



# Completion Report

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**PUBLIC**

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## Advancing Time Release Studies in Southeast Asia

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## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

<b>TA Number, Country, and Name:</b> TA 9312-REG: Advancing Time Release Studies in Southeast Asia		<b>Amount Approved:</b> \$1,000,000	
		<b>Revised Amount:</b> Not applicable	
<b>Executing Agency:</b> Asian Development Bank	<b>Source of Funding:</b> Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific	<b>Amount Undisbursed:</b> \$242,993	<b>Amount Used:</b> \$757,007
<b>TA Approval Date:</b> 19 April 2017	<b>TA Signing Date:</b> 19 April 2017	<b>TA Completion Date</b>	
		<b>Original Date:</b> 31 March 2020	<b>Latest Revised Date:</b> 31 March 2021
		<b>Financial Closing Date:</b> 25 June 2021	<b>Number of Extension:</b> 1
<b>TA Type:</b> Capacity development TA			

### Description

The technical assistance (TA) provided support to the customs administrations of participating Asian Development Bank (ADB) member countries so they could better implement the various Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) trade facilitation initiatives. Specifically, the TA provided capacity building to conduct a time release study (TRS), an internationally recognized trade facilitation methodology established by the World Customs Organization (WCO), to identify bottlenecks in the trade flow process and to trigger the implementation of necessary measures to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of border procedures. The TA was aligned with the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 (AEC 2025) and its Trade Facilitation Strategic Action Plan. The TA was consistent with ADB's development agenda on regional integration under ADB's Strategy 2020 and built on previous ADB support for transport and trade facilitation in Southeast Asia.<sup>1</sup>

### Expected Impact, Outcome, and Outputs

The expected impact of the TA was enhanced trade facilitation in Southeast Asia through more efficient border procedures. The expected outcome was improved trade facilitation regimes in participating ASEAN member countries. The TA had three expected outputs: (i) TRS recommendations implemented, (ii) new TRSs conducted, and (iii) TRS implementation strategy strengthened.

### Implementation Arrangements

ADB, through its Southeast Asia Department, was the executing agency for the TA. ADB worked closely with the customs administrations in participating ASEAN member countries, which served as the implementing agencies. The TA proposed to engage a total of 76 person-months of consultancy inputs (three international consultants for 28 person-months, and five national consultants for 48 person-months). Overall, the TA delivered a total of 58 person-months of consultancy inputs. This comprised 23 person-months of international consultants' inputs: (i) trade facilitation specialist, team leader (22 person-months); and (ii) trade facilitation specialist (1 person-month); and 35 person-months of national consultants' inputs if these inputs are provided by two individual consultants with project administration expertise (one for 11 person-months and other for 24 person-months). In addition, resource persons were engaged to undertake various studies, and act as moderators and facilitators in workshops and meetings to cover the gap left by the trade facilitation specialist and team leader who resigned from the TA. All consultants and resource persons were engaged using the individual consultants' selection method. The undisbursed amount of \$242,993 reflected savings from the consulting services budget (77% utilized), surveys (0% utilized), and the miscellaneous TA administration budget (4% utilized). The requirements for surveys were changed in the implementation as the information is available in the TRS reports published by the participating countries with the support of the TA. The actual workshop expenses exceeded the original allocation of \$56,000 by 116% to accommodate requests from the implementing agencies.

### Conduct of Activities

The original implementation period was from April 2017 to March 2020. The TA was extended to 31 March 2021 to provide time for it to deliver the remaining activities. Minor changes in implementation arrangements included the: (i) expansion of the TA to cover the Brunei Darussalam–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA); and (ii) the addition of a project administration consultant to provide logistics support. During TA implementation, priority areas of support were discussed based on the actual needs and priorities in each participating country and subregion: Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and BIMP-EAGA. Since March 2020, just after the extension of the TA, implementation was seriously hampered by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic which

<sup>1</sup> ADB. 2014. *Midterm Review of Strategy 2020: Meeting the Challenges of a Transforming Asia and Pacific*. Manila.

posed huge operational challenges to the project. The pandemic limited the planned in-person support, which was replaced with remote assistance, and severely weakened the implementation capacity of the participating countries, who provided only a skeleton workforce focusing mostly on urgent pandemic responses. The following were the key activities delivered under each output of the TA.

