

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SAAE

TA No. and Name TA 5866-REG: Fourth Agriculture and Natural Resources Research at CGIAR Centers: Building Performance-Based Management Systems in the National Agricultural Research Systems in Asia			Amount Approved: \$800,000	
			Revised Amount:	
Executing Agency: International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR)		Source of Funding: TASF	TA Amount Undisbursed \$55,865	TA Amount Utilized \$744,135
Date Approval Signing Fielding of Consultants 14 Oct 1999 1 Jan 2000 n/a			Completion Date	
			Original 31 Dec 2002	Actual 31 July 2003
			Closing Date	
			Original 30 Dec 2002	Actual 4 February 2005
Description				
<p>A slowdown in technology generation and dissemination by research and extension agencies has been observed in recent years due to these agencies' poor performance. Organizational performance, defined as the ability of National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) to effectively and efficiently generate relevant outputs, is severely constrained by management weaknesses and affected by the environment in which the organizations operate. The International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), established in 1979 with a research mandate to assist developing countries to improve performance and organization of NARS, identified some of the principal challenges and demands facing public sector agricultural research: (i) the need for innovation in research management, governance, and organization; (ii) changing market forces that affect technology needs; (iii) threats to the environment and natural resources; (iv) responsiveness to producers; (v) participation of producers and stakeholders in planning; and (vi) effective partnerships with the private sector in providing agricultural research and services. The current challenges require a reorientation, from the traditional focus on managing inputs, to the achievement of outputs and results.</p> <p>To position themselves to perform effectively in the current economic situation, the research organizations need to confront some key issues: (i) changes in the economic and institutional environment that require strategic responses and adjustments; (ii) research and service outputs that are responsive to farmers and other users; (iii) changes in roles and responsibilities in relation to other players in research and extension, such as the private sector, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and universities; (iv) centralization or decentralization in planning and implementing research; (v) effective strategic alliances, linkages, and coordination with other organizations in the public, private, and voluntary sectors; (vi) innovative, performance-based modes of governance and management; and (vii) accountability to users and investors through effective participation of stakeholders. In this context, ISNAR research and experience with organizational performance assessment and enhancement was proposed to be used to adapt and implement tested performance-oriented assessment systems in selected Asian research institutions as a foundation for regularly assessing and improving management and performance.</p>				
Objectives and Scope				
<p>The sector goal of the project was to enhance the performance of public agricultural research organizations to deliver relevant research outputs. The project purpose was to strengthen the capacity of selected agricultural research organizations in Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam and Sri Lanka by improving key management processes that affect performance and by assessing governance.</p> <p>The project introduced performance-oriented management improvements to organizations that were selected in consultation with research leaders in participating countries. Five components through which practical improvements can be made in research performance were addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) establishing an organizational performance assessment system (OPAS) that enables managers to periodically evaluate, measure and report research outputs, results, and management effectiveness;(ii) implementing strategic planning to position organizations in response to changes in producers' needs, and in their institutional and economic environments;(iii) creating a staff performance assessment system that provides managers a means to improve productivity, both individual and organizational;(iv) developing partnerships and linkages with procedures that result in agreements between partners on shared objectives, benefits and costs; and(v) governance case studies to improve accountability, oversight and coordination, and decentralization of decision-making.				

Evaluation of Inputs

The project design was relevant, budget was adequate, and it was well supported by ADB, both through review missions and regular communication between ISNAR and ADB staff. ADB's responsiveness was recognized as effective and prompt throughout the TA, and as having contributed to successful completion of the TA, and may be rated as highly satisfactory. ISNAR brought in adequate expertise in agricultural research management and performance assessment and evaluation methods, and performed satisfactorily. Additional expertise was brought in from the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). Implementation problems were few, but there were some delays due to security concerns in Pakistan (after September 11, 2001), as well as delays in outputs from AIM. The scope of the TA was somewhat demanding in relation to the planned time frame, and a budget-neutral time extension of four months was sought and approved.

Evaluation of Outputs

The TA outputs were comprehensive and in some cases exceeded the TA framework targets. The work plans agreed upon with NARS leaders in each country were achieved or exceeded. Major achievements of the TA include:

- (i) introduction, implementation and dissemination of new, advanced management tools: an OPAS, advanced strategic planning and priority setting methods, and partnership and linkage planning methods;
- (ii) analysis of existing staff performance assessment systems and the development of improved systems;
- (iii) extensive involvement (for the first time in each organization) of internal and external stakeholders in workshops and working sessions, resulting in greatly improved communications and transparency within participating research organizations, and between the research organization and other partners;
- (iv) establishment of institutional capacity to sustain the new methods and approaches, through experienced national teams that participated in their implementation;
- (v) case studies of governance related to research organizations in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Vietnam that assess the situation and indicate improvements;
- (vi) analysis of decentralization of Assessment Institutes for Agricultural Technology organizations in Indonesia, and development of a decision-support system to aid the decentralization process; and
- (vii) public goods in the form of publications, method guidelines, and reports related to each project component, and their availability through a website and mailings.

Dissemination of project information, guidelines and reports was achieved through a website (<http://www.isnar.cgiar.org/pbms/>), distribution of documents, presentations, national working sessions and workshops, and regional workshops. The outputs were produced efficiently and within budget. Participating DMCs were highly satisfied with the outputs, and proposed continuing such support (a follow-on TA was proposed, but could not be funded by ADB).

Overall Assessment and Rating

The project had a successful outcome in relation to its purpose; i.e., strengthening the management capacity of selected research organizations in Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. The basic objectives or targets agreed upon with NARS leaders in each country were achieved or exceeded. The TA is rated as successful.

Major Lessons Learned

Active involvement of public and private sector stakeholders in decision-making, planning, and implementation of agricultural research improves transparency, communication, and relevance of the research.

Policy changes are needed to support decentralization of research functions, and to institutionalize reward systems based on performance and merit.

TA closing was delayed because of time taken to account for equipment handing over at the end of the TA, complicated by the fact that ISNAR had meanwhile been disbanded as an institute. TA agreements should clearly state responsibilities and procedures for accounting and handover of equipment at the end of the TA

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

ADB regional and country strategies need to provide explicit links between projects in the agriculture sector and the outcomes of TAs such as these in the area of institutional capacity building and governance improvements.