TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: MKAE

TA No. and Name TA 4427–CAM: Establishment of the Tonle Sap Basin Management Organization II		**Amount Approved** $300,000 **Revised Amount** $300,000	
Executing Agency Cambodian National Mekong Committee	**Source of Funding** TASF	**TA Amount Undisbursed** $70,435.82	**TA Amount Utilized** $229,564.18

Date			Completion Date	
Approval	**Signing**	**Fielding of Consultants**	**Original**	**Actual**
8 November 2004	29 December 2004	12 January 2005	31 July 2005	30 November 2005
			Closing Date	
			Original	**Actual**
			31 July 2005	14 February 2006

Description

The Tonle Sap ecosystem is (i) the main source of animal protein for much of the population of Cambodia because of the productive fisheries of the Tonle Sap, (ii) a direct and irreplaceable source of livelihoods for more than 1 million people living on and around the Tonle Sap, (iii) a seasonal breeding and nursery ground and forage area for fish that subsequently migrate to the Mekong River, and (iv) an environmental hotspot of global significance. The Tonle Sap basin, defined as the catchment area of the Tonle Sap River at its confluence with the Mekong River, has an area of 85,000 square kilometers (km^2), of which 80,000 km^2 lie in Cambodia (5,000 km^2 lie in Thailand). The Tonle Sap basin includes all or part of 8 of Cambodia's 24 provinces.[1] It extends over 44% of Cambodia's total land area, including the Tonle Sap, and is home to 32% of Cambodia's total population, or about 3.6 million people (1998 figure). It is also a reservoir from which water drains in the dry season to control salinity intrusion and conserve mangrove in the Mekong Delta. However, high population growth is increasing the number of people to feed, and consumptive use of the Tonle Sap basin's resources is intense. Threats to the Tonle Sap include over-exploitation of fisheries and wildlife resources, encroachment during the dry season, and cutting of the flooded forest. In the watersheds, the degradation of natural vegetation is destroying habitats and resulting in deteriorating water and soil quality and increased siltation rates. Limited awareness and understanding of the impacts of human actions, insufficient governance and accountability systems, and inadequate mechanisms for management coordination and planning compound these root causes of degradation. Consequently, despite the inherent richness of the lake, most indicators of poverty are worse in the basin than in the nation as a whole. In October 1997, the Government nominated the lake as a biosphere reserve covering 15,000 km^2. In September 2001, it established the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve Secretariat to serve as a focal point for environmental management. In November 2002, ADB approved a loan and supporting TA for environmental management of the Tonle Sap.[2] In July 2003, it formulated the Tonle Sap basin strategy[3] to support the Country Strategy and Program, 2005–2007. This last initiative is consistent with ADB's water policy and a worldwide trend toward managing land, water, and biotic resources within a framework of basin units. In November 2003, it also provided TA[4] to design and plan the development of an institutional framework for integrated basin planning and management. That first TA determined that the preferred organizational model for the Tonle Sap basin should comprise a basin council and a council secretariat. It specified their mandates and responsibilities, including those of related sub-basin entities and their working arrangements, and outlined a roadmap for their establishment and effective operation. CNMC, the executing agency for that TA, endorsed its findings in April 2004. Feedback from CNMC informed the design of the TA, which marked the first step in implementing the roadmap.

Objective and Scope

The goal of the TA is sound management of natural resources and the environment in the Tonle Sap basin. Its objective was to advance the establishment of improved institutional and organizational arrangements for managing land, water, and biotic resources in the Tonle Sap basin.[5] The TA complemented the suite of loan, grant, and TA projects that ADB promotes under the Tonle Sap Initiative.[6] Two outputs were expected to accomplish the TA's purpose (i) the finalization of the design for a Tonle Sap basin management organization (TSBMO), and (ii) the

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[1] The provinces are Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kompong Chhnang, Kompong Thom, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Pursat, and Siem Reap.

[2] ADB. 2002. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors on a Proposed Loan to Cambodia for the Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project*. Manila.

[3] ADB. 2005. *The Tonle Sap Basin Strategy*. Manila.

[4] ADB. 2003. *Technical Assistance to the Kingdom of Cambodia for Establishment of the Tonle Sap Basin Management Organization*. Manila.

[5] The TA's objective was a high priority of the Executing Agency at that time of TA preparation.

