

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT<sup>1</sup>

Division: Poverty Unit, RSDD

<b>TA No. and Name:</b> RETA 5892: International Conference on Poverty – What have we Learned from the Past 30 Years of Research on Poverty?			<b>Amount Approved:</b> 250,000		
			<b>Revised Amount:</b> additional \$740,000 on 19 Sept 2000		
<b>Executing Agency:</b> ADB - RSDD		<b>Source of Funding:</b> TASF	<b>TA Amount Undisbursed</b> USD 205,157	<b>TA Amount Utilized</b> USD 784,843	
<b>Date</b>			<b>Completion Date</b>		
<b>Approval</b> 26 Dec 1999	<b>Signing</b>	<b>Fielding of Consultants</b> Various dates	<b>Original:</b> 31 Oct 2000	<b>Actual:</b> 31 Dec 2005	
			<b>Closing Date</b>		
			<b>Original:</b> 31 Dec 2001	<b>Actual:</b> 19 June 2007	
<p><b>Description:</b> ADB approved its Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in November 1999. As part of the PRS implementation, ADB was to organize an <i>Asia-Pacific Forum on Poverty</i> to exchange ideas on poverty reduction strategies and practices. At the time, the then Economics and Development Resource Center (EDRC) had proposed to organize a conference on poverty related research results in Sept 2000. This was to be funded with RETA 5892 approved on 26 Dec 1999. Both the proposed forum and the proposed research conference clearly had the same goal. On 19 Sept 2000 the supplementary funding for RETA 5892 in the amount of \$740,000 was approved with the view to merge the two events under Asia-Pacific Poverty Forum to be held in February 2001.</p> <p>Following the ADB Reorganization in January 2002 the RETA was transferred on 21 June 2002 from EDRC to the Poverty and Social Development Division (RSPR) of Regional and Sustainable Development Department. The RETA's remaining fund of \$430,000 was used to finance activities for the PRS implementation and review.</p>					
<p><b>Expected Impact, Outcomes, Outputs, Activities and Inputs:</b> The merged RETA was to finance the preparation and implementation of the first Asia-Pacific Poverty Forum. The Forum was expected to (a) provide an opportunity for exchange of ideas on poverty reduction strategies; (b) improve understanding on poverty measurement; and (c) enhance understanding among policymakers in the region for designing appropriate poverty reduction programs. Following the transfer of the RETA from EDRC to RSPR, the objective was to use the remaining fund for the PRS review.</p>					
<p><b>Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities:</b> The Asia Pacific Poverty Forum was held in February 2001. The proceedings and conference papers are on the poverty website (<a href="http://www.adb.org/Poverty/Forum/">http://www.adb.org/Poverty/Forum/</a>). The results of the conference are also documented in a two volume book published at end 2002. About 40% of the total RETA disbursed fund was used for this.</p> <p>Additional activities funded from the remaining balance of the RETA fall into two categories. First, it relates to the PRS implementation, Specifically, the RETA funded DMC participants in three poverty-related conferences including (i) a workshop in Bangkok in Oct 2002 on monitoring and evaluation, linked to the World Bank's Initiative of Poverty Analysis and Development Indicators (PADI) and the UNESCAP's statistical work; (ii) the "Second Regional Conference on National Poverty Reduction Strategies" in Phnom Penh in October 2003; and (iii) the regional Ministerial Meeting on the MDGs in Asia and Pacific in Jakarta in August 2005. In this category, the RETA also financed purchase of equipment for poverty statistics and engagement of local consultants. About 20% of the total RETA disbursed fund was used for this category of activities.</p> <p>The second category of activities financed from the remaining balance of the RETA related to the PRS Review. Key activities included workshops, meetings of the PRS review advisory panel, a background study on poverty assessments and background work by local consultants. About 40% of the funds of the total RETA disbursed funds was used for this purpose. However, these activities for the PRS Review could have been sourced from RETA 6105 which was approved specifically for the purpose of PRS Review.</p> <p>While approvals were duly sought for specific uses of the fund as indicated above, there was no record of formal approval for change in scope of the RETA in order to use the remaining balance beyond its originally envisioned scope. Indeed, the RETA administration seems to have been quite complicated as different departments were responsible for this RETA at various times—the Poverty Unit in SPD was initially responsible for the Asia Pacific Poverty Forum; later EDRC took up the responsibility; and then the RETA was transferred to RSPR on 21 June 2002. Also, the RETA files were not well organized especially on the additional activities on PRS Review. The</p>					

<sup>1</sup> In preparing any country program or strategy, financing any project, or by making any designation of or reference to a particular territory or geographic area in this document, the Asian Development Bank does not intend to make any judgments as to the legal or other status of any territory or area.

