



Technical Assistance Report

Project Number: 46071
Regional—Policy and Advisory Technical Assistance (R-PATA)
December 2013

Implementing the Greater Mekong Subregion Human Resource Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan (Phase 2) (Cofinanced by the Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund and the People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund)

Asian Development Bank

ABBREVIATIONS

ACTFA	–	Academic Credit Transfer System Framework for Asia
ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	–	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUN	–	ASEAN University Network
CTS	–	credit transfer system
GMS	–	Greater Mekong Subregion
HRD	–	human resource development
Lao PDR	–	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MRF	–	mutual recognition framework
RIHED	–	Regional Center for Higher Education and Development
SEAMEO	–	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SFAP	–	strategic framework and action plan
TVET	–	technical and vocational education and training
TA	–	technical assistance
WGHRD	–	Working Group on Human Resource Development

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CLASSIFICATION

Type	–	Regional—Policy and advisory technical assistance (R-PATA)
Targeting classification	–	General intervention
Sector (subsectors)	–	Education (technical education and vocational skills training, tertiary and higher education), health and social protection (social protection)
Themes (subthemes)	–	Social development (human development), regional cooperation and integration (other regional public goods), gender equity (human capabilities), capacity development (institutional development, organizational development)
Location (impact)	–	Regional (high), national (medium), rural (low), urban (low)
Partnership	–	Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund and the People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund

NOTE

In this report, "\$" refers to US dollars.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 11th meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD), held in Yangon, Myanmar in November 2012, discussed the draft GMS Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP), 2013–2017. At the meeting the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was also requested to provide regional technical assistance (TA) to support the implementation of the action plan's key activities. The SFAP, 2013–2017 was endorsed by the GMS ministers at the 18th GMS Ministerial Conference in December 2012.¹ The TA will contribute to achieving the objectives of ADB's Regional Cooperation and Integration Strategy² as well as the GMS Strategic Framework, 2012–2022.³ The TA will take into account emerging regional issues and multisector links, priorities, and initiatives in the HRD sector that support and reinforce the focus on the economic corridor development approach in the GMS. The TA will focus on three of the seven strategic thrusts of the SFAP, 2013–2017 (para. 7). The design and monitoring framework is in Appendix 1.⁴

II. ISSUES

2. Economic growth in the GMS has been rapid, averaging 6% per annum in recent years, despite economic shocks in 2008. However, growth has been unbalanced within the subregion and may possibly slowdown in the future. There are also substantial differences in the levels of income among the GMS countries and in the degrees of social sector development. Cooperation in HRD can contribute to broad economic growth and sustainable social development within the GMS. It can also address problems and needs arising from increased regional connectivity and integration in other sectors, and facilitate the process of further integration by harmonizing HRD policies, procedures, and regulations in critical areas. The TA will address selected priority HRD issues and challenges identified in the SFAP, 2013–2017,⁵ which include (i) the absence of harmonized frameworks in GMS countries for promoting the free flow of skilled labor and student mobility across borders, and (ii) a further need to strengthen an HRD cooperation mechanism in the GMS. Cross-border skilled labor will help fill skill gaps, and has the potential to yield substantial economic benefits to GMS countries while promoting poverty reduction by providing income-earning opportunities to the poor.

3. GMS cooperation and integration in many sectors creates a need for increased human resource capacity in many areas. This need is echoed in the Association of Southeast Asian

¹ ADB. 2013. *Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Human Resource Development in the Greater Mekong Subregion, 2013–2017*. Manila. The six GMS countries are Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

² ADB. 2006. *Regional Cooperation and Integration Strategy*. Manila.

³ ADB. 2011. *The Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework, 2012–2022*. Manila.

⁴ The TA first appeared in the business opportunities section of ADB's website on 14 November 2013.

⁵ ADB addresses cross-border and regional health issues such as communicable disease control under the ongoing GMS Communicable Disease Control Project (Phase 2). In collaboration with the GMS Working Group on Agriculture, the World Health Organization tackled the issue of cross-border trade in contaminated food and fake and/or substandard drugs. Concerns regarding the social impact of rapid growth and subregional integration in the GMS economic corridors are being addressed by ADB and development partners. HIV prevention components are included in ADB infrastructure projects and TA. Other development partners—such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the GMS, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime—address concerns related to the prevention of human trafficking, particularly cross-border trafficking of women and children, due to increased labor migration across borders in the GMS.

Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community blueprint, which calls for the free flow of skilled labor across borders.⁶ However, a significant barrier to cross-border labor mobility is the absence of harmonized frameworks in GMS countries for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education. Subregional harmonization can facilitate the cross-border flow of workers and students. While making use of opportunities for HRD cooperation in the subregion, GMS HRD harmonization activities should build on ASEAN agreements such as the ASEAN mutual recognition arrangement framework. Under TA for Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (Phase 1),⁷ a framework of mutual recognition of skills and qualifications in three skill areas (welding, automotive technology, and housekeeping) was tested and validated in some TVET institutions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Thailand, and Viet Nam. However, there is a need to further develop such a framework, to be agreed upon by the six GMS countries.

