

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: PAHQ

TA No. and Name TA 3400-TIM: Community Empowerment Program		Amount Approved: \$990,000	
		Revised Amount:	
Executing Agency: UNTAET	Source of Funding: JSF	TA Amount Undisbursed \$39,593.17	TA Amount Utilized \$950,406.83
Date of Report		TA Completion Date	
Approval 9 February 2000	Signing 7 March 2000	Original 31 August 2000	Actual 26 October 2000
		Account Closing Date	
		Original 31 August 2000	Actual TBD ¹

Description

In September 1999, after having voted overwhelmingly for independence, the people of Timor-Leste became victims of a sustained campaign of destruction and terror that forced three quarters of them to flee their homes. This TA was developed as a response to one of the highest priorities identified by the international community in the aftermath of that destruction campaign; that of rebuilding the country's social infrastructure and local government capacity. To this end and to prepare for the future transfer of responsibilities to an elected government - while UNTAET² was already providing essential humanitarian support and a small administrative structure to oversee emergency relief and reconstruction - there was a strong need to establish effective and accountable institutions through which government and civil society could mobilize resources and coordinate efforts for reconstruction and development. In other words, the main rationale for the TA was the need to revive the devastated rural infrastructure and economy while at the same time setting in place a community-based planning and management structure that could serve as a platform for the future local government.

Objectives and Scope

The ultimate objective of the TA was the development of an effective system of local government. As this goal demanded a more sustained level of support than could be provided simply through a short-term TA, it was decided that ADB in conjunction with the World Bank would pursue a parallel path to prepare for a full-scale (TFET) project³ that actually started by mid-2000. The key objective of the TA was therefore to provide the foundation for a reformed system of governance and more efficient, effective and responsible public administration. Such platform, which basically comprised the establishment of a network of subdistrict and village development councils, would then be used to expand the initial TA 3400 program and provide a series of development block grants to the subdistrict and village councils in order to meet the development priorities of the local communities. The TA had 4 components: (i) training and deployment of subdistrict and village facilitators; (ii) establishment of district, subdistrict and village councils and strengthening of their capacities to receive, prioritize and disburse community development funding including village development block grants funded under the TFET main project; (iii) provision of an initial grant to the subdistrict councils; (iv) refine the design and pilot the longer-term assistance program.

Evaluation of Inputs

The TA provided \$990,000 to be used for core staff, vehicles, equipment and training for a program that was to establish development councils in every village in the country. While 17 of 18 tasks required under the TA were completed and in some areas the TA exceeded targets (e.g. district and village coverage), various TA design-weaknesses were identified during implementation. Most of these related to the over estimation of the response capacities of the communities and were the result of the TA being formulated under emergency response pressures. However, overall project objectives, scope and TORs resulted generally well designed, with a good performance by the contracted consulting firm (CAA/OXFAM Australia) and the individual consultant fielded in Dili for TA coordination purposes. One major challenge related to the pace of implementation. A balance was required between meeting urgent community needs on the one hand, and

¹ Services completed in August 2000; however, the final claim of one consultant has not yet been resolved. This is being followed-up.

² UNTAET: United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor.

³ TFET (Trust Fund for East Timor): Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (co-managed by ADB and World Bank).

delivering the project in a sustainable and empowering manner on the other. While this compromise was not always at the optimal level, TA implementation showed very good progress in this direction with an important role and overall satisfactory performance by both the individual international consultant (TA coordinator: 7 person-months) and the CAA/OXFAM team (5 international consultants: 17 person-months). ADB project management performance was also satisfactory, while EA performance is rated less than satisfactory.

