

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT¹

Division : PAHQ

TA No., Country and Name:		Amount Approved: \$1,000,000	
TA 6258-REG : Demographic and Health Survey in Pacific Island Countries		Revised Amount: N.A.	
Executing Agency: Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)	Source of Funding: TA Special Fund	Amount Undisbursed: \$84,405.02	Amount Utilized: \$915,594.98
TA Approval Date: 22 Sep 2005	TA Signing Date: 22 Feb 2006	Fielding of First Consultants: 10 March 2006	TA Completion Date Original: 31 Oct 2007 Actual: 30 May 2008 Account Closing Date Original: 31 Oct 2007 Actual: 28 February 2009
Description Socioeconomic analysis, policy making, and development planning in the Pacific region are heavily constrained by the limited availability of quality statistics. ADB agreed to finance demographic and health survey (DHS) information to help strengthen this capability. ADB further agreed that a DHS be conducted in Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Solomon Islands (SOL), and Tuvalu. A regional meeting of the relevant Pacific developing member countries (PDMCs) and donor stakeholders held in April 2005 agreed that a coordinated regional approach to conducting these DHS would be more cost-effective and efficient than having each agency work separately. The planned DHS would also assist in enhancing and transferring skills and enhancing technical competence of public officials in conducting surveys, analyzing data, and formulating evidence-based policy for basic social needs. Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs The expected impact of the regional technical assistance (RETA) was to contribute to an “enhanced formulation and monitoring of social development strategies, including progress towards Millennium Development Goals and targets.” The intended RETA outcome was to generate and disseminate reliable demographic and health data on a comparative basis in the Pacific sub-region. Five outputs were: (i) identification of demographic and health-related data needs in the Pacific region, (ii) improved sampling methodology, (iii) designing and conducting a Pacific DHS, (iv) capacity building in national statistic offices, and (v) evidence-based social services policy making. Appropriateness of Objectives The intended impact was partially achieved with SOL utilizing DHS material in formulating social development strategies and with a realistic expectation that RMI will also formulate similar strategies based on their DHS in the very near future. Tuvalu and Nauru are still completing detailed DHS reports. They nevertheless anticipate these reports will provide impetus for improving social development policies and strategies. The intended outcome was, and remains, entirely relevant. A review of the project, and discussions with DMCs and donor partners, concluded that this pilot project was successful and recommended that DHS in other Pacific island countries be conducted. Four of the five outputs have been achieved. The remaining, output evidence-based social services policy making, is still emerging, the latter country is considered to be overly ambitious as this is very close to the intended impact. Terms of reference for individual consultants were adequate for the tasks required. Executing arrangements were not implemented in accordance with the RETA report. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), as the Implementing Agency, was not consulted in developing the scope of services for complimentary aspects of the project. This caused inefficiencies in implementation and conflicts of responsibility for delivery of particular tasks. The implementation schedule was overly ambitious and did not adequately take into consideration PDMC capacity or ownership in preparing for and managing a DHS. As a consequence, the initial intention of running concurrent surveys in four countries was abandoned and consecutive surveys were conducted. This led to inefficiencies in resource utilization compared to the initial plan and lengthened the timeframe necessary to achieve project outputs. Stakeholder participation and ownership varied between countries. Nauru and RMI were fully engaged in the RETA. SOL was not fully engaged, and significant delays and cost overruns occurred, this was partly due to the DHS coinciding with the aftermath of the SOL tsunami. Additional resources were provided by other donor partners. These resources were not directed through the RETA.			
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities All activities required by the RETA were completed. In undertaking the surveys consecutively, the project team was able to progressively build on their experiences, improving the effectiveness of survey processes. Survey design, preparation, and			

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training were carried out effectively. Survey outcomes were found to be more robust where (i) surveys are culturally sensitive; (ii) nationals help select survey supervisors; (iii) other ministries and the public are involved; and (iv) there is political commitment. The TA design did not identify the quality and type of output reports required. This led to confusion with respect to the level of detail required in the post survey report. Confusion of management responsibilities at the beginning of the project resulted in: (i) ineffective application of resources; (ii) poor assessment of in country requirements, leading to delays in implementation; and (iii) diminution of project momentum. This issue was resolved and all partners worked well together and would likely appropriately collaborate in future.

