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Evaluation of Regional Technical Assistance Projects on Nutrition and Food Fortification



Relevance of Objectives and Design²⁵

TA 5671-REG was developed to assist DMC governments in raising awareness of (i) child malnutrition as a public policy problem; and (ii) the need to link appropriate strategies and resource mobilization for its solution. The objectives were ambitious and covered a range of issues.²⁶ The RETA's design at processing stage was relevant to the nutrition trends and issues of the region and ADB's related policies and strategies, such as the Policy for the Health Sector. In general, it was also relevant to nutrition development priorities of the participating DMCs. The RETA was designed in 1995, at the time when most of the participating DMCs had a central planning budgetary function. With the paradigm shift away from central planning, marked by decentralization of the budgeting and planning function to provincial, state, and district levels, as well as the shift toward market-based approaches by creating consumer demand and developing public-private partnerships in parallel with global market movements, the RETA's relevancy decreased (except for DMCs that remained relatively centrally planned). This RETA was highly relevant at approval and relevant during evaluation. Thus, overall, it is considered relevant.

The objectives and design of TA 5824-REG were based on the lessons derived from TA 5671-REG, and it intended to continue forging a regional partnership for the improvement of nutrition by increasing dialogue with various DMCs and concerned development partners about defining a role for ADB in helping achieve the reduction of malnutrition and its economic consequences to promote economic growth, and assist DMCs in reaching the MDGs. (The two RETAs were also meant to provide input to ADB's policy on nutrition that was planned for 2002.) The objectives and design of TA 5824-REG were relevant to ADB's and the participating DMCs' related policies and strategies. In general it was more focused, less ambitious, and participating DMCs played a more important role in defining the activities than they did in TA 5671-REG. It helped the development of public-private partnerships and food fortification. It was also designed to begin developing regional networking and sharing ideas of better approaches to improve nutrition status. TA 5824-REG is therefore considered highly relevant both at approval and during evaluation.

²⁵ Detailed evaluation of the four RETAs is given in Appendix 12.

²⁶ Detailed objectives and scopes of all RETAs are given in Appendix 10.

**TA 5824-REG Helped the Development of Public-Private Partnerships
in Some Countries**

Investment Opportunities–Merging Interests

Public Sector	Private Sector
National Advocacy	Awareness of Industry Professionals
Public Education	Marketing
Data Bank	Consumer Research
Product Development	Product Development
Large-scale Demonstrations	Proving Health Claims
Regulatory and Inspection Systems	Industry Best Practices and Quality Assurance
Tariff and Tax Incentives	Flexible Investment Criteria
Capital Investments in Plants	Capital Investment in Plants
Start-up Premix Costs	Premix and Recurrent Costs
Public Markets	Expand Niche to Mass Markets
Training and Capacity Building	Training and Capacity Building

Source: ADB. 2000. *Manila Forum 2000: Strategies to Fortify Essential Foods in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila.

TA 5944-REG has benefited from the completed RETAs and therefore has clearer objectives. The scope of this RETA is to help DMC research teams develop medium-term CIPs to eliminate micronutrient malnutrition, and to sponsor regional meetings to increase knowledge of best practices and build capacity in the region. The participation of DMCs from the previous RETAs has made this RETA more in line with the concerns of the DMCs involved. A distinct point of departure was established with the focus on food fortification, which participating DMCs identified as the most cost-effective nutrition improvement intervention. TA 5944-REG attempts to help countries identify innovative approaches that benefit the poor, by pursuing the best, most effective nutrition intervention, rather than a mix of activities most appropriate for the participating countries. Thus, at approval and evaluation, TA 5944-REG is relevant.

The design and objectives of TA 9005-REG are focused and clear, and are mainly geared at promoting sustainable food fortification programs. This RETA intends to improve nutrition status and physical and mental capacity of the poor by (i) focusing support on the poor currently afflicted or at risk; (ii) piloting related capacity-building processes for establishing a regional

network of marketing, distribution, and rules of trade; and (iii) demonstrating the efficacy of a regional approach to solving a common nutrition problem that is depressing both human and economic development in the region.

