

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: PARD
Office: PLCO

TA No. and Name: TA 3789-VAN: Performance Improvements To Service Delivery Units			Amount Approved: \$300,000	
			Revised Amount: \$300,000	
Executing Agency: Department of Strategic Management (DSM)	Source of Funding: JSF		TA Amount Undisbursed \$35,037	TA Amount Utilized \$264,963
<u>Date</u>			<u>TA Completion Date</u>	
Approval 7 Dec 2001	Signing 13 Dec 2001	Fielding of Consultants 8 Jun 2002	Original 31 Jul 2003	Actual 31 Dec 2004
			<u>Account</u>	<u>Closing Date</u>
			Original 30 Aug 2003	Actual: 9 March 2005

Description

The TA was designed against a background of inadequate managerial skills and weak capacity to effectively develop, implement, and monitor service delivery improvements across the public service. Service delivery targets were included in annual budgets for quarterly reporting by line agencies but follow-up action was lacking. The need to strengthen the service skills of task managers was urgent. Some directors-general (DGs) and their staff were not familiar with improvement methodologies and therefore did not possess the skills required to efficiently and effectively identify and implement service improvements. The result was a slowing down and, in some cases, even deterioration of the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to the public. In addition, the Service Delivery Improvement Committee (SDIC) set up by the Council of Ministers in 1999 was intended to facilitate service improvement but lacked the organizational capacity to support service delivery agencies. As an alternative, the development of institutional capacity to support service improvement was needed. This TA was intended to develop that capacity in the form of teams of officers already involved in service improvement within ministries, referred to as service improvement groups (SIGs). A previous service improvement initiative identified a lack of institutional capacity to support front-line service improvement.

Objectives and Scope

The objective of the TA was to build the capacity of government institutions to facilitate service improvements within the public service. The scope of the TA was intended to strengthen management capability of the SIGs to enable them to respond to service improvement within their own ministries and manage projects successfully, using several pilot SIGs to demonstrate the approach. The role of the SIGs was to create sustainable improvement capacity within departments, hence local staff were to be involved in the full range of improvement activity. After consultation with local stakeholders, the following service improvement areas were agreed upon: (i) strengthening the role of secondary school inspectors in the Ministry of Education (MOE), (ii) improving the management skills of six provincial health managers in the Ministry of Health (MOH), (iii) improving the processes for disseminating and raising awareness about export of products both internally and offshore in close consultation with the officials of the Department of Trade (DOT) and Department of Agriculture (DOA), and (iv) training one or two Department of Strategic Management (DSM) officials in performance improvement methodologies. The design was relevant in terms of TA formulation, implementation, appropriateness of TA objectives, terms of reference (TOR) and stakeholder participation; notwithstanding some changes made to the TOR during TA implementation.

Evaluation of Inputs

The TA was formulated appropriately building on the lessons learned from a previous TA with emphasis on monitoring of key services as part of the capacity building. The TA provided for 10 person months of consulting services for two experts from a firm over an 18-month period. Australia Continuous Improvement Group International was recruited to implement the TA and provided two experienced and well qualified improvement specialists. The TA had a hands-on approach with a strong focus on delivery of services in the rural areas, which was a success given the strong level of commitment and dedication from the counterparts. The intermittent approach provided the counterparts a chance to apply their performance improvement methodologies and assess their effectiveness. The counterparts and the TA consultants maintained constant interaction via electronic mail. Strong and enthusiastic involvement was gained from the MOE and MOH. Initial support from the DOT was strong but the failure of the DOA to honor its TA partnership agreement severely limited the impact that the Trade team could have achieved. DSM also had good early involvement but under pressure from the Ministry of the Prime Minister, staff were diverted to other work that DSM involvement in the project became limited to training only. The TOR was comprehensive and focused. Midway during TA implementation, changes were made to the TOR to reflect the local realities arising from the non-availability of DOT and DSM staff, and the lack of clear direction from the Office of the Prime Minister to reform the SDIC. Accordingly, the original TORs were revised. In addition, both the MOE and MOH requested extension to the TA by one month so the consultants could assist the SIGs with assessing monitoring tools, their application and appropriateness. The consultants built strong relationships with local staff. Their approach was very practical, simple and easy to understand. In short, the consultants' contributions

and performance was commendable.¹ ADB Missions were regularly done by SPRM and the project officer was able to respond promptly to any emerging issues and maintained close contact with officials. Overall, the performance of ADB and implementing agencies was satisfactory and effectively contributed to TA accomplishment.

