

4

ADB Assistance Associated  
with Nutrition

---



## Rationale

From 1985 to July 2004, ADB financed 31 RETAs related to health, nutrition, population, and early child development (HNP-ECD) for a total of \$32.8 million. Beginning January 1996, ADB approved five RETAs directly related to enhancing nutrition conditions and setting the stage for ADB interventions in food fortification in 16 DMCs, totaling \$11.7 million, out of which \$8.8 million was financed by grants from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR). All of the RETAs on nutrition and food fortification were evaluated, except TA 9052-REG, which was recently approved and not implemented during the SES. A list of RETAs related to nutrition and food fortification, and a list of HNP-ECD RETAs, are given in Appendix 9.

The first three RETA activities aimed to start regional dialogue to (i) develop and implement 10-year investment plans in participating DMCs; (ii) develop a series of reports/publications; and (iii) initiate innovative public-private partnerships in the area of micronutrient malnutrition. The above RETAs were also supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA), and International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI). This approach was initiated to improve the capacity of governments in mobilizing resources from the public and private sector as well as consumers to implement more effective nutrition interventions. The three RETAs were implemented sequentially, with the results from one RETA laying the groundwork and justification for the next one. In addition, there are two other RETAs funded by JFPR, which focus on food fortification in Asian countries in transition (ACT), namely Azerbaijan (for one RETA only), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This SES evaluates the completed RETAs (TA 5671-REG and TA 5824-REG) and conducts preliminary evaluations of the ongoing TA 5944-REG and TA 9005-REG.<sup>21</sup> TA 9052-REG is not evaluated, for reasons given above.

<sup>21</sup> Titles of the four TAs are

TA 5671-REG: *Reducing Child Malnutrition in Eight Asian Countries*, for \$750,000, approved on 29 January 1996.

TA 5824-REG: *Regional Study of Nutrition Trends, Policies and Strategies in Asia and the Pacific*, for \$750,000, approved on 23 December 1998. Supplementary funding for an additional \$50,000 was approved on 27 April 2000.

TA 5944-REG: *Regional Initiative to Eliminate Micronutrient Malnutrition in Asia through Public-Private Partnership*, for \$1,100,000, approved on 17 October 2000. Supplementary funding for an additional \$200,000 was approved on 01 August 2002.

TA 9005-REG: *Asian Countries in Transition for Improving Nutrition for Poor Mothers and Children*, for \$6,000,000, approved on 26 April 2001. Supplementary funding for an additional \$850,000 was approved on 23 October 2001. Both amounts were financed by JFPR.

The RETAs were undertaken in 16 DMCs, but not every country continuously participated in all RETAs, as shown in Table 2. The countries were selected to represent a sample of DMCs from low- to middle-income levels, and those with low to high levels of malnutrition. The justification was to allow DMCs to define the regional agenda for nutrition in a participatory manner, so that assistance related to nutrition would be more relevant to the needs of country-level programming and poverty reduction. Participation in the RETAs would also help DMCs in their efforts to meet the development needs of children, protect the lives of mothers, and lay the groundwork for emerging nutrition issues, such as the nutrition transition and urban nutrition programming. This is needed because the Asia and Pacific region is currently facing a double burden of disease due to the nutrition transition, i.e., communicable and lifestyle diseases in addition to the old problems caused by malnutrition.

TABLE 2  
Participating Developing Member Countries in the  
Regional Technical Assistance Projects

Developing Member Country	5671-REG	5824-REG	5944-REG	9005-REG	9052-REG
Azerbaijan				x	
Bangladesh	x	x			
Cambodia	x				
China, People's Republic of	x	x	x		
Fiji Islands		x			
India	x		x		
Indonesia		x	x		
Kazakhstan				x	x
Kyrgyz Republic		x		x	x
Mongolia				x	x
Pakistan	x		x		
Sri Lanka	x	x			
Tajikistan				x	x
Thailand			x		
Uzbekistan				x	x
Viet Nam	x	x	x		

REG = regional.

Source: Technical assistance reports.