MACRO International's overall performance rating is satisfactory. Their technical contribution to the RETA was highly satisfactory. MACRO International were, however, relatively inflexible to changes in implementation arrangements. Changes in key personnel arrangements also led to additional delays and costs. MACRO International was also found to have poor controls on reimbursable costs.

SPC's overall performance rating is satisfactory. Their management of the RETA reflected their commitment to DHS and their results orientation. Progress reporting was weak. Financial management is difficult when conducting household surveys in four countries and they did well to obtain as many receipts in small atoll communities as they did. Nonetheless, their understanding of Asian Development Bank's (ADB) evidentiary requirements requires strengthening.

ADB's performance is rated as satisfactory. ADB was heavily engaged in establishing the RETA and its direction. As the first activity of its type in the region this was appropriate. Nonetheless, ADB's close control during the early stages of the technical assistance limited the ability of the executing agency to effectively perform their responsibilities. A focus on strategic oversight and technical support would have been more effective.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

Efficiency in the production of outputs was low. DHSs are expensive surveys and the RETA underestimated the costs of conducting the survey in SOL and Tuvalu, where transport costs and schedules severely impacted upon the efficient delivery of the outputs and the cost of management. The RETA was effective, achieving its intended outputs. The quality of the outputs (a preliminary DHS report for each country) met international standards. The international benchmark firm, MACRO International, effectively managed quality control. An evaluation by participating countries found the RETA: (i) strengthened the national statistics office. This will have spin off benefits to other surveys; (ii) the DHS reports generated debate on health issues and policies; and, (iii) participating countries expressed satisfaction with the process and appreciation for the RETA. Constructive comments for future surveys are in the workshop report. The outputs were not produced as expected in the implementation schedule due to: (i) delays between RETA approval and the fielding of consultants; (ii) changes in the approach to undertaking the surveys in each country, i.e. consecutively not concurrently; and, (iii) the impact of the Tsunami.

Overall Assessment and Rating

This RETA is ranked overall as being successful. It is: (i) likely to achieve its intended impact; (ii) has partially achieved its outcome; and (iii) could be reasonably expected to completely achieve its outcome during 2009. All but one of the RETA outputs have been delivered.

The outcome of this RETA will only be partially sustainable. The technical capacity required to prepare a DHS and to tabulate the data could not be retained in a small PDMC. However, technical staff within national statistics offices are now better able to support preparation for a DHS and to conduct the survey themselves. The capacity to utilize the DHS reports to improve policy and service delivery is sustainably retained by the individuals involved. The experience of conducting a DHS will provide some institutional sustainability within participating departments in each country, but continued support will also be required.

Major Lessons

Lessons derived from this RETA include: (i) planning and management responsibility be vested in a single entity with the authority to direct the resources of the RETA within ADB guidelines; (ii) greater resources be provided to prepare regional activities to ensure the commitment of identified countries and to analyze their capacity prior to implementation of project activities; (iii) greater flexibility be built in to RETA designs to avoid delays during implementation through contract variations; (iv) improved staff handover arrangements within COSO, CTL, and PARD be established to retain corporate memory; and (v) a common understanding of the output specifications be documented by all project participants.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

Preliminary DHS reports prepared under this RETA provide only an overview of the demographic and health issues in the pilot countries. ADB has supported the preparation detailed DHS reports in each of the four countries through RETA 6414. Future TA should incorporate detailed DHS reports as an output of the project. At the evaluation workshop held in June 2008, PDMC officials and donor partners agreed to continue undertaking DHS activities in the region on a rolling program aligned with other survey work. It is recommended that ADB continue to support DHS in the region. PARD will follow-up on the outputs of this RETA and assist in the compilation and dissemination of policy briefs stemming from the detailed DHS reports.

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