**Output 1: Time release study recommendations implemented (substantially achieved).** The TA completed most of the planned capacity building activities for the participating customs administrations, except for output 1e, which usually required considerable policy reforms and implementation periods by the participating countries to ensure compliance with the latest international rules and standards on trade facilitation and customs modernization. A series of review missions, consultations with government counterparts and field visits to selected border crossing points was conducted in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines to review the current trade procedures as well as their operations and its systems. To develop an authorized economic operator (AEO)<sup>2</sup> program, the TA engaged a WCO-accredited AEO expert as a resource person for Myanmar, the Philippines and BIMP-EAGA. The TA funded a regional AEO workshop for BIMP-EAGA (March 2019) and a national AEO workshop for the Philippines (December 2019). Subsequently, the Philippines officially launched an AEO program (December 2019) to comply with the Customs Memorandum Order and the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE). For Myanmar, the resource person reviewed a draft standard operational procedure on AEO in conformity with the SAFE (August 2020). To facilitate Myanmar's implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), the TA engaged a resource person to conduct a comprehensive gap assessment on the relevant provisions (Article 1.2 and 10.9) of the TFA and the RKC. A draft revision of the Customs Act of Myanmar was presented through video conferences (August 2020). To effectively monitor cross-border movements of transit cargoes in Cambodia, the TA engaged a resource person to undertake a feasibility study of cargo tracking systems in Cambodia. The feasibility study was finalized in March 2021 and identified the best model for Cambodia, including the ASEAN Customs Transit System.

**Output 2: New time release studies conducted (achieved).** The TA helped the participating customs administrations conduct a TRS in line with the latest international standards. To effectively undertake the TRS and related activities, the TA engaged three WCO-accredited TRS experts as resource persons. They provided practical and technical guidance on the methodology based on the latest WCO TRS Guide (Version 3). In preparation for the study, the TA funded three national TRS workshops for Cambodia (September 2019), Myanmar (April 2018), and the Philippines (June 2018). In addition, a regional workshop for BIMP-EAGA was also organized (November 2018). In these preparatory workshops, the customs administrations, other government agencies (OGAs), key stakeholders, including the private sector and development partners, worked together to understand the TRS data requirements and methodologies and share their involvement in trade processes and procedures. Hands-on support by the TA and the WCO TRS experts enabled them to process the remaining TRS activities in compliance with the TRS cycle. This included collection and recording of TRS data, designing questionnaires, use of WCO software, and drafting the TRS final report. Eventually, three TRS reports for Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines were finalized (2019). They identified bottlenecks in the trade flow processes and provided policy recommendations to improve trade procedures and processes. For improved transparency and wider dissemination, the TA also provided translation services to publish these reports in English on the customs websites (2020).

**Output 3: Time release study implementation strategy strengthened (partly achieved).** The TA provided advisory support to strengthen the capacity of the TRS working groups which were formally established in the participating countries to oversee TRS activities, including implementation and coordination between all the parties involved. Although the original plan of output 3a was to have a trade facilitation implementation committee, comprising representatives of customs, OGAs, and key private sector stakeholders in the participating countries, this did not materialize. In line with the needs and priorities of the participating countries, the TA focused its support on the TRS working groups to assist TRS implementation. To help alleviate the implementation challenges, especially in the midst of the pandemic in 2020, remote communications through video conferences were frequently used to address the technical difficulties encountered by the TRS working groups. In the process of drafting the TRS 2019 reports, the TA provided inputs to the working groups on: (i) how to incorporate a national action plan into the TRS reports; and (ii) how to organize a TRS exit conference and to invite the participants while ensuring safety protocols were met. For these consultations, the TA had to pay close attention to the evolving situation of COVID-19 in cooperation with the ADB resident missions while exercising maximum flexibility to accommodate the countries' emergent pandemic responses. Eventually, through a series of consultations with these participating countries, ADB and Cambodia decided to co-host a virtual TRS exit conference in July 2020, where the results of the TRS exercises were presented, bottlenecks were identified, recommendations laid out, and a national action plan endorsed.

<sup>2</sup> An AEO is a party involved in the international movement of goods in whatever function that has been approved by or on behalf of a national Customs administration as complying with WCO or equivalent supply chain security standards. (Source) AEO Validator Guide, World Customs Organization (WCO), <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/aeo-validatorguide.pdf?la=en>.

