

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SERC

TA No., Country and Name			Amount Approved: 2,500,000	
TA 6262–REG: Enhancing the Development Effectiveness of the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program			Revised Amount: 3,900,000	
Executing Agency: ADB		Source of Funding: TASF, Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund; Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund	Amount Undisbursed: 37,504.21	Amount Utilized: 3,862,495.79
TA Approval Date: 11 Oct 2005	TA Signing Date: 11 Oct 2005	Fielding of First Consultant(s): 20 Oct 2005	TA Completion Date Original: 31 Jan 2008 Actual: 31 Dec 2010 Account Closing Date Original: 31 Jan 2008 Actual: 30 Jun 2012	
<p>Description. The 2nd GMS Summit in July 2005 noted increasingly complex challenges confronted the GMS and that effectively addressing these challenges would require a greater focus on action and results on the ground, strengthening collaboration efforts among the GMS countries and establishing mechanisms that engender well-coordinated responses to issues. The ADB was urged by the GMS Leaders to play an even larger role in bringing GMS to the center stage of economic integration in Asia by mobilizing higher levels of resource and knowledge transfers. The TA enabled ADB to support expanded regional cooperation and integration initiatives and activities, including accelerating the implementation of the strategies and work programs of the various GMS working groups and forums.</p> <p>Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs. The intended impact of the TA was to sustain and accelerate the realization of benefits from subregional projects and initiatives. The envisaged outcome of the TA was an improvement in the results orientation of the GMS program through strengthening result management in its institutional mechanism and timely provision of assistance in terms of resources and knowledge inputs for the expanding regional cooperation and integration initiatives. The expected outputs of this TA included; (i) establishment of a formal and quantitative impact evaluation and monitoring framework for the GMS program; (ii) preparation of work programs for GMS institutional structures that were focused on a clear and manageable set of priorities; (iii) strengthened capacity for rapid assessment of and timely response to emerging subregional developments and issues; (iv) identification of projects in key sectors with potential for private sector investment; (v) stronger mobilization and coordination of development partners' resources to support the GMS program; (vi) enhanced coordination capacity of GMS national secretariats; and (vii) an improved and well managed information dissemination system. The scope of the TA was then expanded under supplementary grant from the TASF and the PRC fund endorsed in 2007, to include the following outputs: (i) organization of and logistical arrangements for the 3rd GMS summit; (ii) agreements, plans and directions produced by the 3rd GMS Summit; (iii) adoption of consistent approaches and harmonized standards by Lao PDR, the PRC, and Thailand in the project design and implementation of the North-South Economic Corridor International (Houzyxay-Chiang khon) Bridge; and (iv) establishing subregional rationale and completing preliminary technical and feasibility assessments for other high-priority subregional projects in the transport and energy sectors. Further supplementary funding was also endorsed in 2009 to include recommendation of IED on what the GMS needed, which included (i) engaging/re-engaging local consultants to be assigned in the resident missions in Cambodia, PRC, Laos, Viet Nam, and possibly Thailand to help with the national coordination of GMS activities; (ii) piloting of a secondment scheme for staff of GMS national secretariats to work with the GMS unit in ADB headquarters and/or with a well-functioning GMS national secretariats in one of the countries; and (iii) cross participation of officials in different sectors in related working group meetings.</p> <p>Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities. The TA sustained support to economic and sector work of the GMS Cooperation in providing oversight and/or substantive inputs to economic, thematic and sector work being undertaken in the various sector working groups and forums. The TA supported about 5 major meetings and 30 regular meetings (SOMs, Task Force Meetings, workshops and working group meetings). The key events and forums supported by the TA in which various policy and strategic decisions were agreed include among others (i) the GMS Senior Officials' Meetings in 2006 and 2007 to review the Plan of Actions adopted by the 13th GMS Ministerial Conference in 2004; (ii) Mekong Development Forums in New Delhi (2005) and Singapore (2006) to increase awareness of the private sector on the opportunities for greater involvement in the GMS program; (iii) 14th and 15th GMS Ministerial Conference in 2007 and 2009, respectively; and (iv) the 3rd GMS Leaders Summit in 2008. The outputs and activities of the TA went beyond financing of GMS events. The support to the 3rd GMS Leaders Summit led that event to be considered as a landmark event. It resulted in (i) a Joint Summit Declaration signed by GMS Leaders for the first time on a medium-term action plan (Vientiane Plan of Action [VPOA] for GMS</p>				

Development for 2008-2012) which contains detailed, time-bound and monitorable priority initiatives. The medium-term action plan was developed based on the findings in mid-term review of the VPOA (2002-2012) also supported under the TA; (ii) participation of the youth through a GMS Youth Forum; and (iii) institutionalization of the conduct of a Business and Investment Dialogue. Post Summit activities undertaken included (i) publication of complete proceedings of the Summit and its related activities; (ii) continuous updating of the status report on projects/initiatives in the VPOA; (iii) convening of a stand-alone Development Partners' Meeting in July 2008 to discuss the outcomes of the Summit and explore possibilities of DP assistance to new Summit proposals and the VPOA. The direct impact of the 3rd GMS Summit was the provision of clear directions and guidance for cooperative efforts under the GMS program, which would in turn enhance its overall effectiveness in achieving the overall goal of GMS Cooperation.

