# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SESS/SERD

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| RETA 6247: HIV/AIDS Vulnerability and Risk Reduction among Ethnic Minority Groups through Communication Strategies | | | Amount Approved: $700,000 (UNESCO cofinancing of $522,000)<br>Revised Amount: n/a | |
| Executing Agency: Social Sectors Division, SERD | | Source of Funding: Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund (PRF) | Amount Undisbursed: $36,535.92 | Amount Utilized: $663,464.08 |
| TA Approval Date: 1 July 2005 | TA Signing Date: 10 January 2006 | Fielding of First Consultant: January 2006 | TA Completion Date Original: 30 June 2007<br>Account Closing Date: Original: 30 June 2007 | Actual: 31 May 2008<br>Actual: 30 July 2008 |

**Description**

The regional technical assistance (RETA 6247) aimed to reduce the vulnerability to, and risk of, HIV/AIDS transmission among ethnic minority groups through communication strategies. It builds on the achievements of a previous ADB regional TA (RETA 6083) aimed at developing radio dramas by (i) scaling-up the content of the dramas to address the increased risk of HIV/AIDS due to human trafficking and drug abuse; and (ii) scaling-out the target groups to include new ethnic groups prioritized by government partners. RETA 6247 adopted a regional approach to tackling HIV/AIDS vulnerability and risk among populations living in cross-border areas where national boundaries are porous. The regional approach was intended to (i) increase the exchange of information, (ii) offer opportunities for comparative analysis and learning, (iii) increase government commitment to focus on HIV prevention for ethnic groups, and (iv) develop regional networks and capacities to better understand the impacts of HIV/AIDS on poverty and the quality of life, especially among minority ethnic groups.

**Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs**

The RETA aimed to contribute to ongoing GMS efforts in achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 6/Target 7 to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. The outcome of the RETA was to reduce, through communication strategies, HIV/AIDS vulnerability and risk among ethnic minority groups living in cross-border areas of the GMS, specifically in Thailand, Yunnan Province in the People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao PDR, and Cambodia. It used communication strategies to inform vulnerable and high-risk populations about HIV/AIDS prevention. The RETA expected to (i) equip ethnic minorities with the tools necessary to reduce their vulnerabilities and mitigate risks, (ii) support subregional cooperation in GMS countries for preventing HIV/AIDS, and (iii) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS communication strategies used in the RETA.

**Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities**

The RETA activities focused on: (i) reducing the risk of, and vulnerability to, HIV/AIDS by using communication strategies, including pilot broadcasting in low-resource settings; (ii) expanding ICT activities to include geographic information system (GIS) vulnerability mapping for the Lao PDR and Cambodia and, possibly, digital radio broadcasts via satellite; and (iii) performance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the adopted HIV/AIDS communication strategies. The RETA was implemented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). ADB recruited 2 specialists for the independent M&E component in August 2007, immediately after the radio dramas had been prepared but before they were broadcast. The performances of ADB, UNESCO, the M&E team and the participating government officials were highly satisfactory, as each fulfilled its obligations under the terms of reference. Required reports, including quarterly progress reports were submitted on time by UNESCO and the M&E team. ADB fielded an adequate number of missions to effectively monitor RETA progress. Partnerships among agencies and individuals were instrumental in achieving the RETA outcome. The implementation period of 2 years was sufficient to achieve the RETA's immediate outputs. Four key changes took place during implementation, which did not have a significant impact on the RETA: (i) change in ethnic language to Tai Lue, as developing a radio drama in the Muoso language was not feasible; (ii) decision to produce an e-publication (rather than a project bulletin), as it allowed for the publication to be revised as necessary; (iii) division of the M&E consultancy into two individual positions, as it was difficult to find one specialist with expertise in M&E and behavioral change; and (iv) extension of the RETA to disseminate information related to RETA activities.

**Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome**

The RETA outcome was successfully achieved based on the performance targets and evaluation of the completed outputs. The RETA, through communication strategies, reduced the vulnerability to, and risk of, HIV/AIDS among ethnic minorities living in the cross-border areas of the GMS. The assumptions identified during TA preparation were accurate.

Tools were developed for ethnic minorities to increase their knowledge about the risk of HIV/AIDS arising from human trafficking and drug abuse. Radio dramas were completed and broadcast in: (i) Krueng (Cambodia), (ii) Khmu (Lao PDR), (iii) Akha (Thailand), and (iv) Tai Neua and Tai Lue (Yunnan province PRC). Audience feedback and evaluation of the dramas in late 2007 showed significant increases in knowledge of sexual and non-sexual means of HIV transmission, as was noted after the *2nd International Hilltribe Pop Concert* in November 2007 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Knowledge of Sexual and Non-sexual Means of HIV Transmission**

| Question | Krueng Radio Drama, Cambodia (Total respondents = 108) | | | Second Hilltribe Concert (Total respondents = 551) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-test | Post-test | Change | Pre-test | Post-test | Change |
| How can HIV be transmitted? | | | | | | |
| • Sexual intercourse | 35.0% | 96.0% | 174.0% | 87.5% | 87.8% | 0.3% |
| • Sharing needles | 7.0% | 63.0% | 800.0% | 54.7% | 68.5% | 25.3% |
| • Mother to Child | 13.0% | 81.0% | 523.0% | 20.0% | 35.7% | 78.3% |
| How can you prevent HIV/AIDS? | | | | | | |
| • Use a condom | 28.0% | 94.0% | 236.0% | 75.8% | 90.6% | 19.5% |

Source: ADB TA 6347-REG Evaluation Results.