RETA completion date was extended several times—to 31 Dec 2002, 30 June 2003 (on 15 Oct 2002), 31 Dec 03 (on 7 May 03), 31 Dec 2004 (on 22 Jan 04), and 31 Dec 2005 (on 19 Jul 05). While the RETA activities had been completed in Sept 2004, the financial closure was in 2007 due to delay in finalization of documentation.

**Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome:**

The original objective of the merged RETA was clearly achieved. The Asia Pacific Poverty Forum in February 2001 had very high-level participation (e.g. World Bank President, many high level policy makers from DMCs, top researchers in the field of poverty reduction). Papers presented at the Forum were very relevant and of high quality, and later were published in two volume conference proceedings titled “Defining an Agenda for Poverty Reduction” ([http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Defining\\_Agenda\\_Poverty\\_Reduction/Vol\\_1/default.asp](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Defining_Agenda_Poverty_Reduction/Vol_1/default.asp) and [http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Defining\\_Agenda\\_Poverty\\_Reduction/Vol\\_2/default.asp](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Defining_Agenda_Poverty_Reduction/Vol_2/default.asp)). The conference improved ADB’s understandings on poverty reduction, enhanced its commitment, and provided impetus to partner countries and ADB for more poverty-relevant cooperation. Therefore, both the outputs and outcomes for this part of the RETA are rated as successful.

The other main use of the RETA funds, i.e. conduct of the PRS Review was also successfully concluded in 2004 that resulted in the finalization of the Enhanced Poverty Reduction Strategy (EPRS). However, as noted in the previous section, there was a separate RETA with the specific purpose to finance the PRS Review. For other activities related to PRS implementation, including the financing of DMC officials’ participation in the three regional conferences in Bangkok, Phnom Penh and Jakarta and the outputs and services rendered by various domestic consults hired using the RETA fund, the outcome is difficult to assess. Qualitatively, the conference participation may have increased the awareness and knowledge of DMC participants in the relevant topics, On the other hand, the lack of systematic record on how the outputs produced by the many domestic consultants were used during PRS implementation makes it difficult to complete this part of outcome assessment.

**Overall Assessment and Rating:**

The RETA was relevant with the two main outputs successfully delivered as noted above. The Asia Pacific Poverty Forum and follow-on actions enhanced ADB’s international and regional visibility on poverty reduction issues. This contributed in part to encouraging donors to provide valuable trust funds to ADB for financing the preparation of national poverty reduction strategies and the pilot-testing of innovative projects to address core poverty concerns. With the Enhanced PRS in 2004, ADB moved to emphasize on pro-poor growth in operations, Thus, the RETA supported timely learning for the ADB’s evolving agenda on poverty reduction. Besides these outcomes and given its main focus on the poverty conference, the RETA’s lasting impact is assessed as limited.

On implementation efficiency and effectiveness, the RETA performance is mixed. Procedurally and as noted earlier, a formal change in scope should have been done to use the remaining balance for activities related to the PRS implementation and the PRS Review, which were beyond the RETA’s original scope. Also as noted, the RETA implementation records were not properly maintained.

Overall, the RETA is rated partly successful.

**Major Lessons:**

1. The RETA’s experience demonstrates that ADB was capable of organizing large scale and poverty-relevant knowledge sharing events and bringing together other knowledge partners. At the same time, it is noted that the impact of one-time conference is limited. With Strategy 2020 emphasizing on knowledge solutions, ADB may explore ways of knowledge networking and partnerships for continuing learning and knowledge sharing on poverty reduction and inclusive growth.
2. RETA 5892 has produced various outputs, of which only the conference proceedings are documented. As a key lesson, documenting outputs needs to be rigorously enforced. The poverty website and the poverty intranet are good media to make ADB knowledge work more visible.
3. The RETA experience also offers lessons on how to follow effectively the proper implementation procedures, including formal approval of necessary actions such as change in scope, record-keeping and file maintenance, and proper transfer of responsibilities. Further, charging the costs for the PRS review to RETA 6105 would have allowed earlier closure of RETA 5892.
4. TA designs should adopt simple implementation arrangement with clear lines of accountabilities and proper attention to observe and adhere to PAIs..

**Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions:** The lessons are incorporated in new RETAs administered by RSSD. No specific actions to be followed up in this particular RETA.

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