

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: PAHQ

TA No. and Name TA 4494-SOL: Institutional Strengthening of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development			Amount Approved: \$700,000	
			Revised Amount:	
Executing Agency: Ministry of Infrastructure and Development		Source of Funding: Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF)	Amount Undisbursed \$56,776.10	Amount Utilized \$643,223.90
TA Approval 17 Dec 2004	TA Signing 23 Dec 2004	Fielding of Consultants 19 May 2005	TA Completion Date Original 31 Dec 2006 Account Closing Date Original 31 Dec 2006 Actual 30 Apr 2007 Actual 22 Jul 2008	
Description ADB's country program in Solomon Islands aims to support rapid, pro-poor, private sector-led economic growth by providing transport infrastructure and services, and by strengthening the enabling environment for the private sector, both with a focus on capacity building and promotion of good governance. At the time of approval, the country had just emerged from years of civil conflict that had damaged infrastructure, halted civil works and maintenance, and drained administrative capacity. Development partners had resumed operations, and significant financial resources were becoming available for rehabilitation, investment, and maintenance. However, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development (MID) had neither sufficient capacity to plan and manage its own activities nor the necessary planning framework to coordinate development assistance. Institutional strengthening was required to carry out reforms, design national policies, and create sustainable funding mechanisms for implementation.				
Expected Impact, Outcome, and Outputs The expected impact of the technical assistance (TA) was increased efficiency in the transport sector, contributing to economic growth with improved distribution of benefits. The expected outcome was to strengthen MID's institutional capacity in planning, finance, and management of infrastructure development. The expected outputs were capacity building through institutional improvements, formal and on-the-job training, and development of planning and management documentation in strategic transport planning, financial management, and project management.				
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities The TA was conducted over a period of 24 months, through 30 person-months of international consulting services provided intermittently through a firm selected through quality- and cost-based selection. Due to difficulties in both recruitment of consultants and provision of counterpart staff, inception was delayed by four months, but eventually resulted in significant improvements in government support through appointment of additional staff for an expanded Transport Policy and Planning Unit (TPPU). At inception, the terms of reference, work plan, and schedule were adjusted to suit the expanded staffing of MID and the TPPU. The TA was extended by four months to allow completion of all activities. There were no other changes to the schedule or implementation arrangements for the duration of the TA. The TA conducted all activities and produced all outputs as planned. An institutional review and personnel development plan were produced that guided the restructuring of MID and the delivery of training. A National Transport Plan was prepared with extensive involvement of all relevant ministries. A National Transport Fund was designed and established. A new Solomon Islands Transport Network Information System was created and staff trained in its development and use. A complete set of manuals was produced (including contract administration, procurement, quality control, standard specifications for engineering and maintenance, standard bidding documents, and programming and budgeting). Training of MID and TPPU staff was a major focus of the TA. Formal and informal on-the-job training for six staff members focused on strategic planning and transport economics, database management, planning and budgeting, and procurement. External training for three staff members was conducted through a 5-week attachment to a partner agency in Australia, focused on project and contract management, technical specifications for civil works, inspection and quality control, and field experience on a range of civil works projects. To complement these activities, staff of the TPPU participated actively in ADB project preparatory missions as another form of on-the-job training. Further formal training sessions were conducted to consolidate skills developed during practical work. Finally, private sector contractors were trained in the new procedures.				

The TA was well supported by the government. A national Transport Task Force was formed at Permanent Secretary level with representatives from 5 ministries including Finance and National Planning, to serve as the project steering committee. This task force has persisted beyond the completion of the TA as a permanent steering committee for both TAs and projects supported by ADB as well as other development partners.

Dissemination of results was accomplished through public relations products including posters, newspaper articles, brochures, and targeted consultation meetings to inform the public and the contracting industry of MID's new procedures and responsibilities. Printed and electronic copies of reports and manuals have been widely distributed.

ADB conducted an average of three review missions a year, in conjunction with country programming and project preparatory work, to ensure that the TA was developing priority skills.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

All activities were conducted collaboratively between the consultants, MID and TPPU staff, and ADB. The manuals and the National Transport Plan were prepared jointly by government staff and the consultants, though more leadership could have been exerted by staff than was the case.

An independent evaluation was conducted by a separate consultant at ADB's request to assess the quality and completeness of the in-country and overseas training program, the training and programming materials, and the sustainability of skills transfer. The evaluation found that the training objectives were generally achieved and sustainability was good, though it could be improved through more regular opportunities for mentoring.

The quality of outputs was very good, as evidenced by the ongoing use of the manuals and specifications for implementation of subsequent projects supported by ADB, other development partners, and MID itself. The procurement manual has been adopted government-wide as a national best-practice document.

As a result of the TA, MID is now well positioned to complete its transition from public-sector provider to an asset management and contracting agency, with much higher confidence in its ability to engage and supervise private sector contractors. This contributes directly to private sector development.

The TA was actively managed using the targets in the design and monitoring framework, and all reports were structured around the indicators. The final report documents the full achievement of all targets.

Overall Assessment and Rating

Highly successful

Major Lessons

The sustainability of training and skills depends on continuous opportunities for their application. Involvement in subsequent TA and project activities has proven to be a good way to maintain engagement of staff.

The first round of maintenance and updating of the manuals and the database has challenged staff, requiring supplementary assistance from consultants to ensure quality. As they gain experience, staff confidence and management oversight are improving.

Retention of trained staff has so far been very good, but resignations are always a possibility and threaten institutional memory and thus sustainability of outcomes. Careful documentation of all training materials is necessary so that new staff can get up to speed without reinventing another institutional strengthening program.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

ADB and other development partners should continue to require active participation in project preparatory and review missions, and encourage assignments to project management units as good ways to build practical experience.

As MID prepares to eventually implement external assistance through a sector-wide approach (expected in about 3 years), capacity development assistance should continue to be included in all project implementation arrangements, as is the current practice on ADB-financed projects.