



# Completion Report

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Project Number: 45292-001  
Technical Assistance Number: 8003  
January 2021

## Strengthening Evaluation of Poverty Reduction Innovations

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## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

<b>TA Number, Country, and Name:</b> TA 8003-REG: Strengthening Evaluation of Poverty Reduction Innovations		<b>Amount Approved:</b> \$950,000.00	
		<b>Revised Amount:</b> \$1,450,000.00	
<b>Executing Agency:</b> Asian Development Bank	<b>Source of Funding:</b> TASF-other sources (\$950,000); Financial Sector Development Partnership Fund <sup>1</sup> (\$500,000)	<b>Amount Undisbursed:</b> \$180,926.17	<b>Amount Used:</b> \$1,269,073.83
<b>TA Approval Date:</b> 16 December 2011	<b>TA Signing Date:</b> 16 December 2011	<b>TA Completion Date</b>	
		<b>Original Date:</b> 31 May 2015	<b>Latest Revised Date:</b> 31 December 2016
		<b>Financial Closing Date:</b> 2 April 2018	<b>Number of Extensions:</b> 1
<b>TA Type:</b> Capacity development TA			

### Description

The overarching goal of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) under Strategy 2020 was to reduce poverty in Asia and the Pacific. Among other things, this required broader development and application of innovative financial inclusion and poverty reduction policies and practices across the region, which in turn demanded the use of more modern and effective tools for evaluating poverty and financial inclusion projects.

At the time of this technical assistance (TA) approval in 2011, ADB was continuing its efforts to improve the evaluation of its own projects. This included adopting modern evaluation techniques and using the relevant impact findings of other evaluators in the international development community. The aim was to measure performance, demonstrate results, learn from operations, and expand the use of lessons learned in knowledge- and experience-sharing. ADB's developing member countries (DMCs) also needed to improve their evaluation methods to help ensure that their poverty reduction efforts would achieve maximum effect.

The TA concept arose from the initial and then unique Microfinance Impact and Innovation Conference held in 2010 in New York where recently accumulated evaluation knowledge and generation of innovations in poverty reduction and access-to-finance product design and research were discussed by an multinational meeting of academics and development practitioners. Errors in traditional approaches were identified, new approaches suggested, and researchers proposed ideas in a marketplace where development partners and country representatives expressed interest in engagement and funding. The sponsors included the Financial Access Initiative, a consortium of development economists from New York University, Yale University, and Harvard University; Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), a United States-based nonprofit that develops solutions to social problems; and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), a network of Massachusetts Institute of Technology professors conducting research into poverty reduction.

The TA aimed to replicate and expand on the approach and benefits of that conference for policy makers and implementing agencies in the DMCs. The aim was to help improve the DMCs' abilities to measure, evaluate, and replicate projects to improve access to finance and reduce poverty in other ways. This was to include increased DMC understanding and use of other modern evaluation techniques, including the randomized control trials that already produced innovations in improving access to finance, resource transfers through community-driven development and conditional cash transfers, and overall work with the ultra-poor. Financial resources were to be provided along with training and experience sharing to support the application of the knowledge gained and promote rigorous impact evaluations of ADB development interventions in the DMCs.

### Expected Impact, Outcome, and Outputs

The project's expected impact was more effective evaluation of financial inclusion and related poverty reduction projects in participating DMCs. The intended outcome was increased understanding and application of sex-disaggregated modern evaluation techniques for poverty reduction innovations by officials and academics of participating DMCs. The TA outputs were (i) a 3-day training course in impact evaluation, (ii) 3-day conference sharing

<sup>1</sup> Financing partner: the Government of Luxembourg.

the latest impact evaluation results, and (iii) implementation of competitively awarded innovation evaluation grants for DMCs and management of TA process.

