

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: RSAN

TA No. and Name TA 5944: REG-Regional Initiative to Eliminate Micronutrient Malnutrition in Asia through Public-Private Partnership			Amount Approved: US\$1,100,000.00		
			Revised Amount: US\$1,300,000.00		
Executing Agency: ADB	Sources of Funding: JSF, DANIDA, TASF		TA Amount Undisbursed US\$ 15,934.78	TA Amount Utilized US\$ 1,284,065.22	
Date			Completion Date		
Approval 17 Oct 2000	Signing N/A	Fielding of Consultants February 2001	Original 30 Apr 2002	Actual 30 October 2004	
			Closing Date		
			Original 30 Apr 2002	Actual 24 Jan 2005	

Description (Background and Rationale)

Micronutrient malnutrition remains a concern to governments in Asia and the Pacific. Three quarters of the world's micronutrient deficient persons—over a billion people—live in the region. Eliminating iodine and iron deficiencies, for example, is essential to ensure the quality of human capital and, where it is needed, is an important component of poverty reduction programs. A proven strategy for eliminating micronutrient malnutrition is through fortification of staple foods. This requires the complementary contributions of the government (legal aspects, incentives, quality control) and the private sectors (food processing industry). The Manila Forum on Food Fortification Policy (ADB, 22 – 24 February 2000) reached a consensus on a regional strategy to establish fortified foods as the standard for a range of staple foods (such as salt, flour, oils, and sugar) widely consumed by large segments of the population, especially the poor. If implemented, this strategy is expected to maximize delivery of micronutrients to those who need them most. This regional TA was designed to facilitate the implementation of the Manila Forum consensus.

Objectives and Scope

The TA goal is to help reduce micronutrient malnutrition in Asia and the Pacific by facilitating public-private partnership for food fortification in the region. The TA objectives were to (i) identify regional issues and actions required to accelerate production of micronutrient-fortified foods; (ii) support regional dialogue on issues related to food standards, regulations, trade, and surveillance; (iii) create a framework for regional fortification of certain essential staples; (iv) develop a comprehensive social marketing and communications plan for (iii); (v) link fortification policies and programs to poverty reduction and human development in the region; and (vi) develop country investment plans (CIPs) for the participating DMCs.

The project proceeded along two directions: regional workshops and local capacity building. The regional workshops discussed (i) food fortification technology for four food vehicles common in the region (salt, wheat flour, cooking oil, and complementary foods), and (ii) required structural reforms in regulation, trade, quality assurance systems, and nutrition surveillance, necessary to ensure that domestically and internationally traded food products would be safe and efficacious. Capacity building comprised training of contracted DMC country research institutes to prepare their CIPs based on guidelines and spreadsheets, to guide resource mobilization once the plans are accepted by governments. The DMCs were carefully chosen based on their demonstrated need and capacity for reform, and their potential to absorb appropriate levels of investment.

Evaluation of Inputs

The Keystone Center was selected to provide international consultants, contract and supervise country research teams, conduct workshops and conferences, and prepare all TA reports and conference proceedings. The terms of reference were appropriate, and the performance of the consulting firm was satisfactory.

The initial TA cost was \$1.1 million. An additional \$200,000 from TASF was approved in 1 August 2002 (changes in TA scope) to finance additional consultant inputs to (i) strengthen the quality and credibility of CIPs, (ii) collect and analyze data related to food consumption patterns of the poor targeted in the CIPs, (iii) conduct additional CIP review meetings to ensure that the CIPs met ADB guidelines and standards of excellence for referral to the international financial community, and (iv) further review and revise draft CIPs.

The original TA completion date of 30 April 2004 was extended to 30 October 2004 to accommodate these changes in scope, and also for (i) printing and dissemination of the Investor's Primer, and (ii) engagement of another international individual consultant to help TA countries translate their investment plans into project proposals, and develop a project webpage.

Evaluation of Outputs

Parallel to the CIP activities at the country level, a series of regional workshops facilitated information exchange and sharing, produced guidelines for national action, and recommended actions on a regional level. These regional workshops comprised: (i) inception meeting, Manila, 6-8 November 2001; (ii) compressed regional workshop on flour and cooking oil fortification, Bangkok, 19-21 April 2002; (iii) regional workshop on regulation, quality assurance, surveillance and trade of fortified foods, Bangkok, 22-25 April 2002; (iv) Asian capacity initiative for public nutrition in Bangkok, 26-27 April 2002; (v) workshop on optimizing early child nutrition strategy for processed complementary foods to reduce micronutrient malnutrition in infants and young children in Singapore, 25-27 June 2002; (vi) complementary foods workshop, 25-27 June 2002; (vii) country investment plan review meeting, Singapore, 28-29 June 2002; (viii) country investment plan review meeting, Beijing, 23 September - 1 October 2002; and (ix) food fortification roundtable, Jakarta, 27 - 28 July 2004.

These workshops produced four Consensus Statements for regional and national action including: (i) four fortification with multiple micronutrients; (ii) vegetable oil fortification with Vitamin A; (iii) trade, regulation quality assurance and surveillance; and (iv) complementary foods.

TA outputs are consolidated into an Investors Primer, "Food Fortification in Asia: Improving Health and Building Economies", published in June 2004 as volume 7 of the ADB Nutrition and Development Series. This Investors Primer summarizes the CIPs for five Asian countries (Indonesia, Pakistan, People's Republic of China, Thailand, and Viet Nam). The CIPs recommend investments in food fortification of wheat flour, cooking oil and condiments that could protect up to one billion people, avert 200,000 premature deaths, and unlock more than \$4.5 billion in national economic benefits over the next 10 years. These benefits can be leveraged through international pump-priming investments of approximately \$80 million.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA was generally successful. The TA outputs continue to facilitate ADB's policy dialogue with the selected TA DMCs on major nutrition problems and provide sound arguments to boost country investments in nutrition programs.

Indonesia is preparing to implement parts of the CIP recommendations: (i) a pilot project for Vit A fortification of palm oil will start in July 2005 (JFPR 9065); and (ii) fortification policy development and quality assurance will be part of the Urban Nutrition Project (PPTA started in June 2005).

Major Lessons Learned

The preparation of the CIPs by DMC research institutions rather than the line ministries concerned led to CIPs with especially sound analysis of the issues and problems, and recommendations. The regional workshops were particularly productive as they facilitated exchange of experience and generated inputs in finalizing the CIPs.

The involvement of academic institutions instead of line ministries, however, may have resulted in low commitment of the decision-makers (the Government) to proceed with the appropriate / necessary investments, because of the lack of ownership of the CIPs by the governments / line ministries concerned. This will now require particularly intensive policy dialogue with the concerned governments and ministries.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

Generally, the TA results will serve as valuable inputs to the preparation of strategic guidelines for nutrition interventions to be supported by ADB.

The TA results suggest a number of follow-up studies and project opportunities:

- (i) Identify new mechanisms for ADB to support food fortification (to date, ADB support for food fortification has been on an ad hoc or project-by-project basis);
- (ii) Develop regional framework and institutional capacity to create a positive regional environment for investment and trade in fortified food products;
- (iii) Consider a ASEAN-wide regional TA, which may include: advocating and helping integrate food fortification into regional trade discussions/ policies/ guidelines for wheat, flour and flour products; developing regional technical standards and guidelines for flour fortification; and identifying national and regional capacity building activities;
- (iv) Consider convening a public-private alliance to raise awareness and commitment, clarify current menu of interventions and assemble a pool of resources to enable fast-tracking the necessary market testing of large interventions.

These recommendations, however, may require additional staff or reallocation of staff assignment.