The scope of TA 9005-REG is to (i) conduct regional roundtable conferences in seeking policy commitment and agreement on the essential requirements for fortifying salt and flour, (ii) establish fortification of salt and flour, (iii) support the regulatory authorities in developing food-testing instruments and surveys for monitoring the enriched food program for mothers and children, and (iv) develop social marketing approaches to create demand by the poor. The participating DMCs for this RETA were limited to the Central Asian republics (except Turkmenistan) and Mongolia. Strong ownership was built by close collaboration between governments, local experts, and ADB in developing the RETA's objectives, coordinated by the local team leader. It has also complemented ongoing UNICEF work in high-risk areas for anemia and iodine deficiency disorders, e.g., in the Kyrgyz Republic, where the UNICEF-supported program established in 1996 was not making progress, and has not succeeded in achieving its expected impact. TA 9005-REG is therefore highly relevant both at approval and at evaluation.

Efficacy

The efficacy of TA 5671-REG in achieving the objectives was mixed, with different levels of effectiveness in different countries. In most participating DMCs, dialogue was established. In the PRC and Viet Nam, the achievements were beyond expectation, but in others, such as Bangladesh, achievements were very limited. Targets related to the development of papers, publications, meetings, and workshops were generally met. The RETA has developed seven feasible 10-year investment plans, which helped Viet Nam to adopt a 10-year national health development plan that the Government is currently trying to implement. At least one other country, PRC, is considering implementing the nutrition plan as a part of its 5-year national strategy. In DMCs that did not directly utilize the plans they developed under this RETA, there has been dissemination of nutrition awareness and the importance of intersectoral collaboration in the improvement of nutrition with education, sanitation, agriculture, and other concerned ministries. While some of the above achievements can be considered highly efficacious, some of the RETA's objectives have not been achieved. Therefore, TA 5671-REG is assessed as efficacious.

TA 5824-REG finalized the objectives initiated by the previous RETA (TA 5671-REG). The major contributions of TA 5824-REG were the successful 2000 Manila Forum on Food Fortification Policy and the finalization of the ADB Nutrition and Development Series,²⁷ which were of good quality and were built upon a series of issue papers produced under TA 5671-REG. These documents include country-specific reports, regional issue papers, and a series of publications on nutrition.²⁸ The country studies were sources of historical nutrition data and offered a description of ongoing programs. In general they were of high quality and accurate as situational analyses, but lacked detail on new activities and improvements in existing ones. Among other things, the Manila Forum on Food Fortification Policy stirred discussions on issues, such as the vision of cutting-edge nutrition technologies, what were effective interventions, and how nutrition problems were evolving. It was also an effective advocacy tool for some of the multilateral agencies, such as UNICEF. There is evidence that it promoted local research, i.e., in the case of Viet Nam.^{29, 30} Increased capacity of governments in planning is the underlying purpose of these RETAs. Technology transfer was primarily achieved through involvement in international meetings and country-based workshops. Some transfer of awareness in related ministries of the participating DMCs on issues such as nutrition transition, the problems of urban nutrition, and effectiveness of various approaches toward nutrition improvement was achieved. Based on the above, TA 5824-REG is considered efficacious.

TA 5944-REG has achieved most of its objectives, particularly in (i) identifying regional issues and actions required to accelerate production of micronutrient-fortified foods; (ii) supporting regional dialogue on issues

²⁷ As of July 2004, seven volumes had been developed for the Nutrition and Development Series, which were of high quality as milestones in the documentation of nutrition efforts in the region. While some UNICEF offices have reported that they were popular, evidence of these publications was not obvious in many nutrition planning and implementation offices in the DMCs observed. Some of the people involved with the RETAs had a few of the documents, but in general they were not readily available in ADB resident missions, and libraries of universities or health/nutrition research centers. General dissemination is done through the ADB web site.