### Implementation Arrangements

The TA was to be implemented over 53 months from December 2011 to May 2015 but was extended up to December 2016. The extension was to allow sufficient time for the completion of the DMC innovation evaluation studies funded by TA grants. The project was to be implemented by ADB's East Asia Department (EARD) in collaboration with its Independent Evaluation Department (IED). The IED project officer was to guide the development and delivery of the training course (output 1) and the selection of the grants to be awarded. The EARD project officer was to oversee work with the TA cofinanciers, the conference setup, and selection for and implementation of the ADB-supported grants. From EARD, it was initially implemented by the Public Management, Financial Sector and Regional Cooperation Division (EAPF), then transferred to the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division, and finally moved back again to EAPF due to staff movement and/or departure from ADB. In January 2013, a minor change in TA scope, with an increase in TA amount by \$500,000 from the Financial Sector Development Partnership Fund (FSDPF), was approved. The additional funding supported expansion of evaluation grants in the areas of financial inclusion and small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development and enhanced dissemination of the TA outputs.

The international consultant was to be engaged through single-source selection from the Financial Access Initiative through the Innovations for Poverty Action, but recruitment was eventually carried out after competitive selection as per advice from ADB's procurement department (then Central Operations Services Office). An individual consultant was engaged through a consulting firm, the IPA. The IPA was a co-organizer of the 2010 evaluation conference, had administered evaluation trial grants for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and had an extensive worldwide network of evaluation researchers that was unmatched at the time of TA implementation. The consultant firm managed the development and delivery of the training and the conference, the logistics, the grants competition, and general grant implementation oversight. The administration of the small grants for evaluation design was also delegated to the nonprofit organization. This included the signing of letter of agreements with grantees, disbursement, monitoring, and assessment.

### Conduct of Activities

**Output 1: Three-day training course in impact evaluation; and Output 2: Three-day conference sharing latest relevant impact evaluation results.** The 3-day training course and 3-day conference were held one after the other in Bangkok in August 2012. About 66 participants from 23 DMCs attended the training course, who also attended the 3-day conference held immediately after the training course. The 3-day conference was attended by 235 participants including representatives from 31 countries, development partners, and practitioners. The two events achieved a successful mix of evaluators, practitioners, and researchers. About 40 innovative ideas were presented, and potential partnerships between participants were identified. Rigorous field evaluations of poverty reduction innovations were shared at the conference; and researchers, policy makers, and development partners discussed the implications for future approaches, recent developments, and options for developing new ideas and subjecting them to strict testing to effectively determine actual results.<sup>2</sup>

**Output 3: Implementation of competitively awarded innovation evaluation grants for DMCs and management of TA process.** In October 2013, 11 grants for \$15,000 were made to support the design of evaluation studies. The additional funding of \$500,000 provided by FSDPF supported larger grants to supplement the impact evaluations in the areas of financial inclusion and SME development. ADB subsequently selected 5 of 21 proposals for \$150,000 grants for three evaluation studies related to financial inclusion, one to SME development, and one to post-conflict management and governance. The studies, completed in December 2016, included assessments of programs for microcredit group information, insurance and migration in India, a financial education program targeting children and youth in the People's Republic of China, and the use of electronic wage payment for factory workers in Bangladesh. Among the activities financed by the grants were the establishment of partnerships, the design of the studies, the finalization of instruments for baseline surveys and the testing of mobile survey platforms, surveyor training, and the introduction of payroll accounts delivered by partner organizations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The conference materials are available via the IPA website (<https://www.poverty-action.org/event/impact-and-policy-conference-evidence-governance-financial-inclusion-and-entrepreneurship?page=1>) (accessed 8 June 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Some of the published reports are: R. Hussam, et al. *Targeting High Ability Entrepreneurs Using Community Information: Mechanism Design in the Field*; and E. Breza, et al. *The Real Effects of Electronic Wage Payments*. (accessed 2 July 2020).

