

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: EASS

TA No. and Name TA 4383-MON: Participatory Poverty Assessment and Monitoring			Amount Approved: \$300,000																	
			Revised Amount: –																	
Executing Agency: National Statistical Office of Mongolia (NSO)		Source of Funding: Cooperation Fund in Support of the Formulation and Implementation of National Poverty Reduction Strategies		<table><tr><td>TA Amount Undisbursed \$22,616.66</td><td>TA Amount Utilized \$277,383.34</td></tr></table>	TA Amount Undisbursed \$22,616.66	TA Amount Utilized \$277,383.34														
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Description The Government of Mongolia approved the economic growth support and poverty reduction strategy (EGSPRS) in 2003. The EGSPRS recommended that further participation of the poor should be sought in the process of improving the EGSPRS and ensuring its sustainable implementation. Participatory processes will be an integral part of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Government's poverty reduction strategy. The Government requested the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide advisory technical assistance (TA) for conducting participatory poverty assessment and monitoring (PPAM) that will help update and monitor the EGSPRS.																				
Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs The goal of the TA was to enhance effectiveness of the Government to monitor and evaluate national poverty reduction programs. The purpose of the TA was to improve the institutional capacity of the Government to monitor and evaluate EGSPRS. The TA would help the National Statistical Office (NSO) set up and implement a PPAM framework in collaboration with other stakeholders, particularly the Poverty Reduction Group (PRG), and key sector agencies and NGOs; assist policymakers and civil society to monitor progress on national poverty reduction programs; and make actions more effective and efficient. The expected TA outputs included (i) PPAM mechanism and manuals developed and implemented; (ii) enhanced capacity of Government staff from NSO, PRG, and line ministries, as well as civil society organizations and academia to plan and implement PPAM; and (iii) publication and dissemination of PPAM results. The TA was intended to (i) build on previous ADB interventions as indicated in the poverty partnership agreement; (ii) provide consistent, updated and complementary qualitative poverty assessment for developing the country strategy and program for 2005–2008; (iii) improve poverty assessment in the longer term; and (iv) help monitor and evaluate progress in reducing poverty. The TA was designed through extensive consultations with stakeholders to meet the Government's EGSPRS monitoring objectives.																				
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities The NSO was identified as the Executing Agency (EA) at the TA fact-finding in June 2004. During fact-finding, a tripartite agreement between NSO, ADB, and the World Bank was formulated to jointly conduct a PPAM for the EGSPRS. ADB agreed to cover five aimag (provincial) centers and rural areas, while the World Bank agreed to cover urban areas in Ulaanbataar. NSO provided policy guidance and facilitated the interagency technical working group (TWG), which comprised deputy director, Population and Social Statistics Department, NSO; director, Macro-Economic Policy Department, Ministry of Finance and Economy; senior researcher, PRG; heads of the monitoring departments of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Welfare; and representatives from civil society organizations. Representatives from the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and other aid agencies were invited to attend the TWG meetings as observers. The TWG met every two months to discuss the findings and recommendation of the study. NSO provided adequate counterpart inputs and office facilities as envisaged. NSO demonstrated fully satisfactory performance, and a high level of commitment and responsibility, working in tandem with TWG, ADB, and the World Bank, steadily learning the qualitative methods for monitoring of poverty and advising and guiding the consultants. ADB conducted two review missions to discuss TA findings with stakeholders through workshops and coordinated closely with the World Bank.																				
Actual consultant inputs comprised 8 person-months (pm) of international consultants and 27 pm of domestic consultants, compared with 5 pm and 24 pm respectively as originally envisaged. International and domestic consultants were selected on an individual basis. The consultants' terms of reference were comprehensive and well formulated to achieve the purpose of the TA and met the expectation of the EA. The international consultants included a participatory poverty monitoring and evaluation-institutional specialist/team leader and a participatory methodology and training specialist. An NGO was contracted to conduct the PPAM and other analytical and consultative processes. In addition, an administrative support specialist and an interpreter/translator were employed to assist the																				