Evaluation of Outputs

By the end of actual TA implementation (23 August 2000), the TA had exceeded its coverage target by establishing a presence in nearly all districts. Similarly, councils had been established in 80% of villages and subdistricts against a target of 50%. Council elections were held in all accessible parts of the country with more than 4,800 council members sitting on 348 village and 50 subdistrict development councils. A total of 144 Timorese staff were recruited as subdistrict and village facilitators. Disbursement of the first round of block grant funds took place in almost all villages in the first 9 operational districts with about \$1.0M of World Bank (TFET) grants distributed to 317 village councils. Capacities at the subdistrict and village level for planning, prioritization and management of community development funding were also strengthened substantially through training of a training coordinator, four trainers, 88 subdistrict facilitators and over 700 village facilitators. Wide village consultations also took place with generally a good degree of collaboration with all involved stakeholders and NGOs (estimated more than 21,000 people consulted). Both the CAA/OXFAM consulting team and the TA coordinator consultant substantially contributed and participated in this consultation process. Preparatory work undertaken under component (iv) was also successful in paving the way for the follow-up full TFET/World Bank project.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA is rated as successful. Despite serious weakness in the UNTAET management capacities, the TA was able to achieve a near seamless integration with the main TFET project as attested by the fact that by the end of July 2000 all but eleven of the 328 villages in the first 9 districts out of 13 had received their initial development grants. However, as described in the consultants' final report, achievement of the physical targets means little unless accompanied by genuine participation and ownership by the community. In this context and despite the TA's important achievements, substantial work and follow-up support was (and still is) required to achieve this goal (good local governance structure supported by full ownership by the community). Overall, the general intent and specific objectives of the TA were successfully achieved.

Major Lessons Learned

Several lessons have been learned out of TA implementation.

- (i) *Council Roles and Decision-Making Participation.* TA implementation was constrained by difficulties for the councils to understand their role in relation to traditional leaders. After a generation of systemic disempowerment, inspiring community members on the concepts of democracy and representative leadership was problematic and labor intensive. On a more positive front, it was evident that the strength and cohesion built up by the clandestine structures⁴ over the last 25 years created a deep well of social capital that needs to be exploited if the country's urgent rural development problems are to be eventually resolved. While it was imperative that the councils be able to learn from and draw on all the scarce human resources, some caution was needed as to the degree of involvement of these leadership structures. This was mainly because the control mentality and gender bias of the clandestine structures were, and still are, contrary to the participatory, democratic processes that the project attempted to instill through CEP. The continuing challenge is to provide assistance in a way that does not weaken the traditional support mechanisms that exist, and finding mechanisms at the same time to strengthen and build upon the stated preference for community-based approaches;

⁴ We refer to the clandestine structure of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT).

- (ii) *Information Availability and Communication Effectiveness.* Another lesson-learned during the initial implementation of CEP was the major need for timely information across Timor-Leste. Most communities have been cut-off from their previous sources of information and to date mass communication has been woefully inadequate. Development projects have been less than successful in getting messages to communities either in the way that these messages have been designed, or in the timeliness of the delivery. A much greater priority needs to be given to communication, especially in community development projects.
- (iii) *Donor Coordination and Sectoral Approach.* The final major lesson from the first phase of implementation of CEP is that different policies adopted by donors have been confusing for communities, which could cause future distortionary economic impacts. Although it is recognized that projects have diverse objectives and sometimes different policies are justified, there is a need to bring project policies and practices more in line with each other, through better project coordination. Donor coordination on community development is needed to ensure that communities and decision-making bodies are provided with information, processes, and procedures that give them the capacity to be more involved in development planning and implementation. Further efforts need to be made to bridge the gap between district and subdistrict development planning, especially to improve the information flows about development activities in the district so that councils can make better-informed decisions. Joint monitoring and evaluation by donors and communities has been one mechanism used on CEP supervision missions to establish greater effectiveness and coordination in community development initiatives.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

As a result of this TA a positive environment emerged for institutionalizing the role of the community councils. While the councils were generally accepted by the communities, a considerable amount of capacity building was and is still needed. In particular, capacities to plan, prioritize and manage development programs, have to be strengthened, possibly through the development of simple and practical models for priority village development projects in areas such as water, agriculture, health and education, as well as priority infrastructure for basic services and communications. At the same time, specific attention will have to be paid to a crucial priority area: assisting the new Government and all involved stakeholders in assessing the potential of the councils and their role within the perspective of the new comprehensive system of local government appropriate to the needs of the country. These and other related issues are currently addressed by on-going community development programs funded by multilateral and bilateral donors through TFET and other channels.