

TA COMPLETION REPORT

Division: AEEH

TA No. and Name TA 2948-UZB: Capacity Building in Education Finance			TA Amount Approved 500,000	
			Revised Amount 500,000	
Executing Agency Ministry of Finance Department for the Financing of the Social Sphere			TA Amount Undisbursed 9,946	TA Amount Utilized 490,054
Date			Closing Date	
Approval 17 Dec. 1997	Signing 20 Jan. 1998	Field 8 Mar. 1999	Original Dec. 1999	Actual April 2000
TA Description <ul style="list-style-type: none">In August 1997, Uzbekistan adopted an education sector reform program (the National Program for Personnel Training or NPPT) for implementation in the period 1998-2007. The NPPT is an ambitious plan to reform the contents, methods and structure of education, making them more relevant to the needs of a market economy. Its key feature, in terms of investment needs, is a new education structure, adding three years of compulsory education at senior secondary level. The Government was aware that much of the cost of the reform would have to be met through improved cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the education system and requested technical assistance (TA) to undertake a comprehensive study of the costs and financing of education.				
TA Objectives and Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none">The main purpose of the TA was to identify strategies for improving cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the education system. The TA scope combined consulting services, research studies and staff development activities aimed at (i) carrying out a review of public spending on education, (ii) assessing the financial sustainability of NPPT and recommending funding strategies, and (iii) contributing to strengthening financial management and policy analysis skills of key personnel at the central and local levels of administration.The TA was considered very relevant in its objectives and scope. As this was the first advisory TA in the education sector, work constraints were probably underestimated in the original formulation. Consequently, the workplan and the input mix had to be slightly adjusted.During contract negotiations, the Government requested a change of executing agency, designating the Ministry of Finance (MOF) rather than the Social Complex of the Cabinet of Ministers (COM). (The absorptive capacity of the COM was considered inadequate, a view shared by ADB).				
TA Inputs Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none">Overall, good cooperation was enjoyed from MOF who fulfilled its principal commitments (provision of office space and facilities, logistical and organizational support, access to information). A TA Steering Group was established, composed of senior officials (typically Deputy Ministers) of the main counterpart agencies (COM, MOF, Ministry of Public Education, Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics). However, lengthy working procedures, lack of time availability of MOF senior staff, and frequent changes in counterpart staff have affected work efficiency. Rating of the performance of MOF is thus considered less than satisfactory.The TA was implemented over a period of twelve months (instead of nine). Three ADB missions were fielded for inception (27 April to 07 May 1999), review (14 to 27 September 1999), and final review (01 to 14 February 2000), allowing close supervision of the TA team. ADB performance is considered satisfactory.A number of local constraints tended to slow down the implementation of the TA, including (i) cumbersome local procedures for releasing statistics and budget data that slowed down the research work; (ii) lack of reliability and consistency of data increasing the risk of misinterpretation and wrong analysis; (iii) limited time availability of counterpart staff in Ministries resulting in cancellation, postponement or shortening of important meetings; (iv) need for considerable translation / interpretation services; and (v) general lack of experience and familiarity of officials with work procedures of international agencies.Several contract variations were processed in the course of the TA to adjust inputs to actual needs and more specifically to (i) increase the person-months inputs of the two international consultants; (ii) terminate the services of one domestic consultant considered unsatisfactory; (iii) increase the budget for office operations and translation due to the extended implementation period. TA funds were adequate.				

TA Outputs Evaluation

- The following reports were submitted within acceptable timeframe by the consultants: (i) Inception report, (ii) Phase 1 report, (iii) Interim report, (iv) Draft final report, (v) Final report. The contents and scope of the reports were in accordance with the terms of reference (although the budget process was not investigated). A major benefit of the TA work has been to highlight critical sector reform issues and to facilitate dialogue both between ADB and the Government and among Government agencies. Of major importance was the increased realization among policy makers of the need to assess the feasibility of reform measures, and to work out implementation strategies and monitoring mechanisms.
- In the course of the TA, the capacity building approach was better delineated, moving away from the originally envisaged 'training workshop' approach (not practical in view of the numerous engagements of the main counterparts) to a combination of short working sessions and guidance for conducting focused policy-research studies. The capacity building impact of the TA can be summarized as follows: (i) new terminology was introduced and economic notions and concepts commonly used in modern educational planning were clarified and disseminated; (ii) a core group of national experts gained knowledge about methodologies and techniques for data collection, processing and analysis; (iii) senior officials (including some TA Steering Group members) gained awareness of educational reform processes in other countries through a study tour to UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (Paris, France) and Fontys University, Netherlands.
- Client satisfaction with the TA outputs can be assessed in several ways. On the one hand, Government officials initially tended to reject policy recommendations that appeared critical of NPPT, especially on grounds of financial sustainability. On the other hand, the TA reports generated substantial interest and debate, especially at the local level. The final TA seminar was a major forum for openly discussing concerns raised by the NPPT.

TA Overall Assessment and Rating

- The TA can be rated as successful in achieving its objectives in terms of depth of sector work and national capacity development (albeit at a very small scale). It was also very instrumental in fostering the sector policy dialogue between ADB and the Government. This dialogue served as the main foundation for the formulation of the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) whose processing started in June 2000. The TA largely contributed to the revision, in mid-2001, of NPPT along the lines of some TA recommendations (expanding the implementation time frame, revising quantitative targets in line with funding potential, achieving cost-efficiency gains by reviewing resource allocation norms). It thus had a lasting and sustainable impact on policy developments in the education sector.

Major Lessons Learned

- As a result of the local constraints highlighted above, a substantial amount of the international consultants' time tended to be devoted to 'non productive' or organizational tasks, reducing the time available to carry out substantive work for which their expertise was required.
- Inputs of young local support staff (translators / interpreters, secretaries, research assistants) with good English skills, recruited on an 'ad hoc' basis by the consultants, have proven critical for the success of the TA. Their versatility and willingness to gain hands-on experience allow them to provide qualified professional services. In fact, the distinction between domestic consultants, identified by the consulting firms or recommended by the Government, and support staff in terms of actual functions and tasks performed often tended to disappear.
- Some simple recommendations can be made to improve the design of similar TAs in the country, including (i) ensuring understanding of the TA terms of reference through clarification of economic concepts often poorly comprehended, translated or interpreted; (ii) setting more realistic timeframes and phasing of activities, allowing sufficient time for translation of reports and in-depth review by national counterparts; (iii) agreeing with the executing agency, at an early stage, on mechanisms and procedures for accessing readily available information; (iv) seeking the assistance of the resident mission in screening domestic consultants; (v) allowing the flexible use of local bilingual personnel who are easily trainable and highly productive.

Follow-Up Action and Recommendations

- Follow-up actions are being discussed in the framework of the ESDP preparation. These include in-depth studies on staff deployment (organizational audit of the education administration, school mapping exercise), further revisions of expansion plans of the senior secondary education (rationalization of boarding facilities), and pro-poor budget reallocations (targeting of scholarships at the tertiary level, supplementary transfers of resources to the poorest areas).