

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SEAE

TA No., Country, and Name		Amount Approved: \$700,000	
RETA 6190: Preventing the Trafficking of Women and Children and Promoting Safe Migration in the Greater Mekong Subregion		Revised Amount: N/A	
Executing Agency: Asian Development Bank	Source of Funding: Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund	Amount Undisbursed: \$88,962.88	Amount Utilized: \$611,037.12
TA Approval Date: 04 October 2004	TA Signing Date: N/A	Fielding of First Consultant: 16 March 2005	TA Completion Date: Original: 30 June 2006 Actual: 31 May 2008 Account Closing Date: Actual: Original: 30 September 2008 31 October 2008
Description <p>The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) has traditionally been an area of high migration, within its countries and across borders. Improved connectivity brought about by the construction of major road and rail networks, the development of trade and tourism, and growing economic cooperation in recent times has led to increased migration, and an unprecedented rise in its most unfortunate and exploitative form—human trafficking.¹ Poor women and children suffer most from trafficking. In response to the growing awareness of trafficking as a complex development issue, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as the lead donor in the GMS, has been asked by regional stakeholders to join in the subregional efforts against trafficking. The regional technical assistance (TA) was designed to address several areas of concern related to human trafficking in the GMS. These are: (i) the extent to which the construction of major highways across the region, as well as tourism development projects, areas in which ADB is a major financier, can increase the risks of human trafficking, and the steps that may need to be taken to mitigate such risks; (ii) factors that create or heighten the conditions leading to increased migration by vulnerable sections of people, and human trafficking; (iii) ways of improving subregional cooperation among sending and receiving countries within the GMS, to address the phenomenon of human trafficking across borders; and (iv) alternative approaches to addressing the growing risks of human trafficking.</p>			
Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs <p>The goal of the TA was the improved safety and social mobility of poor and vulnerable people in the GMS, especially women and children. The purpose was to encourage subregional cooperation in the GMS countries to promote safe migration and address trafficking issues in subregional projects. The outputs were as follows: (i) pilot programs promoting safe migration and minimizing the risks of trafficking, to be developed and implemented along with two ADB-financed DMC loan projects—Loan 1989-LAO (SF) for the Northern Area Economic Corridor Project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Loans 1969-CAM (SF), 1970-LAO (SF), and 1971-VIE (SF) for the GMS Mekong Tourism Development Project in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam; (ii) support for subregional cooperation among Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam against trafficking (in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region [UNIAP]); (iii) increased awareness in individual countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam) of the risks of trafficking, through advocacy and policy dialogue; and (iv) evaluated and disseminated TA results, and a strategy for expanding anti-trafficking programs in the subregion.</p> <p>The expected impact consisted of the following: (i) improved understanding of the fundamental factors contributing to human trafficking from particular communities or areas; (ii) creation of knowledge regarding the extent to which improved physical infrastructure and tourism development can increase human trafficking; (iii) improved subregional cooperation against human trafficking; and (iv) sustainable subregional training programs to create human resources in the countries that can deal effectively with human trafficking.</p>			
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities <p>The TA took a slightly different turn during implementation than was expected at its formulation. It was designed to be linked with ADB-assisted projects in Lao PDR and Cambodia. However, slow progress in the implementation of the tourism project (Loan 1969-CAM [SF]) made it difficult to study the role of tourism development in human trafficking. Therefore, in Cambodia, rather than looking purely at the impact of the ADB-assisted tourism project, the TA looked at the effects on ethnic groups of wider processes of change in the economy and society. The choice of research sites took into consideration (i) areas affected by increasing in-migration of Khmer populations, (ii) changes</p>			

in land use and land grabbing in ethnic minority lands that were communally owned and then converted into plantations, (iii) changes within ethnic minority cultures from barter to cash-based transactions, (iv) the growing need for cash due to changing consumption patterns, and (v) impoverishment of ethnic communities due to loss of livelihoods and habitat.

In Lao PDR, however, Loan 1989-LAO (SF) for the Northern Area Economic Corridor Project provided a useful link in developing research on issues of relocation of ethnic minority populations nearer the road, and the effects of such movements on social cohesion and the integrity of livelihoods. Research was developed along the areas adjacent to the road in the provinces of Bokeo and Luang Namtha. The research used anthropological methods to understand the role of culture, changes in value systems, the inner resilience of certain communities, and the role of all these factors in determining the extent to which members were exposed to risks of human trafficking.

During implementation an interesting aspect that emerged was the importance of researching the conditions under which communities and people become increasingly vulnerable to trafficking. As a result, the TA carried out considerable primary research into these aspects in both Cambodia and Lao PDR, and produced very significant findings.

Another area in which the TA did rather well was in subregional cooperation against trafficking. ADB linked up with UNIAP and was instrumental in the development and signing of a subregional memorandum of understanding by all GMS countries, to combat human trafficking through cooperation at all levels. This was further followed by the setting up of a regional training center for capacity building in combating human trafficking at the Mekong Institute in Khon Khaen, Thailand. The training center was supported by the TA during its implementation, and is now being sustained by other donors.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

The TA produced a fair number of reports and papers, including guidelines for ADB projects in the GMS, papers on alternative programs for combating trafficking, and research papers on the origins and extent of trafficking and the factors contributing to it in Cambodia and Lao PDR. These are expected to be published by ADB.

With regard to institutional collaboration, the TA created a long-term relationship between ADB and UNIAP, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), among other partner agencies involved in anti-trafficking work in the region.

The subregional resource center at Khon Kaen supported by the TA is now sustainable through long-term support from other partners. The training programs at the center have been found to be useful by ADB's developing member countries (DMCs), which want to see them continue. High-level participation in the programs has led to better understanding of the issues involved in human trafficking, as well as a results-oriented approach to dealing with the problem.

With regard to the expected outputs, the TA had limited impact in creating safe migration for women and children. Human trafficking cases do not appear to have decreased. However, many factors contribute to the growth of trafficking, including the flourishing demand for the services of trafficking victims, as well as push factors such as loss of livelihoods and habitat, accompanied with growing integration of barter economies with cash economies. Sending communities, often poorly educated and ill equipped to link up with modern sectors of the economy, get the short end of the stick. Therefore, while it is rather difficult for a single intervention to lead to reduced trafficking, the TA, in association with other projects, led to greater awareness, both among partner governments and within ADB, of the heightened risks of human trafficking and its negative social and economic impact, aside from the sheer human tragedy playing out in the lives of the victims.

Besides the setting up of a sustainable subregional resource center, the TA also supported the development and implementation of a subregional action plan to combat trafficking.

Within ADB it helped add to a growing awareness of the importance of including anti-trafficking measures in projects. The guidelines are in draft form and being circulated for comments before being finalized for publication. The TA also contributed to ADB's providing assistance for more technical assistance projects in the Asia and Pacific region to combat human trafficking.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA project was rated a success.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

The draft guidelines ought to be published and used as reference material for mission leaders designing and administering projects in the GMS. In all infrastructure development and tourism projects, close attention must be paid to the effects of the projects on the habitat and livelihoods of communities within the project area, whose preparedness for change in their livelihoods, and the impact of rapid change, must be considered. Greater attention

must be given to the baseline situation, likely risks, and the proper design of preventive and mitigating measures.

ADB must provide continued technical assistance to DMCs and to partner agencies to support anti-trafficking activities. The GMS Working Group on Human Resource Development should address the interlinked issues of labor migration and trafficking.

The research papers and guidelines will need to be published by ADB and circulated widely.

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