

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: ERDI

TA No. and Name TA 3684 MON: Improving Social Statistics			Amount Approved: US\$ 500,000	
			Revised Amount: US\$ 500,000	
Executing Agency National Statistical Office (NSO)		Source of Funding: TASF	TA Amount Undisbursed \$ 75,058.45	TA Amount Utilized \$424,941.55
Date			Completion Date	
Approval 12 July 2001	Signing 21 July 2001	Fielding of Consultants 9 Oct 2001	Original 30 November 2003	Actual 30 September 2004
			Closing Date	
			Original 30 September 2004	Actual 9 December 2004

Description

1. The Poverty Partnership Agreement signed between ADB and the Government of Mongolia requires the Government to monitor poverty related indicators on a regular basis. Despite some success in achieving economic growth in recent years, there has been little progress in terms of reducing poverty level in Mongolia. Unemployment and income opportunities still prevail in the country. The social relevance and policies in employment is very important. The government of Mongolia saw the need to strengthen and further improve the quality of its social statistics in particular the labor statistics which were not reliable.

2. The National Statistical Office (NSO) of Mongolia has received technical assistance in different areas of statistics from various international agencies. In 1993, ADB has provided TA 1811 to assist the then State Statistical Office to comply with international standards in improving national accounts and other statistics in monitoring economic development. These assistances have contributed substantially to improve the economic statistics of Mongolia. However, the social statistics was still underdeveloped. In 1999, the Government requested ADB to assist NSO to assist in strengthening and improving the quality of its social statistics, particularly labor statistics. The ADB responded and agreed to provide the technical assistance with the overall objective of improving data collection, analysis and dissemination of social statistics.

Objectives and Scope

3. The TA had four broad objectives, namely, i) to revise the structural organization; ii) to support the updating of the master sample and the implementation of a national labor force survey; iii) to reinforce NSO capacities in analyzing social statistics in particular the social components of the 2000 population and housing census data; and iv) to provide long-term training to NSO staff.

4. These objectives were met by providing a combination of advisory services, training facilities and equipment (mainly computers and office facilities), and support for data collection through the conduct of various sample surveys as well as the compilation of existing data, and the dissemination of these data through publications.

Evaluation of Inputs

5. The TA was designed with a view to strengthen primarily the labor force statistics. The component of Disability Statistics was later added following the request of the Government of Mongolia during a TA review mission. Several activities such as establishment of a well-equipped training unit, overseas training for NSO staff, and local training for the aimags were conducted. Most of the activities included in the TA were successfully accomplished. The number of advisory services delivered were higher than originally planned because of the additional requests for guidance from the government. The overall services of most consultants hired were of excellent quality. The NSO staff were highly satisfied with their performances, especially that of labor force statistics consultant whose services were greatly appreciated.

6. ADB was successful in closely monitoring the implementation of TA through various means including frequent correspondences such as emails and faxes. Several review missions were undertaken by ADB staff during the project period to review the progress, discuss problems and issues, and provide solutions as needed. The schedule of TA activities prepared by the executing agency was closely monitored and reviewed.

7. The TA budget has recorded a small savings amounting to approximately 15 per cent of the approved budget because of the savings made in recruiting domestic consultants, and recruitment of international consultant from developing countries in the region as well as utilization of services of the experts from the United Nations Statistics Division and UN ESCAP.

Evaluation of Outputs

8. The TA has contributed substantially in improving the quality of social statistics of Mongolia. The TA particularly assisted in partly restructuring the organization of NSO, the establishment of a master sample frame, implement a national labor force survey, training and staff development and acquisition of needed equipment for the continuous implementation of social statistics. The collection of social statistics particularly the labor and disability statistics will become a regular activity in NSO.

9. The results are mixed in restructuring NSO. There were reservations on restructuring NSO on some specific recommendations made by the ADB Statistics Office Management Consultant. Some recommendations were accepted in principle but due to budgetary constraints the action was difficult to initiate. A partial reorganization had been effected which includes the consolidation of pre-existing Divisions under 4 Departments. Another important structural change has been the transfer of administrative control of the Statistical Branch Offices in the Provincial Administration (Aimags) to the NSO under Public Sector Budget and Administration Law. This is of special significance in the context of the direct involvement of these regional offices in the collection and compilation of statistical data from respondents guaranteeing confidentiality to the respondents. Another important recommendation by the ADB consultant was to activate the dormant National Statistics Council. However, NSO was still unable to activate NSC as recommended due to legislative constraints.

10. The TA assisted NSO in the establishment of a master sample frame. It has been designed and executed in the context of a paucity of survey skills and expertise within and outside the NSO. This is envisioned to go a long way in assisting the NSO undertake sampling surveys in the future.

