

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: Social Sectors Division, Central and West Asia Department

TA No., Country and Name			Amount Approved: \$ 200,000.00	
6124-REG: ADB-OSI Central Asia Education Cooperation Network			Revised Amount: \$200,000.00	
Executing Agency: Asian Development Bank Open Society Institute		Source of Funding Governance Cooperation Fund	Amount Undisbursed: \$25,012.59	Amount Utilized: \$174,987.41
TA Approval Date:	TA Signing Date:	Fielding of First Consultants:	TA Completion Date Original:	Actual:
October 2003	N/A	May 2004	30 September 2005	30 September 2006
			Account Closing Date Original:	Actual:
			30 September 2005	26 February 2007
Description				
<p>The Central Asia Republics (CARs) faced dramatic political and socioeconomic changes following independence from the Former Soviet Union. One sector greatly affected has been education. One of the main obstacles to effective education reforms in the region has been a centralized, top-down approach to education planning and administration, resulting in exclusion of major stakeholders. Furthermore, information systems and data on education in the CARs are often unreliable, incomparable, and are not always relevant to policy work. Analytical papers and innovative approaches are rarely distributed and made public for discussion or replication, and regional cooperation and harmonization on education is still weak. The TA was co-prepared and co-financed by the Open Society Institute (Budapest) and covered four countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and had the objective to increase communication among education stakeholders in the region, leading to the creation of the Central Asia Education Network (CAEN).</p>				
Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs				
<p>The TA contributed to the education reform process in the CARs by improving cooperation in the region. The outcome of the Project was the establishment of a network of education stakeholders in the CARs, interacting primarily through an Internet interface, to share information on education reforms, projects, legislation, statistics, analytical reports and other resources. Main outputs of the TA included (i) opening the education reform process to a variety of stakeholders groups; (ii) developing the capacity of local education professionals for educational policy research, analysis, reporting, monitoring and advocacy; (iii) increasing the awareness among CAR policy makers regarding international experience in reforming education; and (iv) creating a platform for discussing and initiating cooperation and partnership between education stakeholders in the CARs. The original TA design overlooked the analysis of the specific capacity of the focal points of the TA countries to achieve the TA objectives and create an effective network among education stakeholders. Therefore, additional activities were undertaken during the implementation of the Project to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the TA.</p>				
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities				
<p>One focal point for each country was selected during the preparation stage of the RETA, and a team of eight domestic consultants was selected in partnership with the focal points and the Open Society Institute (OSI). The local consultants were led by a regional coordinator based in Uzbekistan. The main assignment of the team was to build and populate the Internet interface, a main tool for the communication of the network. This part of the work took most of the resources, while less attention was given to the actual "building of the network". As political events in the region in 2005 delayed the Project activities, especially in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz Republic, the first extension of the TA activities was granted. The RETA was restarted in third quarter of 2005 and the website www.educasia.net (and www.educasia.ru) were finalized. A major regional event was prepared and took place in March 2006. The event was the occasion to evaluate the TA activities and sustainability of the network. Due to the need of increasing capacity of network members for sustainability of the Project, the TA was granted the second extension. During the second extension, two capacity building events were organized and delivered jointly by OSI and ADB for the network. The overall performance of the consultants was satisfactory. However, better performance could have been obtained by focusing on capacity needs of the focal points at the beginning of TA implementation. A set of equipment for the effective management of the website, including collection and sharing of information and knowledge, was provided to each focal point.</p>				

ADB provided irregular support to the TAs activities, due to frequent changes in project manager and little allocation of staff-time for the Project. A first review mission took place in March 2006, during the first extension of the TA and to coincide with the regional conference. The focal points and OSI highly appreciated the involvement of ADB since the second quarter of 2005.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

The website developed under the TA is a good tool for information and knowledge information. At the end of TA activities the website was migrated to the server of the Kyrgyz Focal Point and became an independent platform for communication among network members. The network has expanded involving other stakeholders beyond the focal points, exception for Uzbekistan where the involvement of the Government and civil society was not satisfactory. The regional network has achieved sustainability and continues the activities carried on under the TA. Regional workshops of the network and the regional conference organized under the TA were highly successful. Conference proceeds both in English and Russian were published and distributed among participants as well as relevant education stakeholders in the region. The TA achieved its stated outcome, however involvement and cooperation with government agencies was mixed with the higher involvement in Tajikistan and the less so in Uzbekistan.

Overall Assessment and Rating

Overall, the Project is successful. While the network infrastructure, increased relationships, and exchange of information among the focal points and extended civil society network have been successful, less positive assessment can be made of the engagement with the governments and institutional stakeholders, which remains weak in the region. The network appreciated ADB commitment to put in place a mechanism and activities to ensure sustainability of the network. The network and OSI have invited ADB to explore how it might continue supporting the participation of civil society in the social sectors in the region.

Major Lessons

While the capacity building event conducted at the end of the TA implementation period was not planned among the initial TA activities, it represented a crucial step towards achievement of the TA objectives. Unfortunately, the workshop took place toward the end of TA and the benefits would have been greater if it took place earlier in the TA. A capacity assessment should have been included during the preparation stage of the TA, and capacity building activities should have taken place as a start-up action of the intervention.

Frequent changes in project officers and limited attention and expertise in dealing with projects involving nongovernment organizations (NGOs) caused delays in TA implementation. The TA participants acknowledged the improvement in the relationship with ADB since September 2005, and last year's joint activities proved to be the more successful part of the TA.

Working with NGOs requires time and resources as most of the relationships are based on mutual trust and daily communications. Given the emerging role of NGOs in the Central and West Asia region, and ADB's policies requiring frequent involvement and engagement with the civil society, ADB needs to build opportunities to bring NGOs and civil society into the policy dialogue and implementation of projects. Sufficient staff time is also required to effectively implement projects in this region.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

The capacity of NGOs in the education and other social sectors in the region remains weak; their participation to the policy dialogue is still limited. While most of the governments in the region are open to dialogue and involvement of civil society in the research, analysis, planning and implementation of projects and reform plans, the mechanism for participation is still based on personal relationships and relies, for the most part, on large international NGOs. Local NGOs and civil society are often left out of the policy dialogue. The necessity of providing opportunities to increase the participation of NGOs and civil society is of critical importance for the sustainable implementation of reforms and projects. For future actions it is recommended to explore with the ADB NGO Center (NGOC) how ADB might support (i) strengthening the capacity of local NGOs and civil society to participate in international programs and projects in the social sectors; (ii) reviewing the participation mechanisms in the region and recommend specific actions to governments for involvement of NGOs and civil society in the reform agenda; (iii) piloting participatory and consultation approaches in projects and programs managed by ADB in selected countries/sectors aiming at mainstreaming civil society participation in ADB projects; and (iv) providing support to ADB staff and governments to increase participation of NGOs and civil society in planning, implementation, and evaluation of TA and/or loan projects.