

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: ECAE

TA No. and Name TA 4231-TAJ: Institutional Development for Improved Environmental Strategic Planning and Policy			Amount Approved: \$220,000	
			Revised Amount: \$220,000	
Executing Agency: Ministry of Nature Protection	Source of Funding: Finnish TA Grant		TA Amount Undisbursed \$61,132.84	TA Amount Utilized \$158,867.16
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<p>Description The technical assistance was formulated against the background of a deteriorating environmental condition and weakened ability of the State to overcome massive disinvestment in the maintenance and improvement of the country's environmental resources in the wake of the break-up of the Soviet Union and protracted civil war (1992–1996).</p> <p>The first impact was financial. Most field activities were simply discontinued and the monitoring network barely survived. Second, new environmental policies and rules were needed, and they had to be developed without local experience of suitable alternatives at a time of fast-changing institutional and macroeconomic conditions, by an under-funded and demoralized civil service. Outside assistance came; but, in the case of environmental management, it came relatively late, was on a modest scale, and arguably not of the most appropriate kind.</p> <p>Policy formulation, where undertaken, was largely donor-driven despite best efforts of many individuals to ensure that it was home-grown and had a wide enough base. The general shortage of certain types of skills in Tajikistan (such as modern applied economics), which are essential for policy analysis, has adversely affected Tajikistan's environment overseeing body, a body whose traditional role was technical or scientific.</p> <p>A number of potentially important strategic and policy documents have been produced in Tajikistan, but almost invariably by a small group of technical experts without adequate peer- and civil society review, and usually in an un-coordinated fashion.</p>				
<p>Objectives and Scope The TA project's central goal was to help the Government of Tajikistan strengthen the capacity for environmental strategic planning, policy formulation, and coordination. This was to be achieved by setting up an environmental policy and planning center under the State Committee for Environmental Protection and Forestry (SCEPF).¹ The Center would help improve the analysis, formulation, and understanding of environmental policy in Tajikistan and encourage healthy debate inside Tajikistan and across regional boundaries about the advantages and disadvantages of alternative ways of dealing with environmental problems. The Center would also promote greater integration of environmental considerations into the economic mainstream of Tajikistan, and better internal, inter-agency and donor coordination in environmental policy matters. The central goal would be supported by a program of internal and overseas training of the staff of the environmental agency. The integration objective would demand a greater involvement of SCEPF in the shaping and dissemination of the National Environmental Action Plan.</p> <p>The TA's principal outputs were to be: (i) a conceptual framework on the roles, functions, and responsibilities of the Center; (ii) a Transfer Plan for the establishment of the Center; and (iii) a two-year medium-term work plan for the Center. Two additional tasks were to: (iv) initiate training of SCEPF staff in policy analysis and formulation, and (v) help make the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) more widely accessible as a tool of greater coordination in environmental policy making and implementation.</p>				
<p>Evaluation of Inputs The TA was conducted by two international consultants through a total of seven short visits to Tajikistan and included an extension to compensate for delays that were beyond ADB's control for a combined total of 124 days. In addition, one of the consultants assisted with the organization and accompanied a group of Tajik trainees on a study tour to Thailand. The consultants provided sound advice based on overseas best practices and generally undertook their tasks in a satisfactory manner however; the Final Report prepared by the Team Leader was deficient in that some appendixes of the English version were submitted in the Russian language with only English annotations. The Russian language version contained some appendixes in English without Russian translation.²</p>				
<p>Evaluation of Outputs The three main outputs of the TA related to: (i) establishment of the Center for Environmental Policy and Information (CEPI); (ii) formulation and execution of a transfer plan to physically move SCEPF and CEPI, as well as recruit and finance the necessary CEPI staff; and (iii) provision of CEPI operational strategy and medium-term work plan.</p> <p>CEPI was established as the center for strategic thinking and home for policy-oriented expertise in the SCEPF. Whilst recognized that it would evolve over time, its purpose was meant to offer fresh insights and an integrated vision for SCEPF and contribute to efficiency in the use of donor environment-related funding along with development and provision of analysis to implementing agencies within the SCEPF. Along with its outreach and information dissemination function, CEPI's role included the examination of data to identify gaps and ways of effectively disseminating more reliable, policy relevant, and useful data to decision makers. As a provider of analysis, the performance of CEPI would very much determine its future prospects.</p>				

¹ At the time of TA signing, SCEPF's institutional predecessor was the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP).

² Satisfactory performance in the PERs, dated 28 July 2005 and 13 February 2006.

