

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: Regional Cooperation and Operations  
Coordination Division

TA No., Country and Name		Amount Approved: \$400,000	
TA 7718-REG: Promoting Links and Improving Coordination Among the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)		Revised Amount: N/A	
Executing Agency: Asian Development Bank	Source of Funding Government of Australia	Amount Undisbursed: \$132,025.93	Amount Utilized: \$267,974.07
TA Approval Date:  15 December 2010	TA Signing Date:  15 December 2010	Fielding of First Consultant:  31 May 2011	TA Completion Date Original: 30 November 2011 Account Closing Date Original: 30 November 2011 Actual: 5 June 2013 Actual: 29 October 2013

**Description:** With 2015 approaching, the ASEAN Member States are taking concerted steps to implement their commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint. Substantial progress has been achieved, but there are still many measures that need to be implemented up to and after 2015. These measures include the “top-down” approaches being taken by ASEAN with the “bottom-up” approaches exemplified by GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT. This TA explored the potential benefits of promoting closer links and improving coordination between ASEAN, and these 3 subregional groupings in support of ASEAN's wide-ranging regional integration agenda under the AEC Blueprint. The study assessed the existing and potential links, as well as gaps in coordination mechanisms across programs.

**Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs:** The expected impact of the TA was better coordination between the GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT subregional programs and ASEAN. The expected outcome was an action plan agreed by the ASEAN secretariat, the three subregional secretariats, and government stakeholders to implement measures to promote links, improve coordination, and strengthen institutional capacity to implement the AEC Blueprint and the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC). The TA's expected outputs were: (i) potential links and strategic coordination issues among GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT subregional programs and with ASEAN examined, and (ii) analysis of institutional arrangements and mechanisms of the three subregional programs and ASEAN to support regional connectivity completed.

**Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities:** The TA was implemented and administered by the Southeast Asia Regional Department with funding from the Government of Australia. The Southeast Asia Regional Coordination and Operations Coordination Division was responsible for managing the TA activities in close coordination with ADB resident missions and sector divisions, government counterparts and the BIMP-EAGA, IMT-GT and ASEAN Secretariats. The overall performance of ADB as the EA is assessed as satisfactory. The TA envisaged a total of 20 person-months of individual consulting services comprising 10 person-months for 2 international regional cooperation specialists, and 10 person-months for a national project analyst. The performance of the consultants was satisfactory. However, consultants were not rated in the end of their assignments due to changes in project officers. The quality of inputs was good and the individual background papers, research and final workshop were prepared well. At TA completion, a total of 27 person-months of international and national consulting services were utilized under the TA compared with the estimated 20 person-months. Surplus funds were used for additional consulting inputs to finalize and edit the final report. At TA completion there were \$132,025.93 in savings, due to a lower than expected cost of consulting services and on one-to-one interviews with stakeholders instead of expensive regional workshops. The TA was intended to be implemented over a period of 10 months, with completion in November 2011. However, due to unexpected issues such as delay in the receipt of cofinancing from the Australian Government and late receipt of no objection letters from participating countries, consultants were only mobilized in May 2011, so the TA had to be extended by 9 months. There were two additional extensions of the TA due to the need to reconfirm data, final clearances from countries, edit the final report, and financial closure. The TA was extended an additional 14 months and completed on 29 October 2013, 23 months later than expected.

The TA activities included desk reviews of official documents—such as strategic frameworks, blueprints and roadmaps. National consultation meetings were conducted with more than 100 key government officials from member countries of the three subregional programs and ASEAN, including the national secretariats of GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT in each country. The consultations were useful to (i) inform relevant government agencies and institutions about the TA's expected outcome, outputs and activities, and (ii) seek their views on how to promote links and strengthen coordination among ASEAN and the subregional programs. The consultation process made possible to prepare draft reports on the institutional and strategic outputs. The draft report recommendations of the two outputs were presented at a regional workshop on 27 November 2012, attended by 90 participants and the integrated final report was published and uploaded in the ADB website in September 2013. The final workshop was very useful to reach consensus on the key findings and recommendations of the TA.

**Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome:** The final document produced by the TA was a publication entitled, “Regional and Subregional Program Links: Mapping the Links between ASEAN and the GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT”. The study examined the links and coordination between the GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT subregional programs and ASEAN. This was the first comparative analysis of the strategic frameworks and connectivity-related sector strategies of the three subregional programs with the AEC Blueprint and the MPAC. The study also provided a review of the three subregional programs and ASEAN and its potential links and coordination mechanisms to complement the wide-ranging regional economic integration initiatives under the AEC. The publication was prepared as a forward looking document to serve as a resource for ASEAN, GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT to improve coordination at the regional level. The TA is rated effective in achieving its intended outcome. As discussed below, the TA focused on two major outputs: the strategic links and the institutional links (STET).

**Output 1.** At the strategic level, the TA conducted an operational review focusing on selected sectors, initiatives or programs. The output covers strategy level review of all subregional groupings including ASEAN and operational links in three connectivity sectors – transport, energy and transport & trade facilitation. This involved the mapping of subregional strategic frameworks and blueprints vis à vis the AEC Blueprint and the MPAC. Through a matrix summary, this mapping identified areas in which the three subregional programs could help to deliver the targets and goals in the AEC Blueprint and the MPAC. As part of this strategic mapping exercise, physical and other aspects of regional connectivity were identified for investment programming and project prioritization. The study showed that there is evidence of a strong link at the strategy level with reference by the subregional programs strategic frameworks to ASEAN. A strong link was also found at the operational, sector level where connectivity initiatives in the transport and energy sectors, as well as in transport and trade facilitation, are high project priority areas in ASEAN and the three subregional programs.

**Output 2.** The institutional output analyzed the institutional arrangements and mechanisms of the three subregional programs and ASEAN. It also examined possible ways of streamlining and strengthening institutional coordination between the ASEAN secretariat and the three subregional secretariats and among national agencies, to better cooperate in implementing regional connectivity initiatives. This included measures to support the institutional capacity needed to implement the AEC Blueprint and MPAC. The TA also looked into existing country-level institutional mechanisms and arrangements for coordinating activities involving ASEAN and the subregional programs. The study concluded that ASEAN, GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT have similar governance structures but the challenge remains mainly with the in-country institutional mechanisms where there is a wide variation in terms of designated focal ministries and agencies that are responsible for coordinating each of the three subregional programs.

**Overall Assessment and Rating.** The TA was successful in identifying potential benefits of promoting closer links and improving coordination between ASEAN, GMS, BIMP-EAGA, and IMT-GT in supporting ASEAN's wide-ranging regional integration agenda under the AEC Blueprint. The study assessed the existing and potential links among ASEAN and the three subregional programs, as well as gaps in coordination mechanisms across the programs. In terms of sustainability, this was the first study to review such strategic and institutional linkages among them, and its findings and recommended approaches can contribute to the ongoing dialogue to enhance coordination. The TA delivered most of the expected outputs effectively. The consultants performed efficiently, fulfilling the responsibilities set out in their terms of reference. Their inputs in preparing the final report and publication were well received by stakeholders, who provided useful feedback during the final regional workshop. The recommendations provided by the TA have been generally owned by the stakeholders. The quality of the final publication was excellent and it was widely distributed at GMS, BIMP-EAGA, IMT-GT and ASEAN meetings. The use of graphical and tabular representations of information was particularly useful. This publication will serve as reference document for enhancing cooperation between ASEAN and the subregions. The study may also facilitate ASEAN economic integration by being a “test bed” for new ideas and approaches to support realization of the AEC by 2015. The TA knowledge product is rated as useful. Overall, the TA is rated as successful.

**Major Lessons.** The major lessons learned include (i) GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT are increasingly recognizing the centrality of ASEAN and consider themselves as building blocks towards the AEC, (ii) ASEAN institutions are also starting to recognize the value of these subregional groupings although issues and constraints in coordination remain; (iii) enhancing links and coordination between the 3 subregional programs and ASEAN will be a long term process that will require significance resources, political commitment from member countries, and enhanced capacities to deliver concrete results in key sectors; and (iv) the role of ADB as a facilitator to coordinate programs is useful and important, but not sufficient to ensure successful linkages; in the long term, the ASEAN secretariat should take the lead in this area.

**Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions.** Coordination between ASEAN and GMS, BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT needs to be further strengthened to ensure synergies and to avoid duplication and inconsistencies. ADB and the ASEAN Secretariat should embark on initiating key recommendations identified in the study. ADB needs to continue to closely monitor the implementation of all the TA outputs. A series of sectoral meetings between ASEAN bodies and subregional working groups should take place in 2014-2016 in key sectors identified in the report such as trade and transport facilitation, energy and transport in order to exchange information and enhance coordination.

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