

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: RSES then transferred to ECTC in 2003

TA No. and Name TA 3441-PRC: Capacity Building for Social Assessments			Amount Approved: US \$781,400	
			Revised Amount: 0	
Executing Agency: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Source of Funding: JSF	TA Amount Undisbursed \$23,821.90	TA Amount Utilized \$757,578.10	
Date			Closing Date	
Approval 18 May 2000	Signing 14 July 2000	Fielding of Consultants 6 November 2000	Original 31 December 2001	Actual 25 November 2005
<p>Description. The technical assistance (TA) was designed to balance technical and environmental planning, which generally follow well-established procedures in the People's Republic of China (PRC), with a focus on the procedures for social assessments and to demonstrate how social assessments could be utilized during project planning, monitoring, and evaluation to support objectives of poverty reduction, gender development, and involuntary resettlement planning in particular.</p>				
<p>Objectives and Scope. The immediate objective was to build the capacity of design institutes and research academies to conduct social assessments for development investments. This would contribute to (i) strengthen the capacity of local governments to formulate and manage such assessments, (ii) build a network of qualified practitioners based on transparent standards, and (iii) contribute to improvements in the design of future development investments to meet strategic objectives.</p> <p>The scope of work of the TA included (i) establishing an in-country core team for social assessments and monitoring, and evaluation of resettlement, poverty, and gender issues; and (ii) building local capacity to review secondary data, measure living standards, conduct household surveys, and undertake gender analysis. The capacity building strategy comprised several elements including (i) project specific and thematic studies and workshops, (ii) preparation of guidelines, and (iii) disseminate information on good practice cases. The TA would create a social research network among key institutions and experts, and raise government awareness. This was done through (i) a workshop to present and discuss the Social Assessment Manual and (ii) support to formulate the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Guidelines for Project Appraisal.</p> <p>The TA design was appropriate in terms of preparing the Social Assessment Manual; however, the effort required to finalize the Manual and the subsequent lack of commitment from the executing agency reduced the TA's effectiveness to build capacity until the Manual was complete, by which time most resources had been expended.</p>				
<p>Evaluation of Inputs. The executing agency, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), provided a working place and played an important role in hosting workshops. However, CASS found it difficult to provide professional counterpart staff from the CASS institutes of sociology, rural development, poverty studies, anthropology, social policy, and social welfare, as had been agreed. Without a strong TA Director and Coordinator from CASS, it proved to be difficult for the consultants to liaise with key government personnel to gain approval for conducting case studies and for inviting participants to workshops. This necessitated frequent supervision missions on the part of ADB staff to arrange ADB case studies and to follow through. The performance of CASS was less than satisfactory. CASS has made no comment on the effectiveness of this TA.</p> <p>The performance of the international consultants was adequate¹ but could have been better coordinated. The national consultants displayed a range of competencies and their fees proved to be considerably higher than in the planning estimates, which curtailed their inputs. The coordination and quality control of the international consultants could have been stronger. The contracted agent appeared to give low priority to this TA at times, with the required reports often arriving late in ADB. The Team Leader was from a highly respected university with an excellent reputation in the PRC studies, and had good contacts in the PRC social science community, but was less than familiar with the contracting agent's administrative and management arrangements.</p> <p>The lengthy period to complete the TA led to some inefficiency for ADB inputs but overall the performance of ADB was satisfactory. The TA had residual budget of \$41,900 which was transferred to ECTC in May 2003. Part of these funds were utilized during 2004 and 2005 to enhance government awareness, develop the social network in PRC, and utilize the Social Assessment Manual as the basis to formulate relevant sections of NDRC's revised Guidelines for Project Appraisal.</p>				
<p>Evaluation of Outputs. An Advisory Committee was formed, to include Ministry of Finance (MOF), NDRC, Bureau of Norms and Standards in Ministry of Communications, State Statistical Bureau, the Leading Group on Poverty Reduction, and the All China Women's Federation. However, it was difficult to arrange meetings with this Advisory Committee during the course of the TA. Representatives from all of these agencies did attend the national workshop on 18–19 April 2002 and generally endorsed the conclusions that social assessments are important. After the Manual was completed, CASS and other key agencies attended a workshop and expressed their satisfaction with the outputs of this TA. However, they felt continued inputs were required for further capacity building in the PRC.</p>				
<p>Case Studies. A total of 12 case studies were conducted on a range of infrastructure projects (9 ADB projects, 1 World Bank (WB) project, 1 nongovernment organization project, and 1 Government implemented project), generating material on poverty, gender, resettlement, participatory approaches, minority, and other social issues. The quality of the case studies was mixed,</p>				

¹ A firm was contracted but only one expert was involved with this TA; the consultant evaluation rating was satisfactory.

reflecting a range of social research competencies. The case studies were based on field research and workshops with project staff.