EA in coordinating meetings, consultations, and regional and national workshops. High quality inputs from the consultants, the EA and concerned stakeholders contributed to achieving the expected outputs. The consultants exhibited a high level of commitment and initiative, and demonstrated professional integrity, expertise and experience. Twenty-four participants from NSO, NGOs, PRG, and local government participated in the training of trainers on qualitative and participatory methods. The study involved consultations with 1,516 participants (more than half were women) from 94 baghs (sub-districts) in 20 sample communities in 5 aimags and 539 residents in 8 urban communities in Ulaanbaatar. The main findings were presented at the 5 aimag centers and at the national workshop in Ulaanbaatar.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

The expected TA outputs were achieved. The TA was effective in (i) setting up an effective qualitative data management system for monitoring progress in poverty reduction; (ii) enhancing the capacity of Government staff from NSO, PRG, and line ministries, as well as civil society organizations and academia to plan and implement PPAM; and (iii) publishing a PPAM report and organize a mass media campaign on issues related to poverty and living standards in Mongolia. All the major TA targets and indicators were achieved and delivery of outcome and outputs was efficient.

The final report was well received by stakeholders. A book launching and photo exhibition in the NSO Gallery was held in late September 2006. Training modules and manuals were developed and used to train research teams for training of trainers. Three special newsletters on methods and findings of the assessment were published during the study in March, June and August 2006, in partnership with the PRG, targeting national and aimag governments, line ministries, international and local NGOs, donor agencies, and the local media. Three leaflets were printed on key study findings, i.e. formal and informal support system for the poor, the dangers of illegal mining, and wellbeing for poor households, and distributed during the national workshop. A schoolchildren's drawing competition was held to help shape young people's perception of poverty by encouraging them to express their views through art. These public awareness and information dissemination activities helped to raise awareness of emerging poverty issues among the poor, disseminate study findings, and provide information for decision makers (government representatives, NGOs, and funding agencies) to prioritize their development interventions. The delay in TA completion was due to government's request to hold the book launching and photo exhibition in the second half of 2006.

Overall Assessment and Rating

This TA fully achieved its purpose and is rated as highly successful. The TA is recognized by the government, donor agencies, and civil society organizations as highly relevant to the Government's needs and priorities. The results were highly satisfactory and the outputs practical and in line with the NSO action plan for monitoring EGSPRS implementation. The national poverty database will be updated and enriched by the methodologies introduced through the achievements of the TA. The findings serve as basic information for the formulation of EGSPRS update and monitoring Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Mongolia. The TA provided credible and comprehensive information on poverty for decision makers, and served as reference material for researchers and academicians working in the area of poverty, economics, and social studies.

Major Lessons

There are three lessons learned. First, the TA contributed to a better understanding of poverty in Mongolia and helped to improve the link between poverty diagnosis and pro-poor policy making by ensuring that the voices of poor people are heard and acted upon. The results of the TA helped to re-orient the approach taken within the Government's anti-poverty program to put more emphasis on the important role that household and community-level assets can play in reducing vulnerability and securing sustainable livelihood. Second, the NSO had a high degree of ownership of the TA and PPAM, which contributed to the success of the TA. Third, harmonization of technical assistance among donor agencies helped to enhance the impact of the TA on long term capacity building.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

The NSO staff involved were introduced to participatory research techniques which were unfamiliar to them and difficult to apply systematically and with rigor. The combination of their existing experience in quantitative approaches to poverty measurement and analysis with open-ended and qualitative approaches offers significant opportunity for NSO to contribute to the implementation of Mongolia's Poverty Reduction Strategy in the coming years. NSO should build on the systems and techniques developed through the TA to further develop PPAM indicators for monitoring national poverty reduction programs. NSO should also strengthen its involvement in policy-oriented evaluations of anti-poverty programs and other interventions designed to assist the Government in measuring progress in implementation of EGSPRS and achievements of MDGs.