²⁸ ADB. 1999. *Investing in Child Nutrition in Asia*. Manila; ADB. 2000. *Strategies to Fortify Essential Foods in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila; ADB. 2001. *Improving Child Nutrition in Asia*. Manila; ADB. 2001. *Attacking the Double Burden in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila; ADB. 2001. *The Nutrition Transition and Prevention of Diet-Related Chronic Diseases in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila; ADB. 2001. *What Works? A Review of the Efficacy and Effectiveness of Nutrition Interventions*. Manila; and ADB. 2004. *Food Fortification in Asia: Improving Health and Building Economies*. Manila.

²⁹ Thang, N.M. and G. Popkin. 2003. "Child Malnutrition in Vietnam and its Transition in an Era of Economic Growth." *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 16:233-244.

³⁰ Thang, N.M. and G. Popkin. 2003. "In an Era of Economic Growth, is Inequity Holding Back Reductions in Child Malnutrition in Vietnam?" *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 12:1-6.

related to food standards, regulations, trade, and surveillance; (iii) creating a framework for regional fortification of certain essential staples; and (iv) developing CIPs in selected DMCs. The CIPs are of superior quality in content and layout. TA 5944-REG has also covered its scope in (i) helping DMC research teams develop medium-term CIPs to eliminate micronutrient malnutrition, and (ii) sponsoring regional meetings to increase knowledge of best practices. TA 5944-REG is therefore considered efficacious.

The objective of TA 9005-REG in piloting an umbrella regional program for delivering micronutrient-fortified salt and wheat flour to the populations of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan has been achieved, particularly for salt iodization, and the lessons identified in developing this regional network are to be followed by wheat flour fortification. The RETA has also successfully covered most of its scope. It has been very useful in mobilizing countries to develop and maintain effective programs, and in establishing a regional network. Close collaboration between the public and private sectors, NGOs, and other development partners is evident. The regional quarterly reports are produced on time, include sufficient details, and are of high quality. TA 9005-REG is highly efficacious.



Billboard advertising fortified flour in the Kyrgyz Republic. The upper wording reads: "The strength of iron—a spring of health." The lower part shows the involvement of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Health and ADB's TA 9005-REG.

Efficiency

There were delays in completion of the two RETAs: TA 5671-REG was extended for 24 months and TA 5824-REG for 20 months. However, holding regional workshops appears to be more efficient and effective in promoting regional discussion than other alternatives that might include the fielding of 10 different field teams to work within participating DMCs. It could also reduce administrative overheads and processing time for delivering the same services as compared with multiple TAs. Delays were mainly due to finalizing various country-level assignments, suggesting that more participatory input in RETA

design could have improved the efficiency of these RETAs. Overall, both RETAs are considered efficient.

TA 5944-REG experienced delays, was extended from its original completion date of 30 April 2002 to 30 October 2004, and still ongoing as of the preparation of this SES. This was partly due to the change in scope that increased the RETA's funding by \$200,000. Disbursements had reached 98.9% by the end of September 2004. Although time-wise the RETA is less efficient, it has achieved its objectives well and appears to have significant impacts. Hence, it is considered efficient.

The change in scope due to Azerbaijan's inclusion in TA 9005-REG has resulted in substantial additional activities, which were funded by a supplementary RETA, amounting to \$850,000. This has caused an extension of the completion date from 31 August 2002 to 31 December 2004. However, by the end of September 2004, the RETA had already committed 98.8% of its revised approved funding. Having a regional coordinating office in Almaty, Kazakhstan, has enabled effective coordination of the country offices and their activities. This RETA is assessed as efficient.

Sustainability and Impact

TA 5671-REG was most likely sustainable at least in two participating DMCs. In general, it was likely sustainable, as it laid the groundwork for TA 5824-REG, which widened the policy discussion from a planning approach to support community nutrition and food security into partnerships to bring fortification as a primary approach for micronutrient deficiency control, to develop a life cycle approach to nutrition, and to help map out effective strategies in light of the nutrition transition. Therefore, both RETAs are likely sustainable.

The impacts of TA 5671-REG and TA 5824-REG were substantial in the more centrally planned economies. For example, as a follow-on to the RETAs in PRC, ADB's close collaboration with UNICEF and WHO resulted in the ongoing TA 3992-PRC: *Strengthening National Public Nutrition Planning*.³¹ This is a case where institutional dialogue, multistakeholder involvement, and processes toward consensus building have arguably taken center stage in progress toward integrating nutrition into national planning (i.e., the 11th

³¹ TA 3992-PRC: *Strengthening National Public Nutrition Planning*, for \$500,000, approved on 20 November 2002 .

