

TA Outputs Evaluation

The TA outputs comprised (i) a project performance information system (PPIS), and an integrated management information system/project management system at CMED, MOA, MWR and MWT; (ii) training on the logical framework approach, performance indicators, project monitoring system initially⁶ for the core monitoring staff of CMED and the three ministries; (iii) training for computer operators; (iv) project management manuals, part 1 (general) and part 2 (Government-wide policies and practices); and (v) study visit to the People's Republic of China of four staff, one each from the four implementing agencies. Two research studies were completed by the additional domestic consultants but their subject matter was not directly related to PPMS (footnote 5).

The achievement of these outputs was beset by a number of problems, including the (i) delay in getting performance evaluation data as inputs for the PPIS; (ii) lack of full and active participation of NPC or the line ministries involved; (iii) lack of support from senior decision makers in NPC and NPC itself to obtain high level support and commitment; (iv) frequent staff transfers; (v) inadequate motivation at various levels of the Government; (vi) lack of staff aptitude and inclination to acquire programming skills necessary to modify the system or correct program bugs in the future; (vii) unfamiliarity of staff with the keyboard for a Nepali font; and (viii) inadequate budgetary support. There is no evidence that the TA contributed to the long-term strategy of building Nepal's evaluation capability, which would have been part of a fully functioning PPMS. Generally, the TA outputs had some of the basic elements of PPMS but taken as a whole would not adequately constitute a full functioning results-based PPMS.

TA Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA was relevant when it was first designed but it was unsuccessful in achieving its objective of establishing an accountable and result-oriented institutional framework at the national and selected line ministries for programming, budgeting and management of development projects. The TA was not effective in developing the Government's capability to (i) identify and prioritize projects based on clear development criteria, (ii) implement and monitor them effectively by keeping track and comparing project results with actual and expected outputs and impacts, and (iii) hold implementing agencies accountable for project outcomes. Although the PPIS was successfully developed and installed with the necessary computer hardware, its usage was not sustained. This could be attributed to the lack of commitment to the system (as a result of the lack of ownership, with the process being perceived as an activity of the consultants) and lack of technical capability. Sustainability of benefits from training in PPMS could not be assured as a number of the staff trained under the TA had been transferred. The study visit, although very much valued by the participants, appeared to have produced little impact on institutional performance.

The TA was able to create the awareness on the value of the logical framework and has led to NPC's directive to all ministries to include the logical framework in all project proposals. The last major activity of the TA was a training seminar on the use of the logical framework as a planning and monitoring tool, which was organized in the aftermath of this directive and open to participants from all ministries. Some institution-building impact could be expected from this. However, it would still take some time before the impact of this directive can be fully felt. Performance of both NPC and ADB could have been better with closer supervision during TA implementation. The availability of the PPIS, the project manuals, and the limited impact on institutional building could put the performance of the TA on the border between partly successful and unsuccessful. But as the major objective of developing a fully functioning PPMS has not been accomplished coupled with the issue of non-sustainability, the TA is rated as unsuccessful.

Major Lessons Learned

Stakeholders' full-hearted participation is essential at both the TA preparatory and implementation stages to cultivate a sense of ownership among the participants and to forestall lack of motivation among implementing staff to initiate TA activities.

A thorough assessment of the beneficiaries' capability/institutional environment prior to TA design would ensure the design's appropriateness and the demand for the TA outputs, and help avoid overly optimistic objectives. In the case of Nepal, for instance, attempting to computerize poorly performing manual monitoring systems may not be the best solution. The lack of data encoders and of programming skills necessary to modify or correct program bugs impinges upon the sustainability of PPMS in the long run.

Follow-Up Actions and Recommendations

The Government should promote the adoption of the PPIS by all government agencies by mandating that the information required for project approval be supplied in the format best produced by the PPIS. This would ensure the utilization of the system.

The Government needs to enforce the directive made at the beginning of 2000 on the use of the logical framework in the project report of all central level projects. This will contribute to further capacity building among government agencies.

Future TAs should ensure the active participation of concerned government officials. Also, future policy dialogue with the Government should include issues such as country TA ownership, staff continuity and high-level commitment.

More efforts should be made to strengthen the accountability mechanisms in future operations by identifying the needed improvements in PPMS as a criterion to be used as part of the country-specific trigger mechanisms in the performance-based allocation for Nepal. ADB's accountability should also be strengthened.

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⁶ This training was further extended to the staff of the remaining 17 ministries in view of NPC's directive in January 2000 to all ministries to adopt the logical framework in their project proposals.