4. Increasing student mobility among reputable universities in the GMS would facilitate the free flow of skilled labor. Harmonization of higher education in the GMS in the area of internal university quality assurance and the development of a common credit transfer system (CTS) has been initiated in collaboration with the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization–Regional Center for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO–RIHED) under Phase 1. The internal quality assurance capacity of universities needs to be further strengthened by providing training to university personnel, including management and administration staff and faculty members who will be trainers of university quality assurance personnel in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Myanmar. The university quality assurance system will use the AUN Quality Assurance system as a regional platform. While existing systems and schemes of credit transfer were surveyed under Phase 1, a common CTS needs to be developed, piloted, and assessed. Promoting the networking of GMS universities, with facilitation by SEAMEO–RIHED, can help achieve this.

5. A key lesson from the implementation of the SFAP, 2009–2012 and Phase 1 is that more effective monitoring and implementation is needed at the country level to ensure the successful implementation of the SFAP, 2013–2017.⁸ Phase 1 has helped strengthen cooperation and coordination of GMS HRD initiatives by supporting the WGHRD and subsector working group meetings. At this point, national HRD working groups need to be established, coordinated by finance or planning ministries and agencies of GMS countries. Developing, implementing, and monitoring national HRD action plans will also help advance GMS HRD initiatives at the country level. Another important lesson is that the involvement of key development partners in GMS HRD initiatives needs to be strengthened and deepened in order to make significant impact at the regional policy level. For example, GMS higher education harmonization and networking requires closer collaboration with the AUN and SEAMEO–RIHED.

⁶ ASEAN. 2008. *ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint*. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat.

⁷ ADB. 2009. *Technical Assistance for Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (Phase 1)*. Manila (TA 7275-REG, \$1.25 million, approved on 29 April).

⁸ The SFAP, 2009–2012 was supported by Phase 1. The TA has four outputs: (i) strengthened subregional institutional arrangements for HRD cooperation; (ii) an agreed framework for mutual recognition of skills and qualifications; (iii) improved labor market information system and labor migration management programs; and (iv) completed social impact assessments along GMS economic corridors. Under (i), the TA supported the four WGHRD meetings, and subsector working group meetings. Under (ii), a framework for mutual recognition of three skills and qualifications in the GMS was piloted. Under (iii), the labor migration awareness campaign for migrant workers and communities in Cambodia and the Lao PDR was conducted by the International Organization for Migration. Under (iv), the TA conducted an HRD assessment in Myanmar and filled information and data gaps on HIV and migrant workers in the GMS. Achievements and lessons from Phase 1 are in Supplementary Appendix A.

III. THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A. Impact and Outcome

6. The impact of the TA will be the increased flow of skilled labor in the GMS. The TA outcome will be strengthened HRD cooperation in the GMS.

B. Methodology and Key Activities

7. Building on the gains of past initiatives and recognizing the lessons learned, the TA will intensify support to the GMS HRD program while working more closely with GMS countries and development partners. The TA outputs will address three strategic thrusts of the SFAP, 2013–2017: (i) improved cooperation in TVET, (ii) improved cooperation in higher education, and (iii) strengthened national implementation and monitoring of the SFAP. A major assumption is strong commitment by GMS governments to achieve subregional cooperation in HRD, while a major risk is negative economic, political, and social impacts of economic slowdown.

8. **Output 1: Improved cooperation in technical and vocational education and training.** A regional framework for the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications in the GMS (phase 2) will be developed and piloted. This activity will build on earlier work to develop a skills and qualifications recognition framework for three skills (welding, automotive technology, and domestic housekeeping) in the Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam (phase 1). Under the TA, a framework will be developed for recognizing three additional skills and qualifications that are most critical in the development of the economic corridors, and at least one of these skill areas will focus on the poor and maximize opportunities for female employment and participation. Second, a system for the mutual recognition of training standards for TVET teachers and trainers will be developed in the three key skill areas (the same as the three additional skill areas in the mutual recognition framework) of greatest importance for the development of the economic corridors.⁹

9. **Output 2: Improved cooperation in higher education.** GMS higher education harmonization and networking (phase 2) will be implemented. Based on the achievements in phase 1 and lessons and experience from other regions and subregions in Europe and Central Asia,¹⁰ this activity will collaborate with the AUN in further strengthening the university (internal) quality assurance capacity in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Myanmar,¹¹ and with SEAMEO–RIHED in (i) developing the Academic Credit Transfer System Framework for Asia (ACTFA) in GMS universities by providing options for harmonizing existing CTs in selected fields to ensure applicability throughout Southeast Asia, and (ii) promoting GMS university networking by supporting the start-up of the GMS University Consortium.¹²

⁹ The regional frameworks for the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications and training standards for TVET teachers and trainers will draw lessons from countries with relevant experience, such as the People's Republic of China, through knowledge sharing and will be utilized in a proposed GMS TVET project listed in the Regional Investment Framework HRD sector pipeline.