[6] The Tonle Sap Initiative is a partnership of organizations and people working to meet the poverty and environment challenges of the Tonle Sap based on the Tonle Sap basin strategy.

design of sub-basin institutional structures. The TA was also intended to advance the roadmap set out by TA 4212–CAM and outline further TA.

Evaluation of Inputs

With hindsight, the relevance of TA design is judged to have been correct and its objective and outputs, methodology and key activities, cost and financing, implementation arrangements, and terms of reference are deemed to have been appropriate. Consulting services in river basin management and institutions accounted for the bulk of the inputs and were sufficient, both in quantity and sectoral allocation, to achieve the objective of the TA. The experts fielded under direct selection collected much information on related projects and committees, provided through workshops and other forums a broad range of consultation opportunities to key stakeholders at the national and provincial levels, and produced relevant recommendations for both the design and operation of the proposed TSMBO. They delivered their inputs as planned, carried out their services efficiently in compliance with their contracts and work programs, and developed cordial relations with the Executing Agency and its constituent members. The quality of technical analyses and advisory services was high. Notwithstanding the short duration of TA implementation, ADB supervised the TA closely and passed prompt comments on all reports.[7] On the side of the Government, there was sufficient involvement of and commitment by senior staff of the Executing Agency as well as the Focus Group established under the previous TA. When required, ADB approved flexible use of inputs, notably by relaxing the duration of the TA to give the Executing Agency more time to consider the outputs. ADB also showed initiative when it volunteered a supplementary workshop to discuss the formation and mode of operation, within the TSBMO, of a board of independent stakeholders. The performance of ADB and the Executing Agency is rated as highly satisfactory.

Evaluation of Outputs

The design for the TSBMO produced under the TA has been accepted by the Government as the basis for implementation and further trials of the sub-basin institutional structures in conjunction with the Seila Program. Active participation by key stakeholders smoothed the progress of the TA. Extensive discussion at a national workshop and subsequent review of the draft final report suggested only minor changes to the latter.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA is rated as highly successful: agreement was reached in the Executing Agency and its constituent members on the need for a TSBMO, its structure and membership, and its mode of operation. These agencies and the concerned provinces are supportive of a proposal to commence implementing the design. Donors working in related projects and programs, and the staff on these projects and programs, have agreed in principle to support implementation of the next phase. Additionally, the TA is deemed to have contributed in a major way in the improvement of the policy capacity of the Executing Agency. The overall assessment and rating are supported by the Executing Agency's response to a TA completion questionnaire that evaluated the TA's outputs and activities, identified lessons learned, and suggested follow-up action.

Major Lessons Learned

Capacity building is development of the abilities of individuals, groups, and organizations to complete critical tasks effectively and efficiently on a sustainable basis. To be meaningful in the long term, capacity building is best done as part of a process, rather than as an end in itself. The major lesson learned from the TA is that capacity building stands to deliver most if it is associated with comprehensive, highly integrated programs such as the Tonle Sap Initiative, under which interventions can be paced or piloted. At a lower level of significance, greater effectiveness in capacity building would have been possible if the consultants and their counterparts had shared an office.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

In Cambodia, incentives for natural resource management are either lacking or at an early stage of development. Their design is necessary if the decentralized and deconcentrated systems being piloted under the Seila Program, with the help of the donor community including ADB, are to succeed. The needs are great and ADB has been proactive in considering them from the perspective of the basin as a whole. However, everything cannot be tackled at the same time. Implementation of TSBMO processes must be prioritized on the basis of need and demand and must be matched with the location and timetabling of other related projects and programs for efficiency and effectiveness. Auspiciously, this is the very logic behind the proposed allocation of regular annual inputs from ADB in support of the establishment of the TSBMO. It is recommended that a further TA be processed to implement at the national level the design of the TSBMO and to pilot its sub-basin institutional structures in Pursat at the province and district levels. The Executing Agency's response to the TA completion questionnaire would inform its design. The Executing Agency should sensitize all related staff in advance, especially at the province and district levels.

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[7] Close supervision was facilitated by the integration of the TA in the Tonle Sap Initiative. This meant that ADB missions processing or administering other components of the Tonle Sap Initiative frequently reviewed progress under the TA in addition to accomplishing their separate terms of reference.