### Technical Assistance Assessment Ratings

Criterion	Assessment	Rating
Relevance	<p>The TA was relevant to ADB's <i>Strategy 2020</i> commitments to effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of ADB's performance to learn and become more effective; the reduction of poverty; inclusive economic growth; and supporting microfinance, SMEs, and gender equity. The TA design was relevant in terms of the results chain and appropriateness although it would have benefited from a systematically embedded mechanism for stronger interdepartmental coordination and collaboration between EARD and IED, alongside other regional and knowledge departments as well as the Private Sector Operations Department.</p> <p>The TA grants provided valuable knowledge and experience in implementing programs on SME financing, micro-credit, mobile health micro-insurance, and innovative payment systems for workers from East, Southeast and South Asian countries, which are prominent in their national initiatives for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of women. Further, the TA supported strengthening ADB's role and value addition as a knowledge provider, particularly in better evaluation and implementation of projects. Through the TA, ADB helped deepen appreciation on importance of impact evaluation and the application of randomized control trials and modern evaluation tools among DMCs.</p>	Relevant
Effectiveness	The TA outcome was achieved. Post-evaluation showed a very high rate of satisfaction from conference participants. A greater number of grant-financed evaluation studies were completed than targeted due to additional financing (Appendix 1). The outputs were delivered, albeit partially, and targets for participation by women were reached in terms of training and conference and as recipients of grants.	Effective
Efficiency	Delegating the administration of small grants to the consulting firm achieved process efficiency than ADB might have delivered due to limited available staff. However, a consistent TA management and proactive supervision by the ADB project team could have improved the efficiency, proper documentation, and monitoring of TA activities. The implementation delay or extension of TA completion by 19 months was required to complete the study grants which were funded by supplementary financing made available a year after the TA's implementation. No explanation is available for the substantial cost savings, but the uncommitted amount could have been used for additional grant or other activity. A more realistic cost estimates at the time of TA preparation and balanced expenditure management during implementation could have contributed to TA efficiency.	Less than efficient
<b>Overall Assessment</b>	The TA has minor design flows in terms of management and interdepartmental coordination, incurred delay in implementation (less than 2 years), and unutilized funding resources. The TA was <i>relevant</i> , <i>effective</i> , and <i>less than efficient</i> . The overall weighted average is above 1.65, hence the project is rated <b>successful</b> .	Successful
<b>Sustainability</b>	By involving relevant officials from the region in the global discourse on measuring the results of poverty reduction efforts and innovations, the TA generated renewed interest and additional knowledge in the DMCs in the area of development results evaluation. The information and approaches introduced through the TA activities remain relevant for application by the DMCs and will be useful as tools in helping ADB monitor progress under its corporate results framework and ADB's <i>Strategy 2030</i> .	Likely sustainable

### Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Implementation and/or delivery	The project showed that immediate follow-up on knowledge building—in this case, by organizing the conference to follow the impact evaluation training—can deepen the imprint and the results of capacity development. Trainees have an immediate opportunity to share, discuss, and expand on lessons just learned. The dialogue and experience-sharing among practitioners, development partners, and researchers at the conference likely heightened this effect and seeded collaboration and future partnerships between the participants. The conference gave researchers the opportunity
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	to link up with practitioners—through series of match-making sessions for potential joint research projects—to be able to design more rigorous evaluations of their poverty reduction projects and innovations. Providing the resources (through grants and seed money) for participants to apply their new skills was also a project strength and moved the learning experience beyond the class and the conference rooms into the field.
Management of staff and consultants	Delegating the administration of some TA activities to the consultant supported effective implementation and enabled the limited ADB project staff available to make better use of their time. However, this approach alone was insufficient to ensure continuity and timely completion of activities due to the transfers of TA management between two divisions of East Asia Department and inadequate interdepartmental collaboration.
Replication and/or scaling up	The benefits of the training and conference generated strong interest on the need for more effective way of evaluating projects, which prompted the stakeholders from the DMCs and development partners to consider replicating the events or conducting them on a more regular basis.

### Follow-up Actions

Poverty reduction remains an unfinished development agenda in Asia and the Pacific, even in countries with relatively high per capita income. The knowledge accumulated through the TA such as from training, conference and grants could help ensure that ADB's interventions achieve the maximum impact and benefits for the absolute poor and women in particular.