¹⁰ Activities under phase 1 included support for conducting initial workshops for capacity development of university (internal) quality assurance in collaboration with the AUN, and mapping the existing credit transfer systems and schemes involving universities in the GMS in collaboration with SEAMEO–RIHED.

¹¹ Viet Nam will be excluded from the activity on strengthening university (internal) quality assurance capacity since it has a relatively well-developed quality assurance system, which was supported by the World Bank.

¹² The AUN comprises 30 leading and/or first-tier universities in ASEAN. At present, a systematic mechanism to build synergy among universities in the GMS is lacking. The GMS University Consortium will complement the AUN by involving second-tier universities strategically located in GMS economic corridors. The GMS University Consortium can benefit from strengthened quality assurance capacity and student and faculty exchange with AUN

10. **Output 3: Strengthened national implementation and monitoring of the strategic framework and action plan.** This activity will support country-level implementation of the SFAP, 2013–2017 by national HRD working groups and subgroups, including developing national HRD action plans, monitoring, and annual reporting to the WGHRD meetings on progress in implementation. Annual WGHRD meetings will also be held tentatively in Viet Nam (2014), Cambodia (2015), the People’s Republic of China (2016), and the Lao PDR (2017).

C. Cost and Financing

11. The TA is estimated to cost \$2,050,000, of which (i) \$750,000 will be financed on a grant basis by ADB’s Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF-V), (ii) \$500,000 will be financed on a grant basis by the Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund,¹³ and (iii) \$500,000 will be financed on a grant basis by the People’s Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund administered by ADB. The six GMS governments will provide counterpart support in the form of office accommodation, remuneration of counterpart staff, utilities, and other in-kind contributions. The cost estimates and financing plan are in Appendix 2.

D. Implementation Arrangements

12. The executing agency will be ADB. The implementing agencies will be GMS government ministries responsible for education (TVET and higher education), health, labor and migration, and social development, and selected development partners (AUN and SEAMEO–RIHED). ADB HRD focal point staff will serve as the secretariat to the GMS WGHRD by (i) assuming their responsibility for overseeing the implementation of activities under the TA, and (ii) liaising with GMS government ministries that comprise the WGHRD and its subgroups. Government ministries, as implementing agencies, will coordinate activities of national HRD working groups and host annual WGHRD meetings. The annual WGHRD meetings will be a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of TA activities and setting an overall direction of the GMS HRD work, which will be guided by the GMS senior official meetings and the GMS ministerial conferences. ADB will also collaborate with selected development partners—the AUN and SEAMEO–RIHED—as implementing agencies. The structure of the GMS WGHRD and implementation arrangements are in Supplementary Appendix B.

13. For output 1, the United Nations or other specialized agency, firm, or research institute will be engaged as a consultant to develop (i) a framework for the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications, which are critical to the development of the economic corridors, and (ii) a system for the mutual recognition of training standards for TVET teachers and trainers in the GMS.¹⁴

14. For output 2, the AUN will continue to be engaged as an implementing agency with advance payment facility to strengthen the university (internal) quality assurance capacity. The AUN is a legitimate regional partner to be an implementing agency given that it (i) was established by ASEAN to help strengthen the network of 30 leading universities in ASEAN, including the quality assurance system; (ii) offers a regional platform in the university (internal) quality assurance system called AUN-Quality Assurance with ASEAN standards; and (iii) was engaged as an implementing agency to implement university quality assurance capacity building under Phase 1.

universities. This will help accelerate the harmonization process in higher education in the GMS in quality assurance and credit transfer systems and help universities in the GMS to reach ASEAN or Southeast Asian regional standards.

¹³ Established by the Asian Development Bank.

¹⁴ It is envisaged that the amount to be contracted would be \$0.50 million for output 1, comprising two subprojects.

15. SEAMEO–RIHED will also continue to be engaged as an implementing agency with advance payment facility to pilot and assess the ACTFA in universities in the GMS, and establish the GMS University Consortium as a GMS university networking mechanism. SEAMEO–RIHED is also a legitimate regional partner in administering a common CTS and promoting university networking given that it (i) is one of the SEAMEO regional centers, which specialize in higher education harmonization and networking; (ii) has the experience and respect of governments and higher education institutions in the area of CTS; (iii) was engaged as an implementing agency to implement policy action research on a common CTS under Phase 1; and (iv) offers a neutral position to serve as a secretariat for the GMS University Consortium.

