

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: RSGP

<b>TA No., Country and Name</b>  TA 6331-REG: Support for Strengthening the Tsunami Development Assistance Database			<b>Amount Approved</b> \$800,000	
			<b>Revised Amount</b> N/A	
<b>Executing Agency</b> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)		<b>Source of Funding</b> Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF)	<b>Amount Undisbursed</b> Nil	<b>Amount Utilized</b> \$800,000
<b>TA Approval Date:</b> 28 July 2006	<b>TA Signing Date</b> 4 August 2006	<b>Fielding of First Consultant</b> 7 September 2006	<b>TA Completion Date</b> <b>Original:</b> 31 July 2007 <b>Actual:</b> 30 Sept 2008  <b>Account Closing Date</b> <b>Original:</b> 31 July 2007 <b>Actual:</b> 12 March 2010	

**Description.** Following the unprecedented devastation brought by the Indian Ocean Tsunami that struck on 26 December 2004, the Asian Development Bank hosted a High-Level Coordination Meeting on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Assistance to Tsunami-Affected Countries on 18 March 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum for regional coordination and information sharing to ensure that recovery efforts would be effective and to avoid wasteful duplication and overlap during the medium term. The meeting brought together over 200 representatives from governments of the affected countries, bilateral and multilateral agencies, non-government organizations, and regional and international organizations. A major area of discussion was the transparency and accountability in the use of aid being provided to the affected countries. It was agreed at the meeting that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the ADB would collaborate in consulting concerned governments to develop a proposal for common systems that will allow the aggregation of data from national systems into a regional summary tracking matrix. Subsequently, a development assistance database (DAD) was designed by UNDP in consultation with ADB and others, and became functional in four of the countries most affected by the tsunami – Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. After a year of operation, funded through the United Nations system, the affected countries requested assistance to strengthen and further develop the DAD system that would include building the capacity of national staff to ensure the system's sustainability. Thus, to help the tsunami-affected countries exercise effective leadership over external assistance, TA 6331-REG was approved in July 2006.

**Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs.** The expected impact of the technical assistance was strengthened transparency, accountability, and efficiency of tsunami recovery programs by helping tsunami-affected countries manage external assistance. The intended outcome was the consolidation of progress in tracking tsunami aid and results, increased data comprehensiveness and accuracy, and provision of analytical products to help in decision making and resource allocation. The following outputs were expected: (i) capacity development of national aid coordination, (ii) establishment of national web portals for easy access to aid coordination data, (iii) regional analysis of tsunami assistance that includes sectoral distribution through a regional DAD mechanism, (iv) preparation of lessons learned from across all four countries, and (v) adaptation of the database to integrate budget and non-tsunami assistance.

**Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities.** Formulation of the TA and its terms of reference were sufficiently adequate and relevant in addressing the identified issues and in achieving expected outcome and outputs. A team of international consultants competently completed its services satisfactorily. The principal inputs included training of finance, planning, foreign affairs and aid coordination officers; database officers and specialist database training; database software for all four countries that included internet connectivity, servers, computers, and other office equipment required for aid tracking databases to operate reliably; international advisers to support the governments; and regional technical backstopping in aid effectiveness, analysis, and private sector. TA activities were conducted in an effective and timely manner with the implementing agencies in the four tsunami-affected countries working closely with the Executing Agency. Concerns were raised by each of the four countries that the database supplier, Synergy International Systems, was overstretched in delivering customized aid tracking systems to four countries simultaneously. These concerns were documented and communicated to the database supplier and pressure exerted to accelerate delivery and improve quality control, and database quality was ensured.

No review missions were conducted during the course of TA implementation but immediately upon commencement of implementation and in keeping with the conditions of the Letter of Agreement, meetings were held between the Project Manager and concerned departments in ADB to update key staff and clarify aspects of reporting and financial statement requirements. Progress on the status of technical and financial assistance to the four countries as well as matters and issues of concern were taken up by RSGP with the Project Manager in the course of subsequent UNDP consultation visits to ADB. A total of 8 quarterly progress reports and a final report were submitted. To enable the recruitment of another consultant to replace the former Aid Coordinator Adviser seconded to the implementation agency in Indonesia, a minor change in implementation arrangements was approved by Director, RSGP while the extension of TA completion date from July 2007 to September 2008 was approved by Director General, RSDD.

**Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome.** An independent assessment of project performance carried out in late 2008 found project outputs and outcomes to have been highly relevant to the priorities of the target group – the governments of the four tsunami-affected countries, the citizens of these countries, the development agencies involved in the recovery and reconstruction effort; and the donor agencies. The overall outcome envisioned by the TA, which was achieved, was that national authorities<sup>a</sup> would have the capacity to track and coordinate tsunami assistance in a transparent and accountable manner as well as the consolidation of data at regional level and its availability through a regional database and portal. In terms of institution building, the Project focused on building capacities of teams of inexperienced officers in tracking aid flows and contributed to a certain extent to enhancing national capacities to use the established systems effectively as a tool to inform dialogue and decision making. The Project has resulted in other UNDP supported initiatives to improve nationally-led aid management in a number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The Project had acted as a trigger and catalyst for several initiatives to improve aid effectiveness in the region, including a regional aid effectiveness workshop, *"From Paris to Practice: Tools for Better Aid Coordination and Management,"* which took place in Bangkok in June 2006. While the DAD demonstrated suitability to be used to track budget and non-tsunami assistance, the Project was only partly successful in firmly integrating the majority of the aid tracking systems into the respective national aid coordination architecture of the countries.

**Overall Assessment and Rating.** The Project was successful in strengthening the aid tracking systems or DADs in the four tsunami-affected countries that requested support, and in establishing a regional DAD application to automatically consolidate country-level data. All databases are accessible online and the data captured was used by project stakeholders to prepare and disseminate reports on tsunami-related assistance. Thus, databases in all four countries significantly contributed to increasing the transparency of external aid flows, which was a notable achievement given the limited data on foreign assistance in most of the four countries prior to the tsunami. This was achieved in an unusually short time relative to other emergency responses, and was remarkable given that the four countries participating in the Project had limited previous experiences in tracking aid flows, and were faced with a humanitarian and development challenge of huge dimensions.

**Major Lessons.** While the Project was quick in establishing systems once requests were made, basic systems were up and running only six months after the disaster had struck, and national capacities to gather data, analyze and integrate it into decision making inevitably took longer still. Thus, an aid information management system (AIMS) should be established as part of regular investments in strong disaster preparedness and aid effectiveness. This would ensure that the system, and related coordination structures, accountability mechanisms, and capacities are already in place before a disaster strikes. It would not be a good practice to introduce a new system every time a disaster hits a country. Attempts must be made to consolidate the systems available to avoid this being necessary.

Caution is required when creating temporary reconstruction agencies. Specialized reconstruction agencies were established in response to a disaster, believing that this would improve the speed and quality of coordination. But while the individuals within these agencies were competent and succeeded in gathering and analyzing reconstruction data effectively, in some instances, the impact of this data was compromised by the lack of solid legal foundation and the lack of good collaboration between the agencies and the permanent institutions of government. Where existing capacities were weak, there were substantial delays in the planning, coordinating and monitoring process. In both cases, challenges of sustaining capacities built through project support were exacerbated by having to invest in staff within temporary institutions, rather than building the capacities of permanent staff from the start.

**Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions.** The contribution of an AIMS also hinges on whether it is linked to the design, implementation and monitoring of a national development or reconstruction plan which, based on a comprehensive needs assessment, defines development (or reconstruction) priorities and targets, outlining what can be financed domestically and what requires external funding. In order to improve domestic accountability, the AIMS should be linked to established domestic oversight mechanisms. For instance, financial and other reports generated through the system should routinely be sent to parliament, especially the budget committee, as well as to the Office of the Auditor General and to local government authorities. This can be achieved more easily if the AIMS is established within the appropriate institution. In a regular development context, this is likely to be the Ministry of Finance.

<sup>a</sup> Indonesia (<http://rand.brr.go.id>); Maldives (<http://dad.finance.gov.mv/offline>); Sri Lanka (<http://edims.mpi.gov.lk>); and Thailand (<http://dadthailand.mfa.go.th>)

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