



Completion Report

Project Number: 48109-001
Technical Assistance Number: 8663
October 2019

Sustainable Environmental Management of Projects in Central and West Asia

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TA Number, Country, and Name: TA 8663-REG: Sustainable Environmental Management of Projects in Central and West Asia		Amount Approved: \$1,500,000	
		Revised Amount: \$2,750,000	
Executing Agency: Asian Development Bank	Source of Funding: TASF- other sources	Amount Undisbursed: \$65,484.58	Amount Utilized: \$2,684,515.42
TA Approval Date: 10 June 2014	TA Signing Date: 10 June 2014	Fielding of First Consultant: August 2014	TA Completion Date Original: 31 December 2017 Revised: 31 March 2019 Account Closing Date Original: 31 December 2017 Actual: 22 July 2019

Description

The regional technical assistance (RETA) was approved on 10 June 2014 to improve environmental safeguards performance through supporting environmental compliance across all ADB-financed projects in participating developing member countries (DMCs) across the Central and West Asia (CWA) region. The majority of the projects under implementation in the region across all sectors involve large-scale construction and are classified as Category A or B. The quality of environmental assessments, as well as timelines of submission and disclosure of safeguard documents have improved over time. However, further room for improvement was identified, particularly with regards to implementing the environmental management plans (EMPs) and preparing and operationalizing Site-Specific Environmental Management Plans (SSEMPs). There was also the need to support and build capacity of executing agencies (EAs), specifically in monitoring the preparation and field implementation of EMPs and SSEMPs. These scenarios could otherwise potentially result in non-compliances with ADB's Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS) and thus, could become a bottleneck to the overall implementation of projects.

Expected Impact, Outcome, and Outputs

The expected impact of the TA is sustained environmental compliance across all ADB-financed projects in participating DMCs across the CWA region. Originally, the intended outcome was to improve implementation of SSEMPs for Category A and B projects in participating DMCs across CWA region. However, during the first year of TA implementation, the need to support the EAs and implementing agencies (IAs) during project processing through quality assurance of safeguard documents to meet ADB requirements was identified as a priority in addition to the continued support on project implementation. Hence, a major change in TA scope was approved in December 2018 to expand the coverage of the TA, and the outcome was revised to 'improved quality of safeguard documents and safeguard implementation to support Central and West Department (CWRD) portfolio for better compliance with ADB SPS 2009'. To achieve this new outcome, the outputs were revised to (i) quality and timeliness of EIAs and IEEs improved, (ii) quality and timeliness of environmental monitoring reports (EMRs) improved, and (iii) environmental safeguard performance of ADB projects improved.

Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities

The original formulation of the TA was expanded to provide support to ADB-financed projects from project processing to project implementation. The TA was extended twice and entailed one major and two minor changes in scope and implementation arrangements, which also involved increasing the total amount of the TA from \$1,500,000 to \$2,750,000.

The TA originally included the recruitment of one international and five national environmental safeguards consultants, with the intention to focus activities on the top five DMCs in terms of number of projects: Afghanistan (AFG), Uzbekistan (UZB), Pakistan (PAK), Tajikistan (TAJ), and Kyrgyz Republic (KGZ). In February 2016, realizing the value of national consultants in supporting safeguards implementation, ADB approved an additional \$750,000 to finance expansion of RETA activities to the other CWA DMCs: Armenia (ARM), Azerbaijan (AZE), Georgia (GEO), Kazakhstan (KAZ). Turkmenistan (TKM) was not included due to its small portfolio. In February 2017, ADB approved the major change in scope and implementation arrangements, which revised and further expanded the intended outcome and outputs of the TA to provide support to EAs and IAs during project processing and extended the TA until 31 December 2018. The terms of reference of the existing consultants were also revised to include (i) provision of support in the preparation of safeguards documents during processing of projects and (ii) expansion of their assignment to more than one DMC. In August 2017, ADB approved a final increase of \$500,000 to finance the contract extension of all consultants, increasing the total amount of the TA to \$2,750,000. In December 2018, the TA was again extended from 31 December 2018 to 31 March 2019. This extension was requested to provide sufficient time to conduct additional training and support to project implementation units (PIUs) in preparing EMRs based on the recently produced manual for monitoring of environmental safeguards implementation under the TA. A total of 19 consultants were engaged throughout the course of the RETA, consisting of six international (four intermittent and two full-time) and 13 national consultants (two intermittent and 11 full-time). All of the full-time national consultants work within the Resident Mission (RM) to provide full support to the projects, while the intermittent consultants were hired specifically to work on specific projects requiring specialized support (e.g. noise and vibration assessment). International consultants are recruited when the scope of work covers multiple countries or requires highly specialized skills and international experience. All performed satisfactorily, with six considered excellent and one eventually becoming ADB staff.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

Under the original scope of the TA, detailed criteria for ranking environmental compliance of ongoing projects was developed. This was used by the TA consultants for the first year of the TA to measure compliance of ADB projects. The need for the PIU staff to learn and sustain compliance monitoring was completed during the first year of TA implementation. Therefore, it was decided that the ranking would not be further conducted by the TA consultants but would instead be used as inputs for a training manual developed for PIU or project management unit (PMU) staff. Evaluation of the revised outputs is as follows:

Output 1: Quality and timeliness of EIAs and IEEs improved

Both international and national consultants under the TA provided support in the preparation of safeguard documents during project processing, which resulted in improved quality of safeguards documents and sustained 100 percent endorsement and disclosure of EIAs/IEEs prior to SRM/MRM. The consultants also participated in site visits and advised EAs/IAs, as well as transaction technical assistance consultants on potential issues of projects. Good practice notes were also prepared on (i) Impact Assessment Process for Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) and (ii) Management of Ground-borne Vibration during Construction of Road Schemes. These

good practice notes were circulated among CWRD project teams and are now disclosed on the ADB website as consultant reports. Further to the guidance note on vibration during construction, a workshop was also conducted among ADB practitioners on vibration impacts with a vibration expert.