### Technical Assistance Assessment Ratings

Criterion	Assessment	Rating
Relevance	The TA was largely aligned with ASEAN's development strategies and ADB's regional strategy to promote trade facilitation in the region. The results chain was well developed with no major deficiencies in the TA design. The rationale of the TA was generally articulated.	Relevant
Effectiveness	The TA results as originally planned were not fully met. The intended outcome indicator was not likely to be achieved due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted global supply chains. Moreover, while six of the eight output indicators were achieved with delays, any improvements in trade processes and procedures in the participating countries could not be confirmed, which hindered the achievement of the outcome indicator.	Less than effective
Efficiency	The TA was extended by 1 year to accommodate the additional support requested by the participating countries under the pandemic. The budget was only 76% utilized due to the limitations on recruitment and on-site missions, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The socioeconomic benefits of the TA included identifying bottlenecks to increasing international trade and promoting trade facilitation which could be beneficial for all traders, including women.	Efficient
Overall Assessment	The TA was relevant and efficient which contributed to ASEAN's trade facilitation initiatives. The TA also provided efficient support with a 1 year extension and was within the budget. Deficiencies in the criterion of the effectiveness pulled the weighed performance rating down. Nevertheless, the overall rating is still above 1.65.	Successful
Sustainability	The benefits of the activities under the TA will likely continue after the project implementation. The improved institutional capacities and strong ownership of government officials, including members of the TRS working groups, will lead to a subsequent TRS and trade facilitation measures if appropriate resources are allocated under the prolonged pandemic.	Likely sustainable

### Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Design and/or planning	<p><i>Lesson.</i> Early identification of priority support areas during the design stage helped increase efficiency and produced better results. Confirmation of these priority areas during the implementation period also enabled the TA to provide more focused support with limited resources.</p> <p><i>Recommendation.</i> It is essential to identify the needs and priority of support in each participating country during project design. For any regional TA, ADB should assess individual country needs so it can provide country-specific assistance.</p>
Implementation and/or delivery	<p><i>Lesson.</i> The TA responded flexibly as the COVID-19 pandemic increased uncertainty and became a major constraint on the implementation of planned TA activities. The TA made the best use of information technology, including video conferences, to maintain momentum, and to accommodate most of the emergency needs of the participating countries by adjusting the planned activities.</p> <p><i>Recommendation.</i> ADB should exercise maximum flexibility in the design and implementation of TA projects to adapt unforeseen circumstances.</p>
Management of staff and consultants	<p><i>Lesson.</i> Face-to-face communication remains key to building smooth relationships with counterparts and to establishing cohesive teams. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person support through missions, workshops and training, and onsite visits were canceled. While remote communication has advantages in cost-saving and timeliness, the conventional face-to face format remains an effective means to nurture mutual understanding and maintain solid networks.</p> <p><i>Recommendation.</i> A hybrid format of communication combining face-to-face and online should be explored to help foster a relationship of trust with the beneficiary countries and within the TA team members.</p>

