

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SAUD

TA No., Country and Name RETA 6225: South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Human Resource Development and Capacity Building in the Tourism Sector		Amount Approved: US\$600,000	
		Revised Amount: US\$600,000	
Executing Agency: Asian Development Bank	Source of Funding: Japan Special Fund	Amount Undisbursed: \$121,994.00	Amount Utilized: \$478,006.00
TA Approval Date: 23 Dec 2004	TA Signing Date: 23 Dec 2004	Fielding of First Consultant(s): 21 Feb 2005	TA Completion Date Original: 30 Jun 2006 Actual: 31 Dec 2007 Account Closing Date Original: 31 Dec 2007 Actual: 22 Oct 2008
<p>Description: ADB has been supporting the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program since 2000. The tourism working group (TWG) comprising representatives of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (BBINS)¹, established under the SASEC program, recognized tourism human resource development (HRD) as a priority project, and emphasized the need for assistance to (i) create a cooperative environment for tourism education and training, (ii) develop and upgrade skills of the tourism sectors in BBINS, and (iii) establish a network of tourism training centers. Development partners who participated in the TWG meeting offered technical expertise for these cooperative efforts. Advisory TA is included in the Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program for 2004, to support HRD in the tourism sector in BBINS.</p> <p>The ADB-funded HRD TA aimed to raise common minimum skill levels in the South Asia tourism industry by developing human resources to meet employment opportunities, and enhance the visitor experience by overcoming disparities of service in the delivery of Buddhist Heartland and ecotourism, two prioritized themes for subregional tourism. To help achieve this, the HRD TA conducted a series of training of trainers (ToT) workshops within the framework of a common minimum training program (CMTP) addressing mutually agreed topics. The training targets three levels of education, reaching down from advanced skills (Tier III), through middle management and tertiary levels (Tier II) to the basic, primary "grass roots" local level (Tier I).</p> <p>Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs: The TA's impact was to support (i) HRD in the tourism sectors in BBINS, and (ii) networking of tourism institutions in that region. The TA aimed to contribute to strengthening institutional capacity in the subregion and support cooperative efforts based on natural and cultural heritage. The TA was also designed to (a) strengthen subregional and national centers of excellence through development of a CMTP, course structures, and a training calendar; (b) support development of HRD strategies for the tourism sectors in BBINS and coordinate country-level efforts to achieve common minimum levels; and (c) establish a web-based mechanism for HRD networking to enable greater private sector participation.</p> <p>Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities: A team of individual consultants was recruited, on an intermittent basis, from February 2005 to November 2007. The TA team comprised a Tourism Human Resource Development Specialist (THS) – 5.70 person months, a Subregional Tourism Specialist (STS) – 2.67 person months, and an information and communication technology (ICT) specialist – 1.28 person months. Given the scope and the deliverables under the TA, it is believed that inputs have been optimized. A total of 7 reports were submitted (Inception report, Progress Reports 1 – 4, Final Report and the HRD Strategy and Action Plan 2006-2011). The consultants' performance were found to be satisfactory by both ADB and the member countries. Two review missions were conducted, aside from the yearly participation in TWG meetings.</p> <p>During the course of the TA, some minor adjustments were made to timeframes, allocation of resources and targets in response to local conditions. Despite some changes in schedules, all CMTP workshops were eventually held and a total of 271 subregional participants were trained, most of whom were trainers with the potential of covering the target range of skills in Tiers I (basic/primary), Tier II (middle/tertiary) and Tier III (advanced).</p> <p>Following a series of country visits, consultations with public and private sector, and training needs assessment in the subregion, the priority training topics for the CMTP were agreed by the NTOs on (i) Travel Media Training Workshop (Tier II), (ii) South Asia Host Workshop (Tier 1), (iii) Community-based Tourism Programs Workshops (Tier I), (iv) Guide Training Workshops (Tier I and II), (v) Hospitality and Business for SME Owners Workshop (Tier II); (vi) Competency Building for Core Staff in Tourism Institutes Workshops (Tier II and III); and (vii) Project Management Training for NTOs/Local Tourism Organizations (LTOs) Workshop (Tier III).</p> <p>Strong participant feedback ratings, enthusiastic trainers and hosts, and requests for more training reflected that the essential premise of the TA was well-founded. Furthermore, a "Knowledge Sharing Event" between Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and SASEC TWG member countries was held to share the experiences of subregional cooperation in tourism and infrastructure development under GMS. Such event was deemed highly relevant to the</p>			

¹ Sri Lanka joined the TWG in 2005.

accomplishment of the objectives of the ADB-supported HRD program, and the preparation and implementation of the forthcoming ADB loan for SASEC tourism development project.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome: All activities prescribed in the HRD and Capacity Building Work Plan were completed. The workshops conducted were acknowledged a success and created positive opportunities for local communities and protection of the natural and cultural environment. The establishment of a Network of Excellence and a pool of subregional trainers across South Asia ensured uniformity and standardization of the courses and is the key to sustain the capacity building initiative across the SASEC countries. Through the CMTP activities, a standardized program to upgrade skills to an acceptable level was designed and implemented. Likewise, service delivery standards, quality and productivity to a minimum acceptable standard throughout South Asia was enhanced.

The TA worked closely with the development partners to help forge relationships. The TA has resulted in networking of tourism training institutions and skills development of tourism service providers in SASEC region. Moreover, following SASEC TWG's findings of the need for more tangible outcomes through infrastructure development, a new TA was processed to support the preparation of a subregional tourism infrastructure project for possible ADB financing (RETA 6362: SASEC Tourism Development).

Overall Assessment and Rating: Based on the feedback from the member countries and the above evaluation, the TA is considered successful. Through the CMTP activities a pool of tourism trainers now exists, ready to transfer the knowledge and lessons learned to the next level. A synergy was created amongst and between the NTOs, development partners, tourism training institutions, private sector groups, community organizations and workshop participants. Through the activities under the TA, the following were achieved: (i) a cooperative spirit among the tourism industry of the subregion was fostered; (ii) employment opportunities were generated; (iii) private sector investment in tourism was facilitated; and (iv) tourism was conceived as a tool to reduce poverty.

Major Lessons

1. Experience during the CMTP activities has revealed that NTOs have limited time or resources for subregional activities. Inevitably, national priorities must take precedence. In order to optimize the limited resources for concerted subregional cooperation in tourism sector, the intended activities should entail well-defined and concrete national details.
2. The trainings and workshops provided by the TA can only reach the field workers through dissemination of national and local level training programs. For this, it is important to retain a focal person within each NTO to ensure this downstream training programs continue to be structured and implemented in such a way as guided by HRD TA.
3. The idea of center of excellence institutions reflecting international best practice, as envisaged in the TA paper, has limited application in the subregion, particularly in the specialist areas of ecotourism and Buddhist circuits, since there is a wide disparity and capacity constraints within existing institutions in the subregion.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

During the HRD TA valuable relationships have been created amongst the NTOs, development partners, tourism training institutions, private sector groups, community organizations and the workshop participants. Continuing these relationships should be a core strategy for NTOs of each SASEC country to maintain lasting impact from the CMTP in raising the industry's capacity throughout the subregion. The relationship building as well as capacity building for NTOs can be reinforced by financial and technical assistances by ADB and other development partners.

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