

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: CWSS

TA No. and Name TA 3975-PAK: Preparing the Early Childhood Development Project			Amount Approved: \$500,000	
			Revised Amount:	
Executing Agency: Ministry of Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education (MWDSE)		Source of Funding: JSF		TA Amount Undisbursed \$61,661.44
				TA Amount Utilized \$438,338.56
Date			Completion Date	
Approval	Signing	Fielding of Consultants		Original 31 May 2003
5 Nov 2002	11 Feb 2003	25 Mar 2003		Actual 15 Sep 2003
			Closing Date	
			Original 15 Sep 2003	Actual 27 Mar 2004
Description: The Government of Pakistan's Interim Poverty Reduction Paper gives high priority to improving health and education outcomes and reducing malnutrition among women and children. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is assisting the Government in health, education, rural development, agriculture, and financing sectors. ADB and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also helped the Government explore ways of reducing rampant malnutrition. ADB is also piloting a project to improve the health and nutrition status of marginalized women and children (JFPR 9031). The Government has requested, and ADB has agreed, to include a loan for an ECD project for 2003 in the Country Strategy and Program for Pakistan. One of the three pillars of the Country Strategy and Program 2002-2004 was socially inclusive development, which would be strongly supported by the proposed project. In ever changing technological world and knowledge based global market, there is a growing realization that Pakistan need to improve its competitive advantage by investing in human resource development. Pakistan Human Development Index has gone down based on 2001 data. Half-a million children die annually from preventable diseases. Two third of all children enter grade one, and only 50% of them complete grade five. The high dropout and repetition rates, from grade one to grade five, cause annual financial wastage of \$32 and \$25 million respectively. The key to breaking this poverty induced cycle is through provision of comprehensive early childhood development interventions. These will improve not only child survival but will also enhance the cognitive, motor, social and language skills of children, and prepare them for schooling and better learning. Better school achievement is a key to breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle. The early childhood development project supported by the ADB was supposed to contribute to six years phase one of Government of Pakistan's commitments to reduce all preventable deaths among children and ensure universal completion of primary school regardless of gender.				
Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs The TA assisted the Government in preparing a project to develop and provide integrated ECD service delivery. The TA's output was a detailed project proposal including verifiable objectives, project activities, implementation arrangements, monitoring, and financing. The primary objective of the project being prepared by the TA was to improve the development conditions of children. The specific objectives of the project were to (i) reduce the prevalence of underweight, anemic, and stunted children; (ii) provide integrated service delivery in health, nutrition, and early education with community-based initiatives and better child care; and (iii) establish a support strategy that will improve the capacity of the local governments and NGOs to assist communities in the planning, financing, and monitoring of ECD activities.				
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities: The formulation of the concept was adequate. It was supported by Government and stakeholders. The terms of reference were clear and feasible. The idea introduced following a proposal by the Government to have two team leaders, one international and one local, proved not to be practical. The performance of the consultants was in general fully satisfactory though there were differences. The international team leader was very committed and did an excellent work. Additional input was a child rearing and caring study, which was conducted by the team leader, which added more background information showing the urgency of the planned intervention. Missions held were reconnaissance (21 January -4 February 2002); fact finding (8-19 July 2002); inception (5-11 April 2003); review (9-23 May 2003); loan fact finding (11-23 August 2003); consultation (21-24 October 2003). Inputs of recipients were the Government in-kind contributions agreed in the TA paper, especially office space and counterpart staff and project director. No major changes were made during implementation except that the international team leader (who was in fact an American citizen born and raised in Pakistan) took the role of the main team leader.				

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome:

The project produced three major reports: One project report with the vast majority of the details required for planning and designing the project, a draft RRP concept with the required attachments, a child rearing and caring study. The team held awareness, concept and design workshops with Government and stakeholders in Sindh, Balochistan and on federal level, conducted a large series of interviews, reviewed international experience, especially from India, where there are more than 30,000 ECD centers. Achievable monitoring indicators were precisely defined. Special attention was given to sustainability issues.

The RRP was circulated and interdepartmental comments were incorporated and it was ready for MRM.

The project was conceptualized for the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan. The governments of both provinces were very much interested in the concept and were very much looking forward to the loan project to start. Towards the end of the PPTA first the position of the Government of Sindh changed and they were no more interested. Thus the concept focused on Balochistan. But after loan fact finding also the Government of Balochistan changed its mind. Finally, also the federal Government backed up. The reasons given by the Governments were (i) the project is not adapted to Islamic structures and cultural environments (mainly the new Government in Balochistan mentioned this); (ii) other donor funds are coming in as grants (Government and city of Sindh); (iii) there is more need for loan projects in the area of middle schools and roads (Government of Balochistan), and; (iv) the project is too complicated (Federal Government). These comments came at a very late stage after an intensive dialogue with all the mentioned governments and stakeholders. Another explanation given for the change in the position of the Government was that the reserves of international currencies, especially US\$ were much better. So there is no need for additional resources.

Overall Assessment and Rating:

The project was successful in term of designing a feasible ECD project for Pakistan taking into account existing structures, services, community realities and needs. It was unsuccessful in terms of not yet leading to a loan project.

Major Lessons:

There were several lessons learned from the project experience. Firstly, an ECD project in Pakistan has to try to take on board to a creation extend more to local circumstances, for example it could be attached as a pilot to madrassah schools as the Senior Minister Planning in Balochistan said (there are ongoing initiatives from the Government to reform Madrassah schools). Secondly, to develop and gain support for the approach takes much time. Six months of a PPTA maybe are not enough. The process should be more flexible. Thirdly, the project should not be given up if there is initial interest and later it does not push through quick enough. More time and effort should be invested in finding out strengths and weaknesses and reasons for changes in positions and opportunities.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

The study showed that there is clearly a need for a concept like ECD in Pakistan. This was also confirmed by all stakeholders and local experts in this field like Aga Khan University, which also runs projects in this area and which was closely consulted during the project preparation. So the discussions should by no means stop at this point.

JFPR 9031 "Mobilizing the Poor for Better Access to Health" has a small ECD component. From this more lessons can be learned.

Meanwhile on several occasions the project was discussed again with the federal Government and the positions to some extent changed. Some more efforts should be made to benefit from the good work done so far and to maybe support a future project in this area (maybe also to assess the potential of Madrassah schools), though there may be new insights in how to adapt the concept.

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