Follow-up activities to share knowledge and experience among development partners, grantees and DMC practitioners include (i) dissemination of the TA outputs, particularly the research grants in ADB and IPA's project websites in project briefs, infographics or short case studies format; and (ii) organization of an online or virtual training or session on related topics. These activities should be designed and implemented through a One-ADB approach.

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## DESIGN AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Impact		
TA is aligned with: more effective evaluation of financial inclusion and related poverty reduction projects in participating DMCs		
Results Chain	Performance Indicators with Targets and Baselines	Achievements
<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Increased understanding and application of sex-disaggregated modern evaluation techniques for poverty reduction innovations by participating DMC academics and officials</p>	<p>a. Post evaluation of conference shows increased knowledge of new evaluation methods and their use (baseline limited or no knowledge) by November 2012</p> <p>b. DMCs implement six evaluation research grants (baseline zero) by May 2015</p>	<p>a. <b>Achieved.</b> The conference was attended by 235 researchers/members of the academe, high-level policymakers, and field implementers in the areas of small and microenterprise development, governance, and financial inclusion from 31 countries (of which 104 or 44% are women). 89% of participants who responded to post training survey rated it as good and excellent. 100% of respondents also reported that they were likely to use the new knowledge they gained in the training.</p> <p>b. <b>Achieved.</b> At least 11 small grants and 5 large grants were completed between 2013 and 2016. A project extension enabled the completion of large evaluation studies financed by the larger grants supported by the supplementary funding.</p>
<p><b>Outputs</b></p> <p>1. Three-day training course in impact evaluation</p> <p>2. Three-day conference sharing latest relevant impact evaluation results</p> <p>3. Implementation of competitively awarded innovation evaluation grants for DMCs and management of TA process</p>	<p>1. Thirty attendees' ex-ante and ex-post surveys of knowledge and practice; at least one-third are women, by month 9</p> <p>2. Presentation of summaries in access to finance and related poverty reduction evaluations, by month 9 At least one-third of conference participants are women</p> <p>3a. Two field implementation grants and four start-up grants implemented in DMCs, 50% with gender analysis, one-third of awardees are women</p> <p>3b. On-time completion of TA with all reports completed by month 40</p>	<p>1. <b>Achieved.</b> A total of 66 participants from 23 DMCs participated (of which 23 or 35% were women) were trained. Based on participant feedback, 89% of the respondents rated the course as good and excellent. 100% reported that they were likely to use the information they gained through the training.</p> <p>2. <b>Achieved.</b> The presentation of summaries of access-to-finance and related poverty reduction project evaluations were published through IPA and J-PAL. The participants of the 3-day training course in impact evaluation attended the 3-day conference. Of the 235 conference participants, 104 (44%) were women. Two of three conference speakers were women, as were 20 of the 55 presenters (36%).</p> <p>3a. <b>Partially achieved.</b> Project documents confirmed delivery of the targeted number of grants by the end of 2016. 3 out of 11 small grants and 3 of 5 large grants have women researcher; gender analysis of the grants were not readily available for verification.</p> <p>3b. <b>Partially achieved.</b> An extension of the TA implementation period (by 19 months) was required to allow completion of evaluation studies financed by the additional larger grants. These grants were supported by supplementary funding which was approved only after 1 year of TA's implementation.</p>

**Actual Key Activities with Milestones****1. Three-day training course in impact evaluation**

- 1.1 Confirm dates and location for training by month 3 (ADB project co-team leaders with coordinator, milestone is letter of concurrence with operator of site). *Achieved by month 5 (May 2012).*
- 1.2 Confirm training facilitators, study results to be presented, and participant lists for training by month 4 (coordinator, milestones are confirmation messages from trainers and list of proposed participants). *Achieved by month 6 (June 2012).*
- 1.3 Finalize training program materials and system for evaluating learning to show results by month 6 (coordinator with ADB project co-team leaders, milestone is training materials inclusive of evaluation materials) *Achieved by month 6 (June 2012).*
- 1.4 Conduct training course and e-learning tool, and complete pre and post conference survey analysis of knowledge of evaluation tool *use by month 9 (September 2012)*; (coordinator with trainers; milestone is evaluation of training and e-learning video on website). *Achieved, pre-training was conducted prior to actual face-to-face training.*