Evaluation of Outputs

Fortnightly reports were provided by the TA consultants and regular briefings held throughout TA visits. Inception, interim and final reports were submitted, reviewed and endorsed. The TA accomplished significant improvements developing in-house capacity of SIGs. Several training workshops were held in Port Vila and in Santo (rural province). Numerous follow-up meetings and short workshops with all three SIGs were held since their initial training. At one time SIGs for MOE and MOH held their training together, and it provided numerous benchmarking opportunities. It also allowed each SIG the opportunity to consolidate on what they had learnt in their opening workshops. Workshops were held to impart computer skills for continuation of the SIGs' work and consolidate their continuing action plans. Each SIG had an action plan and timetable for their service improvements. The MOE and MOH SIGs made substantial progress towards their service improvement plans, while the DOT and DOA SIG was still in the early phases of carrying out their improvement plan. The MOE SIG achievements have included the development of an Inspector's Manual, process maps for all their key processes, clearly defined performance measures, clarification of roles and responsibilities for key education personnel, plus several process improvements. For example, an inspectors report took about two months to be sent out to the teachers on completion of a field visit. This time was reduced to one-day assessment using a newly designed inspection form. The inspectors manual are in use and several process improvements activated as part of the MOE's ongoing improvement plans. The MOH SIG achievements have included (i) development of a new management audit form for use during visits to rural health facilities; (ii) identification of a major health risk in the northern provinces, namely very low immunization rates for children; (iii) development and conduct of an employee survey; (iv) diagrams developed to assist in the presentation of this data, and analysis is currently underway; and (v) identification of a range of service delivery related issues that require attention. Some of these include: development of a process for handovers for when key personnel are posted to/from rural health facilities; drawing a process map for rural health facility visits; development of a range of performance measures for the outcomes and outputs of their key processes; recognition of the need to consider asset sharing in remote parts of Vanuatu; developing a better understanding of the finance processes within Health; and developing a closer working relationship with the finance personnel within MOH. These improvement plans were formally adopted in the MOH. The Trade SIG has now started to provide pricing information to rural farmers. The feedback from the five skills training workshops was unanimously very high. Training handbooks, slide presentations and lesson plans for SIG training were handed over to DSM and copies given to team leaders in the MOE and MOH. Materials were given both in hard-copy form and also on CD-ROM. SIGs were trained in project management and were managing their own action plans and schedules by the end of the project. It was evident during the TA extension period² that the SIG team leaders were running training sessions within their respective departments. Overall, Institutional building was achieved in the MOE and MOH through skills development and successful project work, and skill development was achieved in the DOT and DOA and DSM. Overall, concerned Government officials highly valued the quality of advice and services provided by the TA consultants. The TA consultants satisfactorily fulfilled their TOR

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA is rated successful as tangible and concrete impacts were achieved under the TA, despite the lack of enthusiasm in two other service departments. Capacity and institutional building was evident under the TA.

Major Lessons Learned

The need to examine ways in which team-based approaches to service delivery improvement could be better organized and managed. A focus by DGs on the issue of front-line service delivery performance, using the regular forum of the Development Committee of Officials (DCO). Second, to manage and sustain improvement, a well-trained, enthusiastic and credible sponsor organization such as DSM or the PSC is required to support public servants.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

(i) Establish overall direction by a senior management group. (ii) Service improvement reports to be made a standing regular agenda item for the DCO. (iii) Institutionalization of knowledge transfer through a permanent training source like the Government Training Centre. (iv) Provision of expert facilitation for new groups starting service improvement efforts – a full-time responsibility for at least one person until such time as a significant number of Service Improvement Groups are operational. Former members and team leaders of SIGs can take on this role within their own Ministry.

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¹ The PER of the consulting firm will be evaluated accordingly.

² The extension in TA period and transitory period required for improvement plans to be implemented and impacts measured explains the time gap between original and actual TA closing dates.