Knowledge building	<p><i>Lesson.</i> Greater transparency in knowledge products enhances the benefit of such products to both the public and private sectors. The TRS reports published on the implementing agency websites in English (Appendix 3) were key knowledge products. Specifically, the TRS report of Cambodia was actively discussed by public and private stakeholders at the TRS exit conference. These publications help domestic and international traders to understand current trade procedures, bottlenecks and provide possible solutions for border agencies to implement.</p> <p><i>Recommendation.</i> To improve the predictability and to maintain the momentum of policy reforms in governments, the TRS reports should continue to be published for the entire international trade community.</p>
Stakeholder participation	<p><i>Lesson.</i> The TA actively engaged private stakeholders to promote and facilitate international trade. Stakeholders in international trade are complex, ranging from parts of the public sector, including customs and OGAs, to the private sector, one of the major drivers of promoting trade facilitation but often left out of such activities. The TA provided several occasions for private stakeholders to come together, such as at TRS workshops and exit conferences, to express their views and discuss possible solutions through group discussions.</p> <p><i>Recommendation.</i> Although the involvement of the private sector was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ADB should provide further opportunities for the sector to actively engage in these issues to promote trade facilitation from the standpoint of the international traders.</p>
Partnership {and cofinancing}	<p><i>Lesson.</i> A close relationship with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was key to the success of the ASEAN projects on trade facilitation. Throughout the implementation of the TA, it was reaffirmed that JICA is one of the prominent development partners in this area with a strong presence in ASEAN. The TA often involved JICA staff resident in ASEAN customs authorities through formal and informal meetings to exchange views, share information, and coordinate activities, which created synergy in promoting trade facilitation in the region. The use of Japanese WCO-accredited experts as resource persons allowed the TA to enhance its technical support in trade facilitation and Japanese visibility (Appendix 4)</p> <p><i>Recommendation.</i> Foster close cooperation and coordination with key development partners and accredited experts in the area of trade facilitation in future projects.</p>
Replication and/or scaling up	<p><i>Lesson.</i> Strong country ownership is a major driver of implementing reforms and improving policy. The TRS exercises will be more meaningful if they are conducted regularly to ensure a steady implementation of policy recommendations. The TA provided technical support through workshops and training for the TRS working groups so they could become familiar with TRS methodologies in line with the latest international standards. This enabled participating countries to continue TRS exercises by themselves.</p> <p><i>Recommendation.</i> ADB should encourage the participating countries to exercise self-help efforts to continue TRS on a regular basis with a high level of ownership in order to effectively implement policy recommendations.</p>
Post-TA financial resources	<p><i>Lesson.</i> Unexpected savings were generated in the JFPR funding mainly due to sudden departure of the consultant. Under the prolonged pandemic, the demand to promote trade facilitation in ASEAN including reactivation of international supply chains is likely to remain strong, but available financial and human resources will be severely limited to in both the ADB and the beneficiaries.</p> <p><i>Recommendations.</i> ADB should ensure the surplus is utilized effectively and in a timely manner on trade facilitation in the region, with a thorough identification of the needs and priorities of developing countries.</p>

### Follow-up Actions

The participating countries should fully implement the policy recommendations included in the TRS 2019 reports to address the identified bottlenecks in close cooperation with relevant border agencies, including customs, key stakeholders and development partners. TRSs should be carried out regularly and their results disseminated. This will help both the governments and key stakeholders as well as development partners to monitor and evaluate the implementation and further promote trade facilitation in the region.

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## DESIGN AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Impact: Trade facilitation in Southeast Asia enhanced in terms of efficiency of border procedures		
Results Chain	Performance Indicators with Targets and Baselines	Achievements
<b>Outcome</b>  Trade facilitation regimes in participating ASEAN member countries improved	Transaction time at borders reduced by at least 10% by 2020 (2016 baseline: latest TRS data)	<p><b>Not achieved.</b> It was unlikely the targeted outcome indicator could have been met by 2020. Although the TRS 2019 can be used as baseline data to assess the level of trade facilitation in the participating countries, the TA was unable to complete all of the planned activities within the targeted dates. Moreover, in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global supply chains, which included restrictive measures and border closures, leading to an increase in trade cost.</p> <p>Source: An Updated Assessment of the Economic Impact of COVID-19 (ADB Brief 133), <a href="https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/604206/adb-brief-133-updated-economic-impact-covid-19.pdf">https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/604206/adb-brief-133-updated-economic-impact-covid-19.pdf</a></p>
<b>Outputs</b>  1. TRS recommendations implemented	<p>1a. Legislation reviewed for compliance with the latest international standards for cross-border control by 2018 (2016 baseline: none)</p> <p>1b. Strategies to enhance customs IT systems and national single window provided by 2018 (2016 baseline: none)</p> <p>1c. Current operations checked against international standards by 2018 (2016 baseline: none)</p> <p>1d. Intelligence and compliance management strategy to align risk management processes designed by 2018 (2016 baseline: none)</p> <p>1e. Current and outdated processes and procedures at checkpoints reviewed and improved by 2018 (2016 none)</p>	<p>1a. <b>Achieved.</b> The Customs Act of Myanmar, and the Philippines Customs Memorandum Order on the AEO program were reviewed to ensure they complied with the relevant provisions of the TFA of WTO and the RKC of WCO in 2020.</p> <p>1b. <b>Achieved.</b> The policy recommendations included in the TRS reports in 2019 in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines provided strategic guidance to improve the use of the existing customs clearance systems and a national single window.</p> <p>1c. <b>Achieved.</b> The findings of the TRS reports in 2019 confirmed the current operations of trade procedures in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines against international standards.</p> <p>1d. <b>Achieved.</b> The AEO is intended to ensure both compliance and supply chain security, the standard operational procedure of Myanmar and Customs Memorandum Order of the Philippines were assessed and found to conform with the WCO SAFE (2020). In addition, a regional AEO workshop was organized for BIMP-EAGA in 2019.</p> <p>1e. <b>Partly achieved.</b> Trade processes and procedures at the checkpoints in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines were carefully analyzed in the TRS report (2019), but improvements could not be confirmed.</p>