**2. Three-day conference sharing latest relevant impact evaluation results**

- 2.1 Confirm dates and location for conference by month 3 (ADB project co-team leaders with coordinator, milestone is letter of concurrence with operator of site) *Achieved by month 5 (May 2012).*
- 2.2 Confirm conference speakers, study results to be presented, and participant lists for conference by month 4 (coordinator, milestones are confirmation messages from key speakers, and list of proposed participants) *Achieved by month 5 (May 2012).*
- 2.3 Finalize conference arrangements and logistics by *month 7 (July 2012)* (coordinator with ADB project co-team leaders, milestone is final agenda and logistics plan)
- 2.4 Conduct conference, and complete proceedings for website as knowledge product and services *by month 9 (September 2012)* (coordinator and ADB project co-team leaders; milestone is proceedings). *Achieved as planned.*

**3. Implementation of competitively awarded innovation evaluation grants for DMCs and management of TA process**

- 3.1 Confirm collaboration arrangements with potential development partners by month 4 (ADB project co-team leaders, milestone is any memorandum of understanding) *Achieved as planned (March to April 2012).*
- 3.2 Contract conference, training and grant coordinator by month 2 (ADB project co-team leaders, milestone is signed contract) *Achieved by month 5 (May 2012).*
- 3.3 Establish size and criteria for field implementation grants and start-up grants by month 3 (coordinator, milestone is document for requests for proposals advertised) *Achieved by month 7 (July 2012)*
- 3.4 Receive field implementation grants and four start-up grant proposals, and apply evaluation criteria by month 6 (coordinator with ADB project co-team leaders, milestone is shortlists for both grant types) *Achieved by month 8 (August 2012) during the training and conference in Bangkok.*
- 3.5 Conduct innovation grant marketplace, and award two larger impact evaluation research grants and four evaluation seed grants in month 9 (coordinator and ADB project co-team leaders; milestone is signed grant agreements). *Achieved based on TA progress reports; small grants were managed by the consultant.*
- 3.6 Monitor progress, results, and write-ups of impact evaluation grants from months 10 to 40 (coordinator; milestone is summary of results of each grant). *Achieved based on TA progress reports, but details cannot be ascertained or validated due to limited project documentation (partly due to transfer of TA implementation from one division to another).*

**Actual Inputs**

Asian Development Bank: \$769,073.83

Financial Sector Development Partnership Fund: \$500,000.00

ADB = Asian Development Bank, DMC = developing member country, IPA = Innovations for Poverty Action, JPAL = Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, TA = technical assistance.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COST

**Table A2.1: Technical Assistance Cost by Activity**  
(\$'000)

Item	Amount		
	Original	Revised <sup>a</sup>	Actual
1. Consultants	170.00	198.00	339.63
2. Training, seminars, and/or conferences	429.00	421.00	388.20
3. Miscellaneous TA administration	35.00	35.00	2.17
4. Studies/Surveys <sup>b</sup>	300.00	780.00	539.07
5. Contingency	16.00	16.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>950.00</b>	<b>1,450.00</b>	<b>1,269.07</b>

<sup>a</sup> Additional financing from Financial Sector Development Partnership Fund.

<sup>b</sup> Includes evaluation innovation grants.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

**Table A2.2: Technical Assistance Cost by Fund**  
(\$'000)

	TASF-other sources	FSDP Fund	Total
1. Original	950.00	0.00	950.00
2. Revised	950.00	500.00	1,450.00
3. Actual	769.07	500.00	1,269.07
4. Unused	180.93	0.00	180.93

FSDP = Financial Sector Development Partnership, TASF = Technical Assistance Special Fund.

Source: Asian Development Bank.