

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SANS

TA No., Country and Name			Amount Approved: \$350,000	
TA 4338-MLD: Strengthening the Framework of Education Toward Vision 2020			Revised Amount: \$350,000	
Executing Agency: Ministry of Finance and Treasury		Source of Funding: TASF	Amount Undisbursed: \$94,584	Amount Utilized: \$255,416
TA Approval Date: 19 May 2004	TA Signing Date: 24 November 2004	Fielding of First Consultant: 31 March 2005	TA Completion Date Original: 31 August 2005 Actual: 31 May 2006 Account Closing Date Original: 31 August 2005 Actual: 17 January 2007	

Description

School expansion designed to achieve universal basic education places stress on the system's capacity to deliver quality and efficient education at an affordable price. Expansion in the Maldives is exposing more bottlenecks, highlighting the weaknesses of the system. Mechanisms and systems are not in place – (i) mechanisms to increase access to postsecondary education within the framework of sustainable education financing need examination, (ii) the capacity for materials development for grades 8 to 10 has to be developed, and (iii) a legal framework supporting education plans and goals – that require immediate action.

As the demand for improving the quality of primary education and expanding and improving secondary education on the Government budget increases, there is greater pressure for cost sharing in postsecondary education for sustainability, efficiency, and equity. Postsecondary education represents a significant financial outlay by families, especially in the atolls where incomes are about half of those in Malé. As the number of students graduating from higher secondary schools increases, and more of these students come from poorer families in the atolls, the Government is keen to explore ways to make postsecondary education more accessible and financially sustainable.

The poor performance of students in the ordinary-level exams,¹ particularly in the atolls, is partly attributed to the ineffectiveness of learning materials. Except in a few subjects, all other learning materials, including textbooks, are sourced and bought from abroad. Some of the examples and illustrations in imported materials used are not relevant to the Maldives, which challenges the students' abilities to comprehend and subsequently apply the learning. To increase the relevance to the Maldivian context of subjects being learned, and thus increase comprehension of concepts and knowledge being imparted, the Ministry of Education (MOE), the implementing agency, wants to be able to develop teaching and learning materials for the lower secondary grades. In addition, MOE lacks the capacity to develop the curriculum for grades 8 to 10.

With the expansion of the education system and increased demand for education, several issues have emerged, including, regulation of private education and training providers, roles of communities, and standards. However, no overall legal framework governs the education sector, including the legal status of public providers, regulation of private providers, and academic freedom. These need to be addressed in a systematic, technically sound manner based on legislation that ensures equal opportunity to quality standards at affordable prices.

Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs

To assist Government's efforts to achieve the goals in Maldives' Vision 2020, the poverty partnership agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Millennium Development Goals, the technical assistance (TA) supported the provision of basic education for all through the development of a solid legal, financial, and curriculum framework. The TA assisted MOE to (i) develop a legal framework for education, including universal basic education, for the country; (ii) analyze options for making postsecondary education affordable to students within the framework of sustainable financing of education; and (iii) build capacity at MOE to develop teaching and learning materials for grades 8 to 10. These three activities constitute Components 1 to 3 of the TA.

Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities

The TA envisaged 19 person months of consultant inputs (8 person months for international and 11 person months for domestic), which were fully utilized over three missions. One international consultant and one domestic consultant paired to work for each of the 3 components of the TA. There was no change in the TA scope from the original plan. During the TA implementation, conducting a regional training for teachers and material writers, in

¹ At the end of the lower secondary and higher secondary schooling, students typically sit for the ordinary-level and the advanced-level examinations.

addition to in-country training, financed from the TA budget savings was discussed; however, this regional training did not materialize due to the time conflict with the academic year schedule of the Maldives. The actual TA implementation was from July 2005 to December 2005, over about 5 months. During this period, the TA team visited a wide range of educational institutions in Malé and the atolls, met with all relevant ministries and departments, reviewed and analyzed key documents, held many focus group meetings and consultation conferences, and conducted three questionnaire surveys.

MOE and its Department of Higher Education and Training, and the Education Development Center provided adequate logistical and administrative support to the TA consultant. The TA consultant generally maintained a good relationship with the government. ADB fielded an inception mission and thereafter supervised the consultant's work from the ADB headquarters.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

The TA's actual outputs were consistent with those envisaged in the Design and Monitoring Framework. The reports were submitted at the inception, interim and final stages of the TA implementation. All the reports are generally well-written and easy to understand. Under Component 1, the draft Education Act was prepared based on analyses of the education sector and stakeholder consultations. Under Component 2, a proposal on education finance was made, including recommendations to improve and modify the student scholarship scheme in the country. Under Component 3, in-country short-term training activities were conducted for material and curriculum developers from the government agencies and schools; and supplementary curriculum materials were developed in due course. The curriculum material development manual was also developed by the TA to guide further activities in the area.

Outputs of the TA from Components 1 and 3 were satisfactory. They were highly appreciated by the EA for their usefulness and quality. However, outputs from Component 2 were less satisfactory as the analyses lacked the basis of sufficient information on statistics and data. Though several specific recommendations on a student loan scheme were made, a broader framework of postsecondary education financing was missing and the analysis made was more academic than practical.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA is rated successful, as the original scope of the TA was generally met within the budget and timeframe. However, the quality of outputs could have been better if data and other information were collected more efficiently at the early stage of TA activities. This process was hampered by the restructuring of major ministries, including the MOE, in the beginning of the TA implementation.

Major Lessons

Since the TA was implemented over a relatively short period, there was not enough lead time to collect data and statistics for more detailed analyses. While it was partly affected by the restructuring of major ministries, which was external to the TA, future TAs that include sector analyses should include an assessment of the availability of needed information and data during the design stage, and adequate time and resources be accordingly allocated for data collection during implementation.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Action

ADB should monitor the Parliament's approval and promulgation of the Education Act that was drafted with support from the TA. Development of curriculum materials is a continuous process and activity at the Education Development Center. The personnel who were trained under the TA are expected to contribute to further improve materials based on the manual and example materials that were developed under the TA; this would also need to followed-up in the future.

Prepared by: Leah Gutierrez
Misuzu Otsuka

Designation: Senior Social Sector Specialist, SANS
Advisor to the President, OPR