

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: PARD/SPSO

TA No., Country and Name TA 4605-COO: Strengthening Disaster Management and Mitigation			Amount Approved: \$600,000 Revised Amount: \$523,739.00	
Executing Agency Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM)		Source of Funding TASF	Amount Undisbursed: \$11,395.84	Amount Utilized: \$512,343.16
TA Approval Date: 30 June 2005	TA Signing Date: 15 August 2005	Fielding of First Consultants: 27 August 2005	TA Completion Date Original: 31 March 2006 Account Closing Date Original: 31 March 2006	Actual: 30 March 2007 Actual: 25 March 2008
<p>Description</p> <p>Cook Islands was severely affected by 5 cyclones occurring within a period of less than 2 months in early 2005. The Government recognized the need to improve its capacity to manage emergency response in the future and develop an effective planning framework for mitigating its vulnerability, taking into account the prospect of increased frequency and intensity of severe climatic events expected to result from climate change. The Government also recognized that its vulnerability could be mitigated by “climate proofing” its infrastructure to limit physical damage and to enhance resilience in the recovery phase, including rapid normalization of economic activities. The technical assistance (TA) was designed to (i) support the strengthening of disaster and emergency management, and (ii) prepare a 20-year integrated and environmentally sustainable infrastructure development plan incorporating recommendations for climate change adaptation in the designs and cost estimates. The TA was implemented under two components, namely Component 1, Strengthening Disaster Management and Mitigation and Component 2, Preventive Infrastructure Master Plan. The TA was approved along with an associated loan (Loan No. 2174-COO: Cyclone Emergency Assistance Project).</p> <p>Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs</p> <p>Component 1: The objectives of Component 1 were to assist the Government in strengthening disaster and recovery management, including damage assessment, aid management and operational coordination; and to establish financial controls necessary to ensure good governance in managing rapid disbursement of recovery funds. The expected output was a systematic approach to disaster management through capacity development of institutions and associated disaster management plans and legislation.</p> <p>Component 2: The objective of Component 2 was to prepare a preventive infrastructure master plan to identify and prioritize infrastructure needs for the next 20 years, and enhance resilience by minimizing the harmful effects of future disasters on the built environment. The plan was to cover all basic infrastructure, including transport, water, sanitation, power and communications sectors, and was to prepare an effective governance and policy framework for essential basic service delivery, and management and maintenance of infrastructure assets.</p> <p>The impact of the assistance is expected to be a contribution to environmentally sustainable economic growth through improved disaster response and infrastructure resilience. The outcome of the TA was to be an improved capacity for disaster management and adoption of longer term strategies for the development of infrastructure incorporating climate proofing.</p> <p>Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities</p> <p>Component 1: The ability of key public and private sector agencies to work together in times of national crisis, as demonstrated in the aftermath of the 2005 cyclones, masked the fact that formal disaster management structures were very weak, outdated, and focused on hurricane response rather than an “all hazards” approach. To achieve an outcome of increased resilience, the need to improve capacity through review of agency mandates, institutional reorganization and preparation of appropriate mechanisms and operational procedures was adequately addressed in the TA formulation and in the Terms of Reference (TOR). The expectation that the consultant could assist with the response to the 2005 cyclones by supporting the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) to maximize offers of grant assistance was not realized, probably due to the fact that the consultant was not mobilized until 6 months after the cyclones struck. The consultant, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), was appointed directly, given its pre-eminent advocacy role for disaster risk management in the Pacific. SOPAC strengthened its team by combining with the New Zealand Ministry of Civil Defense and Emergency Management and their overall performance was very good. The Government adequately supported the TA activities and engaged fully with the consultant to achieve the objectives. Drafting of supporting legislation took more time due to counterpart staff constraints resulting in an extension of the services by 5 months.</p>				

Component 2: The ad-hoc nature of infrastructure investment and development and the need for a more systematic approach was recognized in the formulation of the TA. This need, along with the additional need for climate change adaptation to be mainstreamed in the design of basic infrastructure, is adequately set out in the TOR. Formulation also recognized the need for institutional reform of the agencies responsible for delivery of infrastructure services. However, the goals set with regard to institutional reform, including drafting of legislation, were not achievable given the timeframe and resources available under the TA. A shift in focus towards definition of a prioritized investment program resulted during implementation at the expense of concrete progress towards institutional reform. The timing of the TA corresponded with a prolonged period of political instability, manifested in frequent changes of Government and consequent reluctance on the part of Government to prioritize potentially controversial reforms at that point in time. No draft legislation was delivered. The TA was amended to develop a “prioritization tool” capable of being used by stakeholders to rank proposed projects in a transparent and systematic way. The performance of the consultant (The MPC Group International) was satisfactory and particularly effective in the area of stakeholder consultations. The TA was well supported by the Government.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

Component 1: Component 1 was directly responsible for the preparation of the Disaster Risk Management Bill which was enacted in November 2007. The TA established the Emergency Management Cook Islands (EMCI), consolidating formerly dispersed or undefined emergency response functions into a single agency. The TA prepared a Disaster Risk Management Plan which is being finalized by EMCI, in preparation for drafting of regulations for the Disaster Risk Management Act. New Zealand Agency for International Development has pledged financial support and technical assistance for drafting of the regulations during 2008. The TA has successfully achieved the expected outcomes.

Component 2: Preparation of the Master Plan was effectively integrated with the concurrent preparation of the Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP). The final report is comprehensive in its analysis of the infrastructure agencies and identification of key economic and social investment priorities, and its close association with the NSDP has ensured good Government ownership. The outputs fell short of preparing an effective governance and policy framework for infrastructure, compensated to a degree by providing decision makers with informed analysis of institutional constraints and providing suggestions for reforms. The dialogue concerning institutional improvement conducted under the TA has been successful to the extent that the prospect for achieving significant reforms in future is considerably enhanced. While the “prioritization tool” was not sufficiently rigorous to support identification of projects to be financed by an ADB loan, it nevertheless identified the key investments that need to be made over the next 20 years, and raised awareness that incorporation of climate proofing is an essential element of project design. The Master Plan has been incorporated in the NSDP and accepted by the Government and other development partners as a key planning document.

Overall Assessment and Rating

Overall, the TA is rated as successful. Component 1 has delivered its intended outputs and these have been adopted through the promulgation of the Disaster Risk Management Act in November 2007. Component 1 is rated as Highly Successful. Component 2 did not make the expected progress towards institutional reform but was successful in delivering the Master Plan with a strong sense of Government ownership. Component 2 is therefore rated as Successful.

Major Lessons

The readiness of Government to accept and promote significant institutional reforms should be carefully assessed in order that outcome expectations can be realistic. Programming for preparation and implementation of institutional reforms in the Cook Islands should provide sufficient time to allow for slow technical and political processes.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

Provision of resources (budget and staff) to EMCI by Government should be reviewed regularly to ensure that these remain adequate.

The Preventive Infrastructure Master Plan has prepared a good platform from which to prepare an Infrastructure Development Project incorporating improvements and reforms of infrastructure governance and policy. Follow-up TA and projects proposed in the CPS 2008–2012 proposed to commence in 2008 is timely.

The Master Plan has fostered harmonization of aid programs of various donors through its status as a key planning document. This status should be exploited to the extent possible when exploring cofinancing opportunities and in joint advocacy of reforms in infrastructure management.