Five-Year Plan). Nevertheless, ADB missed the opportunity to discuss nutrition in its PRC poverty profile. Positive impact is also seen in Viet Nam, where these RETAs helped to develop a new policy in nutrition. Participation in the ADB RETAs was cited in the policy document as one of the contributing factors to the policy development, which provided inputs to a comprehensive Eight-Year Plan for improving nutrition, and a strong nutrition component in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. However, impacts of these RETAs were moderate in decentralized government systems, and to date ADB has no policy on nutrition, although inputs for this policy have been produced by these RETAs. In decentralized government systems, a participatory approach that includes representatives from the state, provincial, or district governments to make this type of strategy effective could enhance its institutional impact. Therefore, the overall impacts of TA 5671-REG and TA 5824-REG are rated moderate.

In some DMCs, such as PRC, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, and Viet Nam, TA 5944-REG has generated support from various development partners to implement their fortification CIPs produced by this RETA, and Indonesia is integrating components of its CIP in a proposed urban nutrition project and preparing a proposal for a JFPR project on food fortification for the poor. The strategies outlined have been funded by other agencies, including Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) in PRC and Viet Nam, and Micronutrient Initiative (MI) in Pakistan. Thus, ADB has played the role of a catalyst. However, the transfer of technology in developing CIPs beyond the academic community is limited. The RETA is considered to be likely sustainable with significant impact.

TA 9005-REG has developed approaches that have enhanced the monitoring and risk assessment capacity of the participating DMCs in ACT. This allows the governments to make quick managerial decisions, which enable increased coverage and focus on delivery of fortified foods consumed by the poor. The RETA appears to have successfully identified new technologies appropriate to ACT, and has facilitated transfer of these technologies to governments, NGOs, the food industry, and consumer groups. It has mobilized other external assistance for nutrition and food fortification in ACT, and has become the basis for Loan 2007-KGZ(SF): Community-Based



TA 9005-REG identified appropriate technologies and facilitated their transfer—here, a simple test reveals iodine in salt as a dark color (purplish).

ECD Project. Thus, the RETA is assessed as most likely sustainable and likely to demonstrate substantial impact.

Overall Assessment³²

TA 5671-REG is assessed as relevant, efficacious, efficient, likely sustainable, and having moderate impact. The overall rating is successful.

TA 5824-REG is considered highly relevant, efficacious, efficient, likely sustainable, and with moderate impact. It is rated successful.

TA 5944-REG was still ongoing during the SES, therefore it is preliminarily assessed as relevant, efficacious, efficient, likely sustainable, and showing significant impact. Overall, it is tentatively rated satisfactory.

The ongoing TA 9005-REG is considered highly relevant, highly efficacious, efficient, most likely sustainable, and having substantial impact. The overall preliminary rating of TA 9005-REG is highly satisfactory.

TABLE 4
Overall Assessment of ADB Regional Technical Assistance
for Nutrition and Food Fortification

RETA	Completed RETAs		Ongoing RETAs ^a	
	TCR	TPAR	RETA	Preliminary TPAR
5671	Generally successful ^b	Successful	5944	Satisfactory
5824	Highly successful	Successful	9005	Highly Satisfactory

RETA = regional technical assistance, TCR = technical assistance completion report, TPAR = technical assistance performance audit report.

^a These RETAs are not yet completed; therefore, the evaluation should be viewed as tentative, and subject to revision at completion stage.

^b This rating was based on the old overall assessment categories of generally successful, partly successful, and unsuccessful. Starting September 2000 there are four overall assessment categories: highly successful, successful, partly successful, and unsuccessful.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

³² The rating criteria are based on the ADB *Guidelines for the Preparation of Project Performance Audit Reports*. September 2000. TA 5944-REG and TA 9005-REG were not yet completed during the SES, therefore, the evaluation should be viewed as tentative, and subject to revision at completion stage.