Output 2: Quality and timeliness of environmental monitoring reports (EMRs) improved

Both international and national consultants provided guidance to PIUs and supervision consultants on implementing EMPs and preparing required EMRs. The consultants provided support in ensuring the quality of draft EMRs prior to submission to ADB and helped the PIUs in addressing ADB comments for finalization of reports. The consultants also conducted site visits to review safeguard implementation to help further improve environmental performance of projects under implementation and provide support to ADB safeguards staff. A key milestone from the RETA was the finalization and subsequent roll-out and disclosure of the Manual for Monitoring of Environmental Safeguards Implementation, which provides guidance to PIUs in preparing quality EMRs. Two regional training events were conducted to present this monitoring manual and to share good practices among the DMCs on monitoring implementation of environment safeguards. The events were participated by selected PIUs from each DMC in GEO in April 2018 (over 70 participants) and PAK in May 2018 (over 80 participants). The training events were seen as a broad success, with 71 percent of participants rating the training as very useful and 29 percent of participants rating it as useful. The training events provided practical learning sessions from practitioners in different countries and included site visits to relevant projects. The training also enabled the establishment of a network across the region for further strengthening safeguards capacity. Suggestions received from the participants included the request to conduct similar trainings to continue the support and strengthen the capacity of PIUs. Further training of PIUs were also conducted by the national consultants in each of the DMCs (except in TKM) to promote understanding of how to use the manual and how the PIU's roles and responsibilities fit into the overall environmental safeguards system. These efforts helped improve the quality of submitted EMRs, as well as improve the timeliness of EMR submission and disclosure from 50 percent in 2013 to 92 percent in 2018.

Output 3: Environmental safeguard performance of ADB projects improved

Four international consultants were hired intermittently under the TA to support processing and implementation of projects requiring assistance in terms of safeguards compliance (i.e. those projects under implementation with potentially significant air, noise or vibration impacts). Following the development of the Information kit on compliance monitoring checklist and training manual from the previous RETA 7548, hands-on training of PIUs were continuously conducted to improve capacity and to mitigate PIU staff turnover. Environmental network meetings, attended by PIU representatives, were also held in ARM, KGZ, GEO, PAK, and TAJ during the RETA implementation period. These collective efforts helped improve overall environment safeguard performance of projects through reduction of non-compliances. Prior to the RETA, there has been no training conducted for PIUs on compliance requirements for monitoring implementation of environmental safeguards. With the conduct of the regional training on the monitoring manual and good practices on implementation of environmental safeguards, all PIU representatives have been trained in using the monitoring manual and 100 percent of the projects utilize the manual as a basis for the preparation of EMRs. Furthermore, the number of projects rated as amber (i.e. with potential problem) and red (i.e. non-compliant) in terms of ENV safeguards have been reduced from 50 percent of the total projects in 2013 to 28 percent in 2018. The RETA also contributed to the better understanding of ADB SPS and project environmental aspects and values of CWRD RM's staff via trainings and taking into account environmental considerations in PAM, agreements and contracts.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The RETA is rated as **Successful**. The RETA significantly contributed in achieving and maintaining compliance with environmental safeguards in CWRD both in project processing and implementation. It was effective in providing safeguards-related support to project teams and improving the overall quality of safeguards documents, as well as the timely disclosure of these documents, during both project processing and implementation. Furthermore, given the continued increase in portfolio and number of safeguard staff, the presence of the RETA consultants in the DMCs has been essential in continuing to ensure compliance with environmental safeguards.

Major Lessons

The RETA initially focused on strengthening project implementation by improving the monitoring system and building the capacity of EAs/IAs. However, from examining the portfolio it was identified that to implement projects properly the RETA must be expanded to provide support to EAs and IAs as early as possible during project processing, through quality assurance of safeguard documents to meet ADB requirements. Effective project monitoring and reporting are built on a robust environmental impact assessment and environmental management plan, therefore it was key that the RETA covered processing as well as implementation. Providing guidance and support early in the project cycle also enabled strengthening EAs/IAs' involvement and accountability to its commitments set out in respective EMPs.

Moreover, as evidenced in the workshops conducted under the RETA, the RETA provides an excellent opportunity for knowledge-sharing and showcasing good practices among countries across the region. The workshops have provided an effective platform for EA and IA representatives from the CWA region to establish a community of practice and discuss issues, challenges, and corresponding solutions in implementing and monitoring environment safeguards requirements of ADB projects. There continues to be a high demand for this kind of practical learning workshop, as requested by all PIUs across the region.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

There is a need to continue and build on achievements of TA 8663 through the now processed TA 9541. Due to insufficient number of safeguards staff both in ADB Headquarters and RM, support from the consultants is essential to ensuring projects are in compliance during processing of new projects and implementation for on-going projects. Ensuring safeguards compliance for project readiness during processing is specifically given high priority. Technical Publications should continue to be published to support EAs/IAs, ADB staff and consultants to address knowledge gaps, provide guidance / templates and outline good practices. Knowledge-sharing events should also be continued as these events help foster a community of environmental management practitioners whose duty and mission is to ensure that environmental safeguards are properly implemented.