

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division : VRM

TA No. 3772-VIE:			Amount Approved:		
Capacity Building for Central Region Poverty Reduction			US\$3,108,000		
			Revised Amount:		
			US\$3,108,000		
Executing Agency: Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)		Source of Funding: Government of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland: \$2,308,000 and the Japan Special Fund: \$800,000.	Amount Undisbursed: US\$442,680.30	Amount Utilized: US\$2,665,319.70	
TA Approval Date: 14-Nov-01	TA Signing Date: 11-Oct-02	Fielding of First Consultant(s): 20-Jan-03	TA Completion Date Original: 31-Dec-2004 Actual: 28-Feb-06		
			Account Closing Date Original: 31-Dec-2004 Actual: 29-Sep-06		
Description:					
<p>The Central region is the poorest part of Viet Nam. In this area, the delivery of services targeting the poor such as microfinance and extension faced difficulties due to the inappropriate skills of staff and ineffective administrative procedures in the Government agencies responsible for service provision. The Technical Assistance (TA) addressed poverty reduction by (i) improving the delivery of poverty targeted services in some pilot communes, and by (ii) improving the institutional environment in the four provinces through improving service providers' skills. The TA also aimed at assisting in implementing Loan 1883 – VIE: Central Region Livelihood Improvement Project (CRLIP).</p>					
Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs:					
<p>The TA was to help improve decentralized poverty reduction activities in Viet Nam. The expected outcomes of the TA were: (i) improved local service delivery performance, and (ii) Government adoption of key policy and practice changes in poverty focused service delivery modalities and the management structure to deliver these changes. The TA's planned outputs were: (i) five modules in participatory planning and community development, microfinance, agricultural extension, infrastructure development, and land use planning and land allocation; and (ii) an active policy and practice network to support the Government develop key principles to improve decentralized service delivery for poverty reduction.</p>					
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities:					
<p>The terms of reference (TOR) for each consultant position were developed with adequate consultation with the Government. Eight international consultants and 14 national consultants were recruited. Total inputs were 45.1 person months (pms) for international and 118.9 pms for national consultants as compared to 45.5 pms and 120.0 pms for international and national consultants that were envisaged. There was no major change or deviation from planned inputs and activities. The first consultant team leader was changed due to poor performance. The consultants partly satisfied the TORs. The Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the Executing Agency (EA) for the TA was not fully satisfied with the TA consultants' performance because some consultants had insufficient expertise.</p> <p>MPI closely coordinated TA implementation with four project provinces, namely Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, and Kon Tum. A multi-ministerial committee was chaired by MPI, comprising Ministry of Finance, Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Affairs, and other agencies. Counterpart staff in participating provinces guided the consultants during TA implementation. Their constructive comments and feedback on the pilot modules and policy recommendations were useful. MPI and participating province performances were satisfactory.</p> <p>The consultants began field work on 20 January 2003 and the TA was completed on 28 February 2006. Originally it was envisaged that the TA would be implemented from December 2001 to December 2004. Due to the late TA signing and mobilization of consultants, the TA completion was delayed by 14 months.</p>					

ADB headquarters administered the TA for the first 12 months until January 2004 and it was then delegated to Viet Nam Resident Mission (VRM). The delegation to VRM enabled close supervision of the TA implementation. ADB's performance was satisfactory.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome:

The expected outputs were not fully delivered. The five modules for decentralized service delivery arrangements were tested in eight pilot communes. However, five modules failed to go through three rounds of six steps of design, training, implementation, evaluation, handover, and application. Out of the five modules, agricultural extension modules were most successful and some of them were adopted by CRLIP. The least successful was the microfinance module, which was implemented only in four out of eight communes due to complicated procedures which could not be applicable for CRLIP. Land use planning and land allocation modules were piloted only in six communes due to the limitation of TA funds. Infrastructure development modules were unsuccessful since the budget allocation for each subproject was too small, at about \$1,400, while the required amount ranged from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Participatory planning and community development modules using participatory rural appraisal (PRA) were implemented satisfactorily, but they were implemented only for two rounds against targeted three rounds.

The TA failed to develop an active policy and practice network that would help the Government improve decentralized service delivery for poverty reduction. Central Region Learning Network (CRLN) website, the basis for creating key policy and practice principles aimed at promoting effective, poverty-focused service delivery was established only at a late stage of the TA implementation. The contents of the website need further improving to include more useful information. The website is managed by Consultant package 2, under CRLIP, as no host organization was identified during TA implementation.

Due to limited achievement of the pilot modules, improvement in local service delivery performance was also limited.

Overall Assessment and Rating:

The TA is rated as partly successful. The expected outcomes and outputs were partly achieved. The TA's recommendations were not completely in line with the Government's new policies and therefore opportunity for adoption was marginal. The TA could not directly support the implementation of CRLIP as originally planned because (i) the delayed TA start and (ii) low applicability of the pilot modules.

Major Lessons:

As the TA was designed to support the CRLIP, the TA was scheduled to be implemented before the start of CRLIP to ensure CRLIP would use the TA outcomes. However, due to the late commencement, CRLIP had no inputs from the TA during the first 18 months of its implementation. In addition, lack of communication between the TA consultants and CRLIP consultants resulted in the TA outcomes that are unsuitable for the CRLIP's use. The other issue is that the anticipated TA outputs and outcomes were ambitious and difficult to achieve even though all inputs and activities were delivered as envisaged. Major lessons learned for a TA which is expected to support a specific loan project are: (i) implementation schedule of the TA and the loan should be synchronized; (ii) close communication between the TA consultants and loan consultants should be ensured; (iii) the TA should be designed to focus on the objectives to support loan implementation; and (iv) if the project experienced the major delay, the Development Monitoring Framework (DMF) might need to be re-visited to assure the relevance of the project.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions:

It is recommended that MPI, the EA for the CRLIP identify the host agency for the CRLN website and train the host agency to ensure that the website will be managed after completion of the CRLIP. The website would contribute to establishing the network to support the Government policy for decentralized service delivery.