

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SAUD

TA No. and Name TA 4261-MLD: Capacity Building for Regional Development			Amount Approved: \$350,000		
Executing Agency (EA), Implementing Agency (IA) Ministry of Finance and Treasury (EA) Ministry of Planning and National Development (IA)		Source of Funding: TA Special Fund	TA Amount Undisbursed 58,272	TA Amount Utilized 291,728	
Date			Completion Date		
Approval 16 December 2003	Signing 23 February 2004	Fielding of Consultants 24 July 2005	Original 31 July 2004	Actual 8 January 2007	
			Closing Date		
			Original 31 July 2004	Actual 31 January 2007	
<p>Description Although the Maldives has achieved impressive improvements in social indicators at national level over the past decade, large disparities in economic and social development opportunities exist between Male and the outer atolls, where most of the poor live. In recent years the Government's policy and program approach to outer-atoll development focused on increasing local government capacity, investing in atoll infrastructure and social services, and encouraging cash-generating enterprises. The success of these programs has however been modest due to: (i) inadequate capacity for in-country education (and a limited private sector opportunities) have caused a large skill gap to develop; (ii) the private sector being still in its infancy and unable to provide on-the-job training in many areas; (iii) post-secondary institutions being unable to provide quality certificate and diploma programs in areas critical to regional development; (iv) a top-down approach resulting in lack of project ownership at local level; and (v) inadequate atoll capacities and operational resources. The needs assessment conducted by Asian Development Bank (ADB) during the implementation of Regional Development Project (RDP) revealed that most national and local government staff, as well as civil society, involved in planning had not been exposed to modern participatory planning techniques. The staff needed to acquire the knowledge to identify public and private sector economic opportunities that would stimulate sustainable development. The staff required exposure to modern methods of environmental planning and management and, to ensure that existing and future projects are adequately managed, training in project management, including accounting, budget planning, and scheduling techniques, were also required.</p> <p>Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs The TA's goal was to improve environmental and land management through a community-based approach that would support the Government's regional development objectives, and improve living standards. Its purpose was to improve staff capacity to carry out regional economic planning, participatory planning, environmental management, and project management. The final TA output would be increased awareness of environmental and planning issues and increased capacity for local management of project activities and community infrastructure and services. Specific outputs were defined as advising and training students in 4 subjects: (i) participatory community development planning, including integration of statistics into the planning process to analyze trends and opportunities; (ii) regional economic planning of interisland systems, including identification of financing sources to stimulate development and private sector involvement; (iii) environmental management in island communities, including water quality and sanitation, solid waste management, and coastal zone management; and (iv) project management and accounting, including project planning, and awarding and management of contracts such as for civil works and financial management. For this purpose, the TA was to engage an accredited university, consulting firm, or agency affiliated with an accredited university to carry out four 1–2-month courses in Male and on the focus islands. A high level committee was to select suitable candidates from Regional Development Management Offices (RDMOs), chosen line ministries and agencies, atoll and island offices, as well as island and women's development committees. To strengthen the partnership with overseas educational staff, expand and improve course offerings, upgrade local staff capacity, and ensure follow-up training, the TA was to coordinate with the Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHC) to include courses offered under the TA into the institution's distance learning program and set up a collaborative program with a university overseas.</p> <p>Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities Objectives and terms of reference were adequate, relevant and in alignment with (i) ADB's Country Strategy Program (2002–2004) and its updates, (ii) Government's priorities and (iii) findings reported by RDP implementing missions. They are the result of extensive discussion with both the RDP's (and the TA's) Implementing Agency, the Ministry of Planning and National Development (MPND), and the Ministry of Atolls Development, responsible for overall development in the outer islands. They also reflect discussions with staff from the RDMOs and atoll/island offices. The design of the TA envisaged the recruitment of a consulting team including 4 international consultants (6.5 person-months) and one national consultant (3.0 person-months). The first-ranked consulting firm proposed the services of a team of 5 international consultants – bringing additional cross-cutting expertise – and a national expert. The economy of input provision is considered to be adequate. Whilst the consultant's team included a large number of international consultants, it is generally recognized that needed expertise is not available in the Maldives.</p>					

The consultant's (PINZ in collaboration with Massey University) performance was considered highly satisfactory by students, Government and ADB. Because of cost-efficiency measures and overall logistics, it was agreed that courses would be delivered in Malé. This was expected to enable greater student participation (at national level) and closer collaboration with MCHE. Despite its delayed implementation (contract negotiations were completed in October 2004 but fielding of consultants had to be postponed in order to give priority to the Maldives Tsunami Emergency Action Plan), courses were adequately structured and delivered in three phases (24 July to 11 August 2005, 12 to 29 September 2005 and 27 November to 15 December 2005) to minimize disruption in Government-related activities and responsibilities amongst part-time students.