The Manual. It was decided to prepare a joint Manual together with the WB Resident Mission staff specialists in social research, to expand the depth of coverage and the range of case studies, and to minimize risks of duplication. The first draft of the Manual was available in April 2002. After this, the WB agreed to finance the cost of additional research and editing work to finalize the Manual. The Chinese version of the Manual was completed and published by the Chinese International Engineering Consulting Corporation (CIECC) in May 2004. Since CIECC works directly under NDRC, this ensured wide distribution and acceptance of the Manual. The English version of the Manual has been modified for international audience.

The two-day National Workshop on Social Assessment in Development Projects (April 2002) was important as the first high level national workshop on social assessments in the PRC, bringing together a range of professionals from national and provincial level agencies and from development agencies. The workshop was sponsored by CASS, International Department of MOF, Social Development Department of NDRC, ADB, and the WB and included presentation of papers prepared by TA team members and other presenters. The TA materials included case study results and chapters from the draft Manual on Social Assessments in PRC. The workshop supported the publication of *Guidelines for Feasibility Studies of Investment Projects 2002*, issued with the approval of the NDRC, which incorporated social assessments into feasibility studies for investment projects.

Network Development. The publication of the Social Assessment Manual provided a key reference document for dissemination to network members and potential practitioners. Unfortunately, CASS did not want to champion this initiative but it was picked up instead by CIECC which is well recognized for project appraisal. In this manner, social assessment has become more integrated into the concept of project planning and thus the network of practitioners has been greatly expanded. This process has been furthered by ADB and WB supporting the social aspects of the revised NDRC Guidelines for Project Appraisal (2005). This document will help to mainstream social assessment into project planning and implementation.

Project-Related Training. The TA supported an International Symposium on Resettlement and Social Development held in Nanjing in May 2002, which was sponsored also by Ministry of Water Resources, WB, ADB, Ministry of Land and Resources, and Hohai University's National Research Center for Resettlement (NRCR) as the lead. This workshop linked resettlement with social development, and Papers from the TA were presented. In November 2004, a Social Assessment Workshop was conducted at Hohai University which was chaired by MOF and sponsored by WB, ADB, and NRCR. The targeted trainees were project officers from ongoing WB and ADB projects. The Social Assessment Manual was used as the key reference document for this training. The workshop and Manual were well received by participants and MOF gained a greater appreciation of the need to develop capacity for social assessment, particularly with local government officials.

Overall Assessment and Rating. The TA is rated as successful. The initial focus on preparing the Social Assessment Manual was challenging and due to delays, the ownership of the Manual by CASS diminished. However, once the Manual was completed by the key authors, several key agencies were interested to support the mainstreaming of social assessment to project planning. Therefore, the TA met the required outputs and has already contributed significantly to meeting the expected outcomes. In terms of the immediate objective of building capacity of design institutes and research academies, this was too ambitious; the TA has contributed significantly but capacity building will require sustained inputs from domestic agencies.

Major Lessons Learned. The TA succeeded in raising the profile of social research and social assessments in the PRC, and demonstrated the importance of these issues to the Government. By March 2002, the TA had contributed to the publication of *Guidelines for Feasibility Studies of Investment Projects*. Since the guidelines were quite general, there was a need to formulate more detailed guidelines during 2005, and the TA again was able to contribute directly to this process. The TA confirmed that, social assessment capacity needs to be strengthened, and can help to avoid unanticipated impoverishment effects which deepen social polarization, including among women.

CASS has the expertise but they did not appoint a strong coordinator for this TA. Consequently, the coordination problems faced by the TA underline the complexities of this kind of assessment in the PRC. It was difficult to find good national consultants while CASS, with relevant expertise, is spread thinly. This initially limited the achievement of capacity building objectives. However, upon completion of the Manual, the interest in capacity building was strongly supported by all. Unfortunately, the resources required for such capacity building are vast and need to be developed over time through the existing critical mass of domestic expertise. Now that social assessment is required for project planning, the financial resources spent on social assessment will increase dramatically, and this will facilitate capacity building.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions. There is growing awareness of the need for social assessments, yet the TA encountered constraints in the policy framework, administrative structure, and the human resources. Since social assessment is now an official requirement, responsibilities need to be established, procedures elaborated, approval standards publicized, and practitioners need to be supported through capacity building efforts. ADB should consider further support for capacity building, now that the awareness and needs for social assessment are well established. The inertia for capacity building has started but ADB involvement could significantly contribute to improved quality of skills development, social assessment, and social development.