## Objectives and Scope of the Regional Technical Assistance Projects

The goals of TA 5671-REG were to raise awareness of child malnutrition as a public policy problem, and to link appropriate strategies and resource mobilization for its solution. The overall aim of TA 5824-REG was to strengthen country-level nutrition policy formulation, as well as identify core interventions and strategies to expand ADB's nutrition program. TA 5944-REG had a long-term objective to contribute to the elimination of micronutrient malnutrition in Asia and the Pacific. There are seven broad themes across the first three RETAs, which are summarized in Table 3. The list of objectives and scope of all RETAs is in Appendix 10, and the TA frameworks of TA 5824-REG, TA 5944-REG, and TA 9005-REG are in Appendix 11.<sup>22</sup>

TABLE 3  
General Nutrition Objectives in the First Three  
Regional Technical Assistance Projects

Objective	5671-REG	5824-REG	5944-REG
1. Strengthening country-level policy formulation	x	x	x
2. Assessing ongoing nutrition programs	x	x	
3. Assessing risks of malnutrition	x	x	
4. Promoting innovative and effective approaches	x	x	x
5. Targeting interventions at high-risk households and geographic areas	x		
6. Promoting fortification for micronutrient issues		x	x
7. Preparing governments for nutrition transition <sup>a</sup>	x	x	

REG = regional.  
<sup>a</sup> Nutrition-related chronic diseases in later life and nutrition problems of adults.  
 Source: Technical assistance reports.

<sup>22</sup> TA 5671-REG did not include a TA framework.

The first three RETAs were primarily executed as regional workshops. They were facilitated by international consultants and were followed by country workshops where policy papers were delivered, country investment plans (CIPs) for fortification were discussed, and national consensus building took place. The reviews were conducted at follow-up regional workshops. Part of the regional networking process was to involve other bilateral and multilateral agencies as well as develop public-private partnerships with the Danish Government (DANIDA), UNICEF, and ILSI (financed by the private sector) to build a common vision on the new millennium's nutrition efforts for Asia and the Pacific. This in turn was expected to help DMCs develop comprehensive community nutrition intervention strategies based on best practices of effective nutrition interventions for the current stage of development, and for emerging problems in a more urbanized and aging population.

The goal of TA 9005-REG was to reduce the prevalence of iodine deficiency disorders and iron deficiency anemia in ACT, thus reducing the prevalence of poverty through raised intelligence, improved learning, and greater productivity. TA 9052-REG is a continuation of TA 9005-REG, and aims to build the capacity of salt industries and flourmills required for food fortification, and government capacity to develop and strengthen the implementation of food fortification legislation and regulations. The description of the components, monitorable deliverables/outcomes, and implementation of TA 9052-REG are given in Appendix 11.

## Technical Assistance Completion Reports

Only two RETAs (TA 5671-REG and TA 5824-REG) had been completed and had their TA completion reports (TCRs) circulated when the SES was prepared. TA 5944-REG, which was originally scheduled to be completed on 30 April 2002, and rescheduled to be closed on 30 October 2004, was still ongoing during the SES. The two paragraphs below are based on the TCRs.

The TCR rated TA 5671-REG generally successful,<sup>23</sup> and the RETA was assessed to have successfully incorporated nutrition investments strategies into national development plans. The major lessons include: (i) the RETA partnership demonstrated the value of regional planning between an international finance institution and a United Nations agency (UNICEF),<sup>24</sup> which benefited the countries as a group and helped build a regional network to encourage improvement in nutrition; (ii) the country studies' joint peer reviews raised the quality of the outputs; and (iii) the division of labor between ADB and UNICEF was helpful in achieving success. It was anticipated that ADB would take the lead in several DMCs and would build on this partnership with UNICEF for country-level collaboration to mutual advantage.

The TCR rated TA 5824-REG highly successful based on the results of the RETA, which strengthened ADB's policy dialogue with DMCs on major nutrition problems and developed a set of principles for a nutrition policy paper. The major lessons from the RETA include: (i) the preparation of the country case studies by DMC research institutes rather than the line ministries concerned led to studies with especially sound analysis of the issues and problems; and (ii) the DMC advisory group improved the quality of all studies, particularly the synthesis report. The TCR recommendations were unclear; it mentioned only the RETA's intention, what it had developed, and that the regional seminar had recommended priorities for ADB's future role in support of regional nutrition action.

---

<sup>23</sup> This rating was based on the old overall assessment categories of generally successful, partly successful, and unsuccessful. Starting in September 2000, there are four overall assessment categories: highly successful, successful, partly successful, and unsuccessful.

<sup>24</sup> Strong complementarities in technical areas and in terms of credibility were demonstrated in ADB's activities in the PRC, where ADB and the Center for Public Nutrition and Development of China had direct collaboration with UNICEF and dialogue with WHO.