To enhance the impact evaluation of the GMS program, a development monitoring framework was developed in 2006 in GMS' Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program Update (RCSPU) and has been updated annually since then. The TA also supported the enhancement of coordination and strengthening of the National Secretariats by recruiting local consultants in CARM, LRM and PRCM. The financing support under the TA for the participation of NS officers in various meetings from working groups to high level meetings have also enhanced their familiarity to the issues in GMS cooperation which in turn enhanced their coordination mechanism. An expanded and improved GMS website and regular publication/dissemination of GMS e-Update, the electronic newsletter of the GMS program under this TA has also improved access to information that contributed to facilitation of coordination, in addition to enhancing public awareness on GMS.

The TA also enabled ADB to successfully adopt appropriate measures in response to certain unplanned developments in 2009. In the face of the political dispute between Thailand and Cambodia regarding former PM Thaksin and border tension and disputed territory in Preach Vihear, efforts were intensified to continue to promote bilateral cross border transport and trade facilitation through bilateral meetings. Other development partners were actively engaged in facilitative efforts to mobilize external resources to support priority projects under the GMS program to complement limited ADB resources.

In assisting preparation of preliminary feasibility assessments to implement high priority subprojects, the TA supported the preparation of project concept profiles. Preliminary consultations were held for: (i) an expressway from Hanoi-Lang Son in Viet Nam (part of Hanoi-Nanning sub-corridor of the GMS North-South Economic Corridor; and (ii) upgrading of sections of the East-West Economic Corridor and Southern Economic Corridors in Viet Nam. Item (i) resulted in approval of Viet Nam PPTA (ADF loan) for GMS: Ha Noi – Lang Son, Ha Long- Mong Chai and Ben Luc-Long Thanh Expressways TA approved in October 2008. The preliminary assessments for subregional transport infrastructure projects actually helped in the processing and approval of PPTAs for these projects. The projects would in turn improve and complete key sections of the GMS transport corridors network and thus help to further enhance subregional connectivity.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome. The outputs under the TA have contributed to the achievement of the intended outcome. The sustained support by ADB in its continuing role as GMS Secretariat clearly led to fruitful outcomes of the GMS program. While most of the outputs were implemented in a highly satisfactory manner, the following observations are made: (i) monitoring framework developed was used for RCSPU which was basically an ADB document, while formal and quantitative impact evaluation and monitoring framework for the review of GMS institutions have yet to be established; and (ii) one of the activities recommended by the IED Regional Cooperation Assistance and Program Evaluation (RCAPE) in 2009, i.e., the piloting of a secondment scheme for staff of GMS national secretariats to work in GMS unit in ADB and/or well-functioning GMS national secretariat in some of the countries, was not implemented. This was due to the tight schedule of GMS activities and limited human resources in the national secretariats, which constrained their ability to spare their officials for any secondment program.

Overall Assessment and Rating. The overall rating of the project is successful.

Relevance: The project is highly relevant as it is consistent with GMS member states' request for ADB to continue its role in GMS cooperation to ensure that the subgrouping sustains and accelerates benefits from subregional projects and initiatives.

Effectiveness: The TA has effectively supported the coordination and monitoring of subregional initiatives under the nine GMS sector working groups. The support given by ADB staff and GMS secretariat consultants ensured working group and high-level meetings were provided clear direction and guidance that in turn helped advance the GMS program.

Efficiency: TA resources have been efficiently utilized, with timely consultants' mobilization, report submission, quality of the reports as well as the presentation to the GMS Member States to facilitate their decision making process.

Sustainability: Though some of the outputs could have been more successful towards increasing capacity of national secretariats or enhanced monitoring framework, the TA has contributed to further strengthening of the GMS regional cooperation program. The countries have reiterated their commitment to GMS and the program is now starting a third decade of cooperation, with a greater focus on a comprehensive results framework.

Major Lessons. The TA is basically a general TA to sustain the support of the GMS Secretariat in ADB to GMS Cooperation. Given that the role of the Secretariat is to facilitate the GMS Countries, the TA should be designed in such way that it provides flexibility to accommodate the need for the GMS program.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions.

- A regional result monitoring framework and institutionalization of a quantitative monitoring mechanism by the GMS institutions may be explored. Possible mechanism may include peer review, regional development effectiveness reports based on regional result framework, or score-card;
- ADB should continue to sustain its support to GMS Cooperation and play its role as the GMS Secretariat. While flexibility should be provided in the subsequent TA, its scope should be aligned to the new GMS strategic framework and its implementation.

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