11. Another major activity of the TA has been the establishment of a training center within NSO. A well-equipped training

room has been built utilizing budget inputs. The training center has contributed significantly in providing local training to a large number of staff of NSO and its branches and other official from other line ministries as well as a number of local trainings were organized by NSO to train the headquarters, provincial and district level staff. The short courses covered the topics on survey sampling, labor statistics, disability statistics and others. The trainings contributed in upgrading the statistical capacity of NSO. Besides, the TA has also contributed to providing external training and apprenticeship for 22 officers to NSOs of China and South Korea and supported middle/senior level officers in both medium and short-term training programs and seminars.

12. The implementation of a large scale national labor force survey was the most important activity of the TA. The output was more than what was planned and envisaged in the project stage. The original plan was to undertake a one time medium sized survey but the scope and coverage of work was significantly enlarged and designed to include a quarterly survey to be conducted in 4 rounds to capture seasonality. At the design stage of the survey a module on child labor was added to the labor force survey and it was funded by ILO. ADB appreciated the contribution of ILO in undertaking the LFS survey. This showed an excellent collaboration between ADB and ILO. The survey conducted a quarterly survey where data collection had extended for one full year from October 2002 to September 2003, to show seasonal variations in the supply and demand for labor. ADB would like the LFS results to be widely released and disseminated to users at the soonest. Moreover, it is hoped that LFS would be highly useful to the policy and decision makers and would be able to fill many gaps in the area.

Overall Assessment and Rating

13. The TA was highly successful in achieving major activities and was able to contribute substantially in improving social statistics in Cambodia. The well equipped statistics training center that has been established with NSO is likely to contribute to strengthen statistical capacity of NSO by conducting regular training programs in different area of statistics as needed for staff of NSO and its branch offices. Likewise, the transfer of the Statistical Branch offices in the Provincial Administration into direct administrative control of NSO will contribute to ensuring the quality in the data collection. Also, the LFS is the first scientific survey ever undertaken by NSO Mongolia. The survey findings should be specially important now when the country is giving greater emphasis on employment creation and poverty reduction programs. The in-depth analysis of the results would help fill many data gaps in employment and unemployment and better understand the issues connected with labor supply and demand.

Major Lessons Learned

14. One major lesson learned from this TA is that experts from the developing countries of the region can become more effective in terms of transforming the knowledge and expertise to the counterpart staff. The international consultants that were recruited from the developing countries of the region not only contributed to the success of the project, they also contributed substantially in strengthening the statistical capacity of NSO. The contribution of the consultant have been highly commended. In fact, one of the consultant was conferred a certificate of appreciation for his contribution in developing, designing and implementing the Labor Force Survey.

15. It was also found that in transition country like Mongolia where communication with the counterpart staff is very difficult, it is useful to appoint a project director who has good language skill so that communication between ADB, consultants and executing agency staff become very easy. The TA was successful in hiring a domestic consultant fluent in English to work as a project coordinator who was able to facilitate smooth implementation of the project.

16. It was also found that it is always useful and economical to use the services of the experts of the United Nations Agencies such as UNSD and UNESCAP who are generally available free of cost. The UN experts are not only knowledgeable about the statistical problems of the developing countries, they are also easily accepted by the counterpart staff in the countries.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

17. Even though ADB TA has been high successful in strengthening the statistical system of Mongolia, it does not however mean that the capability of NSO has been fully strengthened. The statistical capacities at the provincial and district level offices of NSO are still weak. The data coverage of the statistical systems need to be enlarged. The NSO also does not have adequate resources to sustain the activities of the TA. It requires further support to consolidate the gains made through this TA. ADB has already included a new TA statistics in its 2005 country program. However, given the declining TA resources in ADB, it is hoped that the Government will be able to allocate sufficient funds to conduct minimum basic surveys to meet the growing data needs of the policy makers and other users.

18. The NSO does not have a critical manpower for undertaking large scale surveys on a regular basis. The 65 staff at NSO is currently inadequate to produce the wide range of statistics that should be produced and disseminated on a timely manner. In view of its increased data collection activities, it is necessary for the Government to consider increasing the present staff capacity of NSO to about 80 as recommended by the ADB consultant.

19. Timeliness of data through data collection, evaluation and dissemination is very important. Related to this issue is accessibility of the data files to the users. In view of this, it is very important that LFS results are widely released and disseminated to users as soon as possible. The collection and compilation of reliable data and comprehensive good quality data are time consuming and costly. Appropriate systems should be established so that data can be used. Releasing of data through websites is a way one such means that is increasingly resorted to by many national statistical offices. Raw data after subjecting them to appropriate anonymization procedures to ensure their confidentiality should also be available for release to the users for analysis. NSO should also be able to recover costs by the sale of statistical products and anonymised.