

TA COMPLETION REPORT

Division: AEEH

TA NO./NAME: 5824-REG: Regional Study of Nutrition Trends, Policies, and Strategies in Asia and the Pacific			TA AMOUNT APPROVED: \$800,000 ¹	SOURCE: TASF/JSF
			REVISED AMOUNT:	
EXECUTING AGENCY: Asian Development Bank			TA AMOUNT UNDISB.: \$195,176.09 ²	TA AMOUNT UTILIZED: \$601,000.95 ³
DATE: 23 December 1998	APPROVAL: 23 December 1998	SIGNING: Not required	FIELD: 26 August 1999	CLOSING : ORIGINAL: April 2000
			ACTUAL: 31 December 2001	

TA DESCRIPTION

Malnutrition holds back development in the Asia-Pacific region and makes it more difficult to reduce poverty in a sustainable manner. To respond to the challenge of child malnutrition, ADB and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) collaborated with eight DMCs, covering two-thirds of the world's malnourished children, through a regional technical assistance (RETA) approved in 1996 to build a policy process within governments that developed and endorsed ten-year investment plans for children.⁴ The current RETA was to build on this policy process and extend the perspective to include food and nutrition policies that will sustain lifelong health, productivity, and achievement. The RETA was designed to provide balanced attention to young children, adolescents, women of reproductive age, and other adults.

The RETA study addressed the following seven core themes: (i) nutrition, human capital, and sustainable development; (ii) food policy and nutrition security; (iii) regional approaches to fortification of staple foods and complementary foods; (iv) evaluation of nutrition programs; (v) managing successful nutrition programs; (vi) prevention of diet-related chronic diseases; and (vii) investment planning for life-cycle nutrition and sustained health.

TA OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The aim of the RETA was to assess nutrition status in the region and identify priority strategies and policy options. The objectives of the RETA were to (i) assess progress made in reducing malnutrition in the region and the benefits of such reduction; (ii) link priority strategies to reduce child malnutrition developed under RETA 5671 with women's health and nutrition programs and with early childhood development programs, and develop strategies for public nutrition to address the needs of adults; (iii) assist DMCs with major nutrition problems in identifying vulnerable groups, formulating priorities for public nutrition, the roles of governments, external sources (including ADB), and public and private sectors; and (v) develop a set of principles for preparing the ADB's nutrition policy paper. A DMC Advisory Group of seven countries⁵ reviewed all RETA documents in light of their policies.

The RETA was intended to provide a comprehensive regional situation analysis, and to support the preparation of issues papers. The RETA also supported case studies of investment planning for the life cycle in selected DMCs;⁶ a regional seminar for key officials in the nutrition and finance sectors from the DMC advisory group to suggest approaches suitable for ADB's consideration; publication of a report on the status and future directions of public nutrition in the region; and production of an electronic media version of the report for use by the ADB and DMCs to optimize its dissemination and impact. Case studies on the food and nutrition policies to sustain lifelong health were supported in selected countries, as possible models for the region.

The RETA was intended to produce a study for publication by ADB as a scholarly review of nutrition policy, internationally and within the region, as the foundation for more effective dialogue on public nutrition policies and programs in the DMCs. The study considered options for incorporating nutrition in ADB operations.

¹ The President approved supplementary TA for \$50,000 on 27 April 2000.

² Balance as of 31 August 2001; part of the remaining unutilized TA amount will be used to cover the cost of publication.

³ Balance as of 31 August 2001; this amount excludes costs of printing of technical working papers, pending finalization of accounts.

⁴ RETA 5671: *Reducing Child Malnutrition in Eight Asian Countries*, for \$750,000, approved on 8 January 1996.

⁵ Bangladesh, Kyrgyz Republic, People's Republic of China, Fiji Islands, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam.

⁶ People's Republic of China and Sri Lanka.

TA INPUTS EVALUATION

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) was selected to implement the TA. The terms of reference were satisfactory, and the performance of the consultant was fully satisfactory. The Consultant provided international consultants, and conducted national seminars, briefings, and one regional conference fully in line with the established terms of reference. Counterpart inputs from DMCs were also adequate and provided in line with the original work plan.

TA OUTPUTS EVALUATION

The TA consolidated country case studies on life-cycle public nutrition investment planning prepared by DMC nutrition policy research institutes and produced a final report for use in disseminating the results through seminars and briefings in ADB and at the country level. The TA generated several reports, five issues papers and country studies, the proceedings of a regional fortification consultation, and the regional seminar proceedings. The RETA has provided valuable inputs into the planned nutrition policy paper. It contributed to country-specific project formulation and regional sector policy development and facilitated regional/subregional dialogue on nutritional problems and responses. The TA was extended by 20 months to provide inputs to country planning with the private sector and donor coordination regarding health and nutrition assistance to DMCs. The scope of the RETA was extended to conduct a special study of the impact of food aid on the nutrition status of the poor, especially women and children, and to offset the costs of the Manila Forum on Food Fortification Policy. The Forum has been an effective catalyst in promoting dialogue between public sector regulators and private sector producers. The RETA produced four world class publications⁷ which went far beyond the expectations when it was designed.

TA OVERALL ASSESSMENT/RATING

The TA was highly successful. Results of the TA strengthened the ADB's policy dialogue with DMCs on major nutrition problems and developed a set of principles for a nutrition policy paper.

MAJOR LESSONS LEARNED

The preparation of the country case studies by DMC research institutes rather than the line ministries concerned led to studies with especially sound analysis of the issues and problems. The regional seminar was particularly productive as it was convened with the main objective to generate consensus on the key priority problems and the type of actions that have potential for effectively addressing them. The DMC Advisory Group improved the quality of all studies, especially the synthesis report.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The RETA was intended to serve as the basis for the preparation of the Bank's nutrition policy paper. The RETA set up an inter-departmental working group to review the regional study and subsequently assist in the review of the draft policy paper. The country representatives at the regional seminar recommended priorities with respect to the future role of the ADB in support to regional nutrition action. The RETA has developed the ADB's credibility as a major analyst of nutrition policy and its contribution to poverty reduction.

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⁷ Manila Forum 2000, *Strategies to Fortify Essential Foods in Asia and the Pacific*, Manila, ADB, November 2000; S. Gillespie and L. Haddad, *Attacking the Double Burden of Malnutrition in Asia and the Pacific*, Manila, 2001, co-published by ADB and IFPRI; L. Allen and S. Gillespie, *What Works? A Review of the Efficacy and Effectiveness of Nutrition Interventions*, Manila, 2001, co-published by ADB and UN Sub-committee on Nutrition; and B.M. Popkin, Sue H. Horton and S. Kim, *The Nutrition Transition and Prevention of Diet-Related Chronic Diseases in Asia and the Pacific*, Food and Nutrition Bulletin Supplement, December 2001.