process or the PPBME system was established. It has led to closer linkage between the national and selected provincial levels and has facilitated information flows between MAF headquarters and the provincial offices. Ongoing training in planning tools, in most cases at the request of the provincial and district offices, serves as a mechanism for strengthening this linkage. In contrast to unstructured

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<sup>2</sup> Upgrading of skills and strengthening of the agricultural database systems is provided under an ongoing program on agricultural statistics and census funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. This builds on an earlier program on agricultural statistics funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization.

and irregular programming in the past, annual planning procedures and their outputs are more methodical, substantive, and painstaking as a result of applying such tools as the logical framework and benefit-cost analysis, and introducing simple budgeting and planning concepts. Nevertheless, the monitoring and evaluation aspect was not defined or made operational and remains the weakest component of PPBME. Further efforts are needed to have the system cover all provinces and districts.

#### **D. Performance of Consultants**

22. The consultants completed their assignment in accordance with their TOR for both TAs. The Bank, the consultants, and the MAF leadership demonstrated flexibility during implementation, facilitating timely delivery of services and equipment. The international consultants made a positive impact on those MAF officials most closely engaged with the team. Early in Phase I, two of the international consultants experienced difficulties in obtaining cooperation from local officials and completing their assignments necessitating a change in scope to emphasize the HRD component, and an adjustment in the phasing of the international consulting services, with four person-months of services being transferred from the team leader and one person-month from the institutional development specialist to the manpower development specialist. This change, as noted by Bank oversight, was needed based on the consultants' working style (particularly, working independently of one another) and the progress being made on the HRD component.

23. The depth of interaction between the consultants and MAF staff was not as extensive as hoped, evidenced by the selective implementation of concepts introduced in the TAs and lack of full local ownership of training manuals and approaches. Such lack of interaction was caused partly by the language problem on the part of some of the consultants, partly by the inadequate commitment of counterpart staff at the beginning of Phase I following the downsizing of MAF and partly by the working style of the consultants who focused most of the time on their computers, interacting minimally with MAF personnel.

### **IV. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. Key Issues**

24. Bank assistance has helped to build data management systems in MAF from a very low base, but the systems are not complete and not fully dynamic. Efforts are needed to update these databases frequently, as they are essential to the efficient operation of the PPBME system. With limited budgetary support and staff constraints within MAF, the data management systems run the risk of being neglected unless further resources from the Government or from international assistance are available to help maintain them. Negotiations for such assistance are currently underway with other donor agencies.

25. For an effective PPBME system, a proper monitoring and evaluation component needs to be in place to minimize costly investment mistakes by tracking implementation experience even as the projects are under implementation. Against this is the tendency to put greater priority on the project planning and preparatory process as it would appear more important to get projects started than to worry about monitoring their successful implementation. This tendency may explain why monitoring and evaluation appear inactive in MAF, apart from the reason of lack of expertise as proffered by MAF staff.

## **B. Overall Assessment**

26. This Report rates the two TAs as a package as generally successful, taking into consideration the initially low institutional capacity of MAF. Major indicators of the impact of the two TAs are positive, including improvements in the quality of MAF's annual plans, improved information flow between selected districts/provinces and the national level, and defined long-term objectives for strengthening human resource management based on the HRDP. The risk of some TA outputs being not fully useful does exist, as procedures for updating and expanding information systems are not yet fully in place. Nevertheless, MAF leadership has begun looking at ways to strengthen its information system across divisions and departments. The leadership also recognizes that the full PPBME system has not been adopted, with monitoring and evaluation as the weakest link. The HRDP represents an important contribution to MAF but requires further adaptation to ground this ideal strategy in domestic systems and training resource realities. Further efforts are required to plan annual training activities, and to garner external support for such training plans.

## **C. Lessons Learned**

27. Defining desired TA outputs, clarifying staffing requirements and indicators of performance (as encapsulated in a logical framework), and facilitating technology transfer with appropriate working relationships between consultants and local staff would have helped in ensuring greater cooperation from the Executing Agency and ownership of the TA outputs.

28. A participatory approach with committed counterpart staff during TA implementation was expected by the Bank. But the number of staff with adequate basic qualifications and experience in a transition economy is limited and is subject to other demands on their time. Added to this was the constraint of language and the work style of the consultants. Inadequate interaction with a large number of counterpart staff partly explained the lack of implementational realism of the TA outputs and limited the potential transfer of knowledge and technology to local staff.

29. For optimal training benefits, training needs assessments are important to anticipate skill levels and direct development of training courses. Spaced repetition of workshops, phasing of workshops to ensure cross-fertilization of ideas, and routine interaction with trainees after workshops are important to sustaining the training benefits.

30. The training of trainers contributed to the success of the TAs, but greater benefits would have been reaped with a wider circle of trainers and interaction with local staff.

31. Allowing counterpart staff to perform training activities in a transition economy with language difficulties and limited resources can serve to augment and facilitate the quick transfer of skills to Government institutions.

#### **D. Follow-up Actions and Recommendations**

32. Further institutional strengthening of MAF is needed to build on the good impacts of these TAs. Further donor assistance could comprise upgrading MAF staff skills in policy and sector analysis including techniques for analyzing trends, forecasting and making policy decisions, and managing project performance that will require improved information from the databases already in place.

33. External assistance to MAF is also needed for implementing the HRDP within the context of the ongoing administrative reforms.

34. Within the constraints of its budget, MAF should encourage greater use of the databases, take further steps to fully adopt and utilize the PPBME system in all districts, and provide the necessary resources to establish a system for updating baseline data.