Results Chain	Performance Indicators with Targets and Baselines	Achievements
2. New TRSs conducted	2a. Workshop for each participating country organized, and follow-up TRSs and results shared by 2019 (2016 baseline: latest TRS status)	2a. <b>Achieved.</b> Three national TRS workshops in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines and a regional TRS workshop for BIMP-EAGA were organized in 2018 and 2019. The results were published in the TRS report of 2019.
3. TRS implementation strategy strengthened	3a. Trade Facilitation Implementation Committee organized by 2018 (2016 baseline: none)	3a. <b>Not achieved.</b> A trade facilitation implementation committee was organized in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines. The TA provided advisory support to the TRS working groups to ensure implementation of the TRS.
	3b. Stakeholders' partnership strategy adopted by 2018 (2016 baseline: none)	3b. <b>Achieved.</b> At the TRS exit conference in Cambodia in 2020, members of TRS working group, key stakeholders, and development partners completed a national action plan which provided clear direction to implement the TRS recommendations.

#### Actual Key Activities with Milestones<sup>1</sup>

##### 1. TRS recommendations implemented

- 1.1 Reviewed current export and import procedures and operations by customs and other border agencies against international standards in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines (2017–2020).
- 1.2 Provided advisory support for the implementation of the relevant provisions of the WTO TFA in Myanmar (2020)
- 1.3 Assessed pilot AEO programs in Myanmar, and the Philippines to ensure they were aligned with the WCO SAFE (2020).
- 1.4 Conducted a feasibility study on possible cargo tracking systems to identify the best model in Cambodia (2021).

##### 2. New TRSs conducted

- 2.1 Provided advisory support to conduct TRSs for each participating country (2017–2021).
- 2.2 Organized national and regional workshops for TRSs to facilitate implementation (2018–2019).
- 2.3 Finalized three TRS reports to disseminate the results of the TRSs on the websites (2020–2021).

##### 3. TRS implementation strategy strengthened

- 3.1 Provided advisory support to help strengthen the capacity of TRS working groups in the participating countries (2017–2021).
- 3.2 Organized a virtual TRS exit conference with key stakeholders in Cambodia to facilitate implementation of the TRS recommendations and a national action plan (2020).

#### Actual Inputs

Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific: \$1,000,000

AEO = authorized economic operator, COVID-19 = coronavirus disease, RKC = Revised Kyoto Convention, SAFE = Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade, TRS = time release study, WCO = World Customs Organization, WTO = World Trade Organization.  
Source: Asian Development Bank.

<sup>1</sup> Activities in Myanmar were completed in January 2021.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COST

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

Item	Amount		
	Original	Revised	Actual
1. Consultants	820.0	820.0	635.1
2. Training, seminars, and/or conferences	56.0	56.0	121.4
3. Surveys	66.7	66.7	0.0
4. Miscellaneous TA administration	13.3	13.3	0.5
5. Contingency	44.0	44.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,000.0</b>	<b>1,000.0</b>	<b>757.0</b>

TA = technical assistance

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

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

	JFPR	Total Cost
1. Original	1,000.00	1,000.00
2. Revised	1,000.00	1,000.00
3. Actual	757.00	757.00
4. Unused	243.00	243.00

JFPR = Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific  
Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