ADB conducted 2 review missions during TA implementation: (i) an Inception Mission in which ADB confirmed individual outputs with Executing and Implementing Agencies and (ii) a closing review mission, where ADB reviewed with stakeholders outputs and achievements, recommendations for future interventions in the sector and attended the awards ceremony. MPND performed adequately and showed high levels of commitment to the TA and its outputs. Similarly, high retention and pass rates (at University-course level) amongst students are representative of the dedication of selected candidates. Unfortunately MCHE, which was to play a key role in the delivery and sustainability of the outputs, showed limited interest.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome The TA produced the following specific outputs (i) training needs assessment, (ii) preparation and delivery of tailor-made training courses as per terms of reference, (iii) a program for knowledge transfer to local staff, (iv) course examination and certificate award from Massey University. The courses - each of which involved between 35-45 participants and consisted of 30-40 contact hours involving formal lectures and tutorials and a minimum of two compulsory field trips - were highly successful, with high course retention and pass levels, revealing vast demand for courses offered. The tailor-made course material was handed over to MPND and the training computer laboratory was transferred to the Engineering Faculty within MCHE. Students, MPND and other stakeholders actively contributed to the design of the courses. The consultants also produced (i) an inception report, (ii) progress reports at the end of each training phase and (iii) a comprehensive final report containing an overall assessment of the TA deliverables. Course qualifications were awarded as follows: (a) a self-contained Certificate of Achievement to students on successful completion for each of the courses undertaken and (b) an International Letter of Reference, from Massey University, to students having completed the courses with credit or merit. Whilst the TA initially envisaged that each course would be equivalent to a transferable semester credit, recognized by any international university, it quickly emerged that (i) given the varied background of the different students and (ii) the need to adapt the design of the course to specific problems and issues of the Maldives, the number of contact hours would have needed to be larger than under a regular semester.

Course sustainability was considered as early as the design stage however, due to faculty's multiple commitments, shadowing and knowledge transfer to MCHE staff could not be fully accomplished over the period of TA implementation. Nonetheless, MPND has reiterated its commitment to the long term sustainability of the program and has proposed to explore the possibility to pursue future course delivery through a private institution. Massey University has reiterated their commitment and support, and selected lecturers would be willing to assist with lecturer's training through various methods of correspondence, which is expected to support strengthening of partnerships with overseas educational staff, expand and improve course offerings, upgrade local staff capacity, and training follow-up. In an effort to ensure wider knowledge of ADB's Regional Development Program and its technical assistance to the Government, a small fraction of funds under the TA has been utilized to print a knowledge brochure on the subject.

Overall Assessment and Rating Whilst TA delivery is generally considered highly satisfactory, sustainability aspects originally considered, whilst initiated, could not be secured over the period of implementation. Based on the feedback from Government agencies, and the above evaluation, the TA is therefore considered successful.

Major Lessons Learned

1. There exists a high demand for formal learning courses to provide a relevant and flexible approach to national development, to be conducted at a level of entry of tertiary study.
2. Students' level of previous formal study was neither a strong indicator of success or failure. This indicates that there are a number of capable and ambitious government and non-government personnel who require educational opportunities which are flexible, at a high standard, and relevant to their work. Opportunities and motivators need to be identified by Government agencies to ensure their retention in Government positions.
3. Output sustainability and replicability requires high coordination amongst key government agencies.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions Further to the array of activities that followed the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the demand for services has significantly increased at atoll level, placing significant strain on limited and constrained Government resources at local level. Delivery of the courses developed by Massey at local level will prove essential if the Government wishes to achieve its new development targets.