The transfer plan described the steps to be taken by SCEPF in its move to a new building along with the physical preconditions for CEPI's operation, and actions needed to recruit and finance the necessary CEPI staff. CEPI would receive its core funding from SCEPF but its financial viability and its activities would depend on its ability to deliver policy-related work of a quality sufficient to attract new donor funding (as well as possibly benefit from any future improvement in budget allocations). Critical to CEPI's future was its transition from temporary salary supplementation to a more sustainable pattern of CEPI staff funding. Novel methods of attracting know-how and finance were proposed under the TA including the proposal that CEPI would seek partnerships with foreign universities or institutes having an interest in environmental management in Central Asia. A charter for CEPI was drafted, which describes its principal objective as helping the Government *implement* environmental policy but also makes it clear that analysis, evaluation, and planning of alternative approaches to solving environmental problems is to be an essential element of CEPI's work. The charter assigns important information-related duties to CEPI. With the assistance provided under the TA, CEPI now exists with staff, premises and equipment, and has begun activities. The procurement of all equipment and furniture intended for CEPI was completed in full by August 2005. Although recruitment of staff has been slow, an ultimate complement of 7 staff was authorized for CEPI and its budget appropriation was included in the overall SCEPF in 2005 but at the local currency equivalent of only about \$7,500, is wholly inadequate for its operational requirements as government employees cannot subsist on existing salaries.

Under the TA an initial short-term plan of work was prepared in June 2004. A full Operational Strategy and Two-Year Work Plan (OSWP) was formulated in May 2005 and modified in August 2005. The CEPI strategy focuses on pollution control, use of natural resources (especially water), environmental assessments, energy efficiency, forest management, and strategic planning and local-level environmental planning. In relation to its information mandate, CEPI's principal directions are facilitation of information sharing, unified and streamlined management of environment-related information, and increased attention to the statistical basis of environmental policy making. In terms of activities, the OSWP foresees the following: (i) summaries of existing policies, (ii) comparative policy assessments, (iii) reviews of statistical resources, (iv) proposals for modifications of existing policies, (v) policy-related assessments for SCEPF's international partners, and (vi) organization of seminars and meetings. Reports on some of these activities were completed and already available at the end of August 2005.

Other TA outputs undertaken included the provision of six training sessions for SCEPF staff and English language training for SCEPF staff as well as the organization of a study trip to Thailand to witness firsthand, the approaches and activities of equivalent Government agencies in that country and learn from their experiences and models for environmental policy making.

Finally, the TA supported the formulation and dissemination of National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), an initiative sponsored by the World Bank, through organization and financing of a workshop to discuss the draft NEAP document with stakeholder representatives. The workshop increased the document's profile, resulted in closer donor cooperation on environmental matters and enabled the SCEPF to reclaim its role of principal responsibility for environmental policy formulation and implementation.

Overall Assessment and Rating TA 4231 has laid modest foundations for a gradual improvement of policy-related skills inside the country's environmental agency. Before the TA, policy-related work was largely absent in SCEPF (and its institutional predecessor) for far too long to be fully addressed by a relatively small injection of external support. Institutional development and increased capacity building is a long-term process as some skills such as modern economics remain in very short supply in Tajikistan and their incorporation into environmental management remains difficult. However, institutional development for environmental policy formulation and implementation has been assisted by the work of the TA and therefore, taken as a whole; it is considered to have been successful.

Major Lessons Learned Despite a clear desire of SCEPF to improve its policy-making skills, the very shortage of these skills made the formulation of a strategy and work plan relatively difficult and largely driven by the consultants and a very narrow group of SCEPF staff. Therefore, the fit between the work plan and available skills is not perfect and the effectiveness of CEPI may be blunted by the weaknesses of SCEPF itself. CEPI's work plan includes several information reviews to begin the overdue task of systematizing and improving the statistical basis upon which policy analysis and monitoring of its effectiveness rests. However, there is still the need for more effective information management within the re-organized SCEPF. Perhaps an initial focus on strengthening SCEPF could have improved the prospects for CEPI however; this would also have delayed the formulation of environmental policies further and lessened the overall effectiveness of the TA. CEPI's reliance on meager Government budget allocations for operational sustainability places its future in jeopardy unless it can attract further financial support through other means and revenues generated through its own initiatives. To ensure its future, this should have been given greater emphasis in the TA, particularly in the formulation of CEPI's operational strategy and work plan.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions CEPI is a small unit within a larger organization that needs further reforms, not least in the area of information management. Its work program is ambitious but it is doubtful that CEPI will play a significant role unless the vicious circle which sees donor support diverted away from SCEPF as a reaction to SCEPF's weakness is broken. The TA has achieved its physical and training targets. However, the sustainability of improved policy work in SCEPF is not assured. ADB should build on the experience of NEAP finalization to sustain the dialogue with the World Bank as a precursor to a more systematic process of donor coordination in environmental matters in Tajikistan and use its authority to help secure additional financial support for CEPI by bi-lateral donors, foundations, academic institutions, and the private sector. The TA started the process of developing an environmental agency and policy awareness, but much still needs to be done. The ADB, along with the World Bank and other donors, should continue with support long enough for this to become self-sustaining.