## INDICATIVE LIST OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

Name of Knowledge Products	Country or Subregion	Information Classification	Details
Reference inventory of WTO TFA Article 1.2	Myanmar	Confidential	For Myanmar, the TA consultant drafted a reference inventory which gathered trade-related information to be published through the internet. This is related to a requirement of Article 1.2 of WTO TFA (August 2020).
Gap assessment on WTO TFA Article 10.9	Myanmar	Confidential	The trade facilitation specialist who participated in the video conference presented a comprehensive gap assessment between Article 10.9 of the WTO TFA and related legislation of Myanmar (August 2020).
Review of AEO legislation	Myanmar	Confidential	The TA engaged a WCO-accredited authorized economic operator (AEO) expert for Myanmar who reviewed AEO legislation against the international standards of the WCO SAFE (August 2020).
Review of AEO legislation	Philippines	Confidential	For the Philippines, the TA engaged a WCO-accredited AEO expert to review AEO legislation against the international standards of the WCO SAFE (December 2019).
TRS report	Myanmar	Public	With the support of the TA, the TRS working group in Myanmar finalized its TRS exercises of 2019 and published them through the following customs website. <a href="https://www.customs.gov.mm/2019%20Time%20Release%20Study%20(TRS)">https://www.customs.gov.mm/2019%20Time%20Release%20Study%20(TRS)</a>
TRS report	Cambodia	Public	With the support of the TA, the TRS working group in Cambodia finalized its TRS exercises in 2019 and published them through the following customs website. <a href="https://api.customs.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Cambodia_TRS_2019_Final-Report_04_08_20_with-DG-Signature.pdf">https://api.customs.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Cambodia_TRS_2019_Final-Report_04_08_20_with-DG-Signature.pdf</a>
TRS report	Philippines	Public	With support of the TA, the TRS working group in the Philippines finalized its TRS exercises of 2019 and published them through the following customs website. <a href="https://www.boc.gov.ph/BOC_TIME_RELEASE_STUDY.pdf">BOC TIME RELEASE STUDY.pdf (customs.gov.ph)</a>
Feasibility Study on cargo tracking system	Cambodia	Confidential	A resource person from a Japanese consulting firm conducted a feasibility study on a cargo tracking system in March 2021 to identify the best model for Cambodia, including the ASEAN Customs Transit System.

Name of Knowledge Products	Country or Subregion	Information Classification	Details
Impacts of COVID-19 on trade sector in BIMP-EAGA	BIMP-EAGA	Confidential	The impacts of COVID-19 on the trade sector in BIMP-EAGA was presented at the customs, immigration, quarantine and security (CIQS) working group and trade and investment facilitation cluster meetings in October 2020.
Consultants' reports	Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines	Internal	To review current trade procedures as well as their operations and IT systems, a series of review missions with key counterparts, and fields visit to border crossing points were conducted in Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Expert views and technical advice were provided in the consultants' reports (2019 to 2020).

AEO = authorized economic operator, SAFE = Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade, TA = technical assistance, TFA = Trade Facilitation Agreement, TRS = time release study, WCO = World Customs Organization, WTO = World Trade Organization.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

## JAPANESE PARTICIPATION IN THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Engagement of Japanese World Customs Organization (WCO)-Accredited Experts

#### 1. Myanmar: Time Release Study (TRS) Workshop, 23–27 April 2018

The Myanmar Customs Department and ADB co-hosted this workshop. Customs, other border agencies, and key stakeholders participated. The technical assistance (TA) project invited a Japanese WCO-accredited TRS expert to present the latest TRS methodology in line with the international standards. The expert also helped to finalize the TRS 2019 report.



#### 2. Cambodia: TRS Exit Conference, 30 July 2020

The General Department of Customs and Exercise of Cambodia (GDCE) and ADB co-hosted this virtual conference in Phnom Penh. It was attended by representatives from the World Customs Organization and Japan International Cooperation Agency. The key outcomes of the 2019 TRS were presented and discussed by over 70 participants from GDCE, other government agencies, development partners, and the private sector. The TA invited a Japanese TRS WCO-accredited expert as a resource person who gave useful interventions on this conference. A Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) expert helped to organize this video conference which took place during the pandemic.





### Activities Conducted in Cooperation with Japanese JICA experts

3. **Philippines: National Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Workshop and Training, 5–6 December 2019**  
ADB co-hosted this workshop with Philippine Bureau of Customs (PBOC) on 5-6 December 2019 to align its program with international standards and best practices. An accredited WCO expert from the Malaysian customs agency was invited to illustrate the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE) framework and to discuss various issues, including benefits of the program with the public sector. As a result, the PBOC officially launched its AEO program in December 2019. For these AEO-related activities, the TA worked in close cooperation with Japanese JICA experts for information sharing, and an exchange of views.



4. **Brunei Darussalam–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA): Regional AEO workshop, 25–28 March 2019**

This 4-day workshop provided AEO training for BIMP-EAGA customs officers to implement the AEO concept in their respective customs administrations. This workshop also served as an awareness programme for the business and trade community on the concept of AEO. It was attended by 30 BIMP-EAGA customs officers and 10 transport operators. A site visit was carried out. A Japanese JICA expert from Malaysia was actively engaged in the workshop.

