

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: PAHQ

TA No. and Name 3667-PNG: Poverty Analyses for Socioeconomic Development Strategies			Amount Approved: \$650,000		
			Revised Amount: -		
Executing Agency: Department of National Planning and Monitoring	Source of Funding: TASF		TA Amount Undisbursed \$19,124	TA Amount Utilized \$630,876	
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Fielding of Consultants 15 August 2001			Actual 15 August 2002		
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Description					
<p>The Government of PNG, with the assistance of donors, had a number of initiatives either underway or planned to address poverty in 1999 and 2000. These initiatives included a World Bank funded report on the status of poverty published in 1999, and a proposed new Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). AusAID indicated interest support for further assessment of poverty, the World Bank in formulating a national poverty reduction strategy. There was also interest from other donors to participate in assessments, policies, and strategies for dealing with poverty in PNG. ADB therefore formulated technical assistance to complement and complete this work.</p>					
Objectives and Scope					
<p>The objective of the TA was to assist in the preparation of a national poverty reduction policy framework involving the civil society through a participatory process, and to help better plan, program, and implement actions required to operationalize the National Program for Reconstruction and Development. The TA included the following activities: (i) conduct a comprehensive analysis of economic, social, and national inequalities and disparities; (ii) transfer skills in planning and conducting field surveys at the household level and in processing and analyzing HIES data; (iii) establish processes to monitor and evaluate poverty reduction and to raise awareness of the poverty issue at all levels of government and society; (iv) generate new data on prices of consumer goods and services; and (v) prepare preliminary short and medium-term strategies to alleviate inequalities and disparities, and reduce barriers for the poor to benefit from economic growth.</p>					
<p>The scope of the TA had four components: (i) design, conduct, and analysis of the HIES, to provide the baseline for consumer price data, and the HIES was to be supplemented with a qualitative assessment of equity-related issues using participatory approaches; (ii) prepare recommendations to strengthen social and economic strategies to reduce poverty; (iii) undertake on-the-job training for staff of the National Statistics Office, Department of National Planning and Monitoring, Office of Rural Development, and other local institutions; and (iv) undertake baseline price surveys to update the consumer price index (CPI).</p>					
Evaluation of Inputs					
<p>The Government and donors' priorities changed substantially during the early part of TA implementation necessitating significant change in the TA scope and inputs. The expected cofinancing for field surveys, training, consultation workshops, and the HIES did not materialize. The design, conduct, and analysis of the HIES, updating of the CPI, economic, social, national inequalities and disparities analysis and skills training in relation to the anticipated HIES, could not therefore be carried out. At the same time, the Government requested additional assistance to prepare a National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) and Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS). These documents, together with the poverty assessment, became the main focus of the TA. The TA implementation arrangements and consultants terms of reference were revised accordingly. The final consultancy inputs totaled 24.6 person-months (5.4 person-months for a Social Development Specialist, 17.2 person-months for a Poverty Specialist, 1 person-month for a Publication Specialist, and 1 person-month for an Economist).</p>					
<p>The consultancy, workshop, participatory surveys, and other inputs were provided on time. The individual consultants interacted well with the government departments and officials. The process of strategy formulation within government and the participatory prioritization of the concerns of the poor were well conducted. The Government was most appreciative of the assistance provided under the revised TA. The Government requested that consultants' inputs be extended but this could not be provided under this TA. The Consultants performance varied from highly satisfactory in the case of the Social Development Specialist, Publication Specialist, and Economist to satisfactory in the case of the Poverty Specialist. ADB review suffered from staff illness during the early part of the TA, but sufficient review was provided later on. The performance of both ADB and EA are rated as satisfactory.</p>					

Evaluation of Outputs

The main outputs of the TA were: (i) NPRS; (ii) MTDS; (iii) the participatory poverty assessment that resulted in the preparation of the first "Priorities of the Poor," booklet that was published in English as well as in Pidgin and Motu, and developed frameworks and standardized methodologies for participatory assessment of poverty that were used throughout succeeding RETA (6002, 6047) enabling regional comparison of study results; (iv) an NPRS and MTDS monitoring plan; (v) an NPRS and MTDS media and communications plan; (vi) on-the-job training in participatory processes for government officials; and (vii) departmental committees established to assist in the preparation of national planning documents.

Although the Government expressed great satisfaction with all TA inputs, it proved to be challenging to assist the Government to prepare both an NPRS and MTDS that embraced proven, good development policy and practices that were well focused. This required additional input from an economist to improve both the NPRS and MTDS. The participatory poverty assessment had significant impact on both the acceptance and understanding of poverty in PNG, and the results of the study were well embraced by senior politicians and government officials as reflected by their efforts to include the people's identified priorities in the NPRS and MTDS. Though well prepared, the NPRS and MTDS monitoring plan and the media and communications plan were not implemented as planned by government. While most outputs were generally delivered on time, efforts to improve the quality of both NPRS and MTDS required additional input and extension of the TA.

Overall Assessment and Rating

Despite the initial lack of complementary funding and other support from donors, and the consequent need to change the scope, the TA made significant progress in prioritizing, understanding and addressing poverty in PNG. The TA was very relevant to the development needs of PNG, given the continuing socioeconomic deterioration, and governance. Overall, the TA achieved its immediate objectives. However the TA is rated as partly successful because the government has largely not followed-up on the results of the TA.

Major Lessons Learned

Given the failure of government and the political processes of PNG, TA participation and participatory processes should be far more extensive, and should embrace not only situational and needs assessments but also design of strategy and programs including implementation, monitoring and evaluation to enable communities to participate and influence effective governance.

Development priorities, both as assessed by the poor themselves and as rationalized by development theory and experience, should be rigorously pursued during development of national plans, strategy formulation and subsequently during government budget preparation, financing and implementation.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

Extensive participation of all relevant stakeholders and rigorous prioritization should feature in all future assistance to PNG. Ownership of development processes, strategies, programs and projects is only likely to be strong if relevant stakeholders are involved throughout.

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