Subregional cooperation in GMS countries on HIV/AIDS prevention among ethnic groups also increased. Radio dramas helped to strengthen cooperation at local levels between government and community groups, and create new working relationships among ADB, UNESCO, government officials and other stakeholders. Government officials from Thailand and Lao PDR explored the possibility of exchanging previously developed dramas. The expansion of the GIS and the HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse enhanced cooperation inside and beyond the GMS (GIS maps were shared with government and development partners at subregional meetings and bi-monthly clearinghouse updates were sent to over 1800 online users). A network of research universities and institutions was also initiated through expert consultation meetings on *"Promoting Standards for Socio-cultural Research on the Issues of HIV/AIDS and Trafficking"* in September 2005 and January 2006.

RETA outputs and experiences were shared with stakeholders in various fora, including: (i) *Informed and Fair Water and Trade Futures: A Dialogue About Regional Cooperation, Development and Governance in Upper Mekong Region and the North-South Economic Corridor* (2006); (ii) *GMS Working Group Meeting on Human Resource Development* (2007); (iii) a radio interview on Radio Australia (2007); and (iv) *Inclusive Growth and the New Poverty Reduction Agenda in Asia and the Pacific* (2007). A pamphlet on "*Evaluating the Impact of Live Entertainment Performances: Results from the 2007 Hilltribe Concert,"* draft e-publication "Ethnic Groups at Risk," radio dramas tapes and CDs, GIS HIV/AIDS vulnerability maps and CDs, and regional linguistic and ethnicity maps were produced.

ADB conducted an independent performance M&E, which evaluated the effectiveness of the communication strategies used in this RETA. Although developing radio dramas may consume more time and human resources than basic one-way information, education and communication techniques (e.g., posters), they are an effective communication tool for HIV prevention. They are based on formative research in the same ethnic language as the target group, and include the links between different vulnerability contexts and HIV/AIDS risk, as experienced by communities. This output also helped develop an event impact survey tool for the Hilltribe Concert; ADB published the findings as a pamphlet.

**Overall Assessment and Rating**

The RETA is rated *highly successful*, as its outcome was achieved. It has contributed to the ongoing efforts by GMS countries in achieving MDG 6/Target 7 to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

**Major Lessons**

A number of major lessons were been identified. In general, it is important to (i) complement existing ethnographic qualitative research activities and analysis with quantitative evaluation; and (ii) understand that the vulnerability context for ethnic groups in the GMS stems from the impacts of regional economic integration (e.g., poverty, gender-based violence, land loss or legal citizenship status). Specific lessons include: (i) radio dramas for HIV/AIDS prevention are an effective medium for communicating messages, especially in remote areas that have fewer competing entertainment sources; (ii) dramas are successful in raising knowledge about the issues, promoting community discussion and providing an entry point for further interventions; (iii) dramas may not be suitable for communicating all types of messages to all target groups (e.g., awareness about drug use among young men); (iv) the Clearinghouse needs to be able to reach a broader range of users; (v) developing and maintaining a GIS is costly and time-consuming; (vi) HIV infections extend beyond traditional groups (e.g., sex workers and truck drivers) to returning migrants; and (vii) developing a regional GIS requires quality village-level data and standardized databases, which is often unavailable.

**Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions**

Recommendations and follow-up actions include: (i) strengthen quantitative/qualitative evaluation of future HIV/AIDS projects to determine the impact of the intervention on behavior change and risk management; (ii) use indicators that go beyond measuring knowledge to include change in behavior; (iii) continue to develop ethnic radio dramas for HIV/AIDS prevention with a stronger focus on ethnic issues along the cross-borders arising from the increased connectivity within the GMS (Akha along Thailand/Lao PDR and Yunnan province border, and Bru/Brao along the Cambodia/Lao PDR border); (iv) expand the content of ethnic radio dramas to include other topics (avian influenza, water and sanitation, or impacts of tourism development); (v) clarify the targeted user groups for the HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse; (vi) increase information on HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination and HIV-related publications for ethnic groups in the HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse; (vii) apply GIS information and mapping for planning purposes to illustrate areas of potentially high risk; and (viii) work with other partners to expand GIS mapping activities into PRC and Viet Nam.

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