

TA COMPLETION REPORT

Division: AWFN

TA NO./NAME				TA AMOUNT APPROVED:	
TA2871-VIE: Red River Basin Water Resources Management				\$1,150,000	
				REVISED AMOUNT:	
				\$1,362,663	
EXECUTING AGENCY: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)			FUND SOURCE JSF - \$1,150,000 Dutch Grant – \$212,663	TA AMOUNT UNDISBURSED: \$588,669 ^a	TA AMOUNT UTILIZED: \$723,994 ^a
REPORT DATE: Oct 2001	APPROVAL DATE: 19 Sept 1997	SIGNING DATE: 20 Nov 1997	CONSULTANT FIELDING DATE: 26 Mar 1998	CLOSING:	
				ORIGINAL: 30 Apr 2001	ACTUAL: 31 Aug 2001 ^b

TA DESCRIPTION

With the rapid pace of development in Viet Nam, there are significant challenges to the management of its natural resources. The changes will place enormous pressures on the country's natural resources, and effective management of water resources will become increasingly important. The Government has requested ADB support for improving water resources management in the Red River Basin in view of its importance to the capital region and the northern economic growth zone, and because of the ADB's history of assistance in the area. About 51 percent of the Red River basin lies in Viet Nam (the upper 49 percent lies in the People's Republic of China) and as competition among water users increases, the cross-sectoral impacts of management decisions will become increasingly significant to the Basin's future prosperity. The consequence of retaining the status quo is increasing conflict over resource allocation and deteriorating water quality, which will disproportionately affect the lives of the rural poor and require significant financial resources to rectify. These trends have been recognized by the Government, and steps towards more integrated water resources management have been initiated. Basin management and coordination across sectors and administrative units are key aspects of the Water Law passed in 1998. Numerous institutional and administrative models for river basin management exist, but adaptations will be required to tailor such models to the specific conditions in Viet Nam.

TA OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The overall sector goal to which the TA contributed was improved management of water resources in the Red River Basin. The TA was the first step in improving the Government's capability for integrated water resources management (IWRM) in the Basin, and aimed to develop a more appropriate policy and institutional framework, increased understanding of the issues facing the Basin, and thereby a sound basis for future management interventions. The TA covered support in three areas: (i) development of a policy and effective institutional framework for integrated water resources management (IWRM) in the Basin; (ii) development of a water sector information system that focuses on the changing demands, hydrology, and land use; and (iii) priority studies addressing key functions of IWRM and the resolution of a set of critical water resources problems.

TA INPUTS EVALUATION

The consultants were fielded on schedule in March 1998 and completed their assignment by August 2001, four months behind schedule because of delays in the Government. The separation of the TA into two phases allowed for a policy and strategy for water resources management in the Red river basin, developed in the first phase, to be reviewed and adopted by the Government prior to commencing the second phase. Early in TA implementation, the Government established an interministerial Red River Basin Strategy Committee (RRBSC) to serve as steering committee for the TA and act as precursor of the Red River Basin Organization to be designed under the TA. The RRBSC met numerous times during TA implementation and effectively guided the work of the TA, including a review of its draft final report. The RRBSC was supported in its work by an interministerial working group, which performed an essential role in analyzing and debating issues and alternative solutions brought forward by the TA consultants. The consultants collaborated closely with their government counterparts as a team. The consultants also established excellent working relationships with representatives of the 25 provinces in the basin, and with staff of the other ministries

^a Final payments are yet to be processed.

^b Completion of consulting services.

concerned. In this process, the consultants effectively introduced a participatory approach to the work of MARD in water resources management. During the latter stages of the TA, the consultants were also able to respond effectively to unforeseen requests from MARD for urgent assistance in the formulation of a Government regulation to establish the National Water Resources Council (NWRC) and its office. The overall assessment of the consultants performance is satisfactory.

TA OUTPUTS EVALUATION

The main outputs of the TA are (i) a sound policy and institutional framework for IWRM in the Red River basin, and for the NWRC, which have been adopted by MARD, (ii) a comprehensive information system on the Red River Basin, involving a Basin Profile developed with the participation of stakeholders, and a Resource Data Directory implemented in an on-line electronic metadatabase; (iii) reports of management studies on land use and water management, surface water licensing systems, and wastewater discharge permit systems; and (iv) the initiation of cooperation with the People's Republic of China for transboundary water resource management in the Red River Basin. Based on the TA recommendations, the Government formally established the NWRC in June 2000 and the Red River Basin Organization (RRBO) in April 2001. MARD regarded the TA as very successful in introducing the complex task of river basin planning and management in Viet Nam through a participatory process. As a result of the TA, MARD's capacity for river basin planning has also been strengthened. The TA has generated much interest within the Government and the donor community, and is widely regarded as a pilot project for replication in other river basins in the country.

TA OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RATING

The TA was successful in achieving its objectives. The Government's capacity for IWRM in the Red River Basin was strengthened through staff training, a comprehensive information system, and the joint design and preparation for the RRBO. A sound policy and institutional framework were developed and adopted. The Government's understanding of issues facing the Red River Basin increased, and the TA recommendations have provided a sound basis for future management interventions, as reflected in the Government's establishment of the NWRC and the RRBO. The TA was implemented in a flexible manner to respond to evolving Government priorities in the sector and basin and, for the first time in such work in Viet Nam, involved extensive stakeholder participation, which was welcomed by the Government.

MAJOR LESSONS LEARNED

The design of the TA in two phases was effective in mobilizing Government commitment to adopt and implement the policy and institutional framework for IWRM in the Red river basin. The in-built flexibility in the TA scope was effective in helping to respond to evolving needs during TA implementation, in particular to assist the Government in the establishment of the NWRC, which was recognized as a necessary condition for establishment of the RRBO. During TA implementation it became evident that introducing a new institutional framework is a long-term endeavor, and that it is therefore important to have a champion in the executing agency to obtain the necessary political support to expedite the reform process.

FOLLOW-UP ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several follow-up actions were taken as a result of the TA. The Government established the NWRC and RRBO in accordance with the TA recommendations, and decided to replicate the design of the RRBO for two other major river basins, viz. the Mekong Delta and the Dong Nai river basin. A comprehensive program of capacity building in the RRBO and for pilot implementation of water licensing systems was designed as part of the Second Red River Basin Sector Project.^c ADB approved a TA cluster for capacity building in water resources management, including assistance to the NWRC and to river basin planning and management in the Dong Nai river basin.^d

c Loan No. 1855-VIE(SF), for \$70 million, approved on 13 November 2001.

d TA No. 3528-VIE, for \$4.650 million, approved on 5 June 2001.