16. For output 3, an individual international consultant will be engaged to assess the implementation progress of the SFAP, 2013–2017. Individual national consultants will also be engaged to support (i) country-level implementation of the SFAP, 2013–2017, including the development of national HRD action plans, monitoring, and annual reporting to WGHRD meetings on progress on implementation; and (ii) the preparation and delivery of annual WGHRD meetings, tentatively to be held in Viet Nam in 2014, Cambodia in 2015, the People's Republic of China in 2016, and the Lao PDR in 2017. Relevant GMS government ministries and agencies as implementing agencies will coordinate activities of national HRD working groups and host annual WGHRD meetings.

17. ADB will recruit the United Nations or other specialized agency, firm, or research institute to be engaged as a consultant under output 1 using quality-based selection, and an international consultant (3 person-months) and national consultants (about 90 person-months for 7 positions) as individual consultants under output 3, in accordance with ADB's Guidelines on the Use of Consultants (2013, as amended from time to time). For the workshops, training, seminars, conferences, surveys, and miscellaneous administration and support costs under the TA, an advance payment facility will be established at the AUN and SEAMEO–RIHED as implementing agencies.¹⁵ TA proceeds will be disbursed in accordance with ADB's *Technical Assistance Disbursement Handbook* (2010, as amended from time to time). It is expected that the TA will commence on 1 January 2014 and be completed on 31 December 2017. The outline terms of reference for consultants are in Appendix 3. ADB will obtain a no-objection letter from the developing member country government before starting any activity financed under this TA in the territory of that country.

IV. THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION

18. The President, acting under the authority delegated by the Board, has approved (i) ADB administering a portion of technical assistance not exceeding the equivalent of \$500,000 to be financed on a grant basis by the People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund, and (ii) ADB providing the balance not exceeding the equivalent of \$1,250,000 on a grant basis, for Implementing the Greater Mekong Subregion Human Resource Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan (Phase 2), and hereby reports this action to the Board.

¹⁵ It is envisaged that the amount to be included in an advance payment facility would be \$0.50 million (\$0.25 million for the AUN and \$0.25 million for SEAMEO–RIHED). Both the AUN and SEAMEO–RIHED have experience and capacity in efficiently using an advance payment facility under Phase 1 and successfully completed the activities and liquidated all the advances on time.

DESIGN AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Design Summary	Performance Targets and Indicators with Baselines	Data Sources and Reporting Mechanisms	Assumptions and Risks
Impact Increased flow of skilled labor in the GMS	By 2022: 10% increase in skilled labor mobility in the GMS compared to the 2013 baseline ¹	Migration and Remittances Fact book Labor Force Surveys	Risk Negative economic, political, and social impact of economic slowdown
Outcome Strengthened HRD cooperation in the GMS	By 2017: Framework on labor mobility developed for consideration by GMS countries Frameworks for university quality assurance and common credit transfer systems developed for consideration by universities in GMS countries	Labor ministry records GMS university records AUN reports SEAMEO–RIHED reports	Assumption Strong commitment by GMS governments to achieving subregional cooperation and integration in HRD
Outputs 1. Improved cooperation in TVET 2. Improved cooperation in higher education	By 2017: A framework for the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications in the GMS developed, with one skill area focused on women's employment and participation A system for mutual recognition of training standards for TVET teachers and trainers developed, with one skill area focused on participation by female TVET teachers and trainers 20 workshops delivered to strengthen university quality assurance in CLM countries, with 40% female participants Options identified, piloted, and assessed for harmonizing existing credit transfer systems	Consultant progress reports Consultant progress reports AUN project monitoring reports SEAMEO–RIHED project monitoring reports	Assumptions Recognition of benefits of subregional technical skills and qualifications by governments, industries, and civil society Strong cooperation by key development partners WGHRD and subgroups maintained Risks The different levels of GMS national programs may hinder reaching agreement within the desired time frame Weak coordination among government ministries and agencies involved in GMS HRD programs

¹ Baseline data will be collected and validated within 6 months of the TA commencement (see para. 4 of Appendix 3).

Design Summary	Performance Targets and Indicators with Baselines	Data Sources and Reporting Mechanisms	Assumptions and Risks																																		
3. Strengthened national implementation and monitoring of the SFAP	<p>GMS University Consortium established with 18–24 universities and start-up activities implemented</p> <p>National HRD working group meetings to monitor and implement national action plans convened on a quarterly basis with 40% female participation in the national HRD working groups</p> <p>WGHRD meetings held annually</p>	<p>SEAMEO–RIHED project monitoring reports</p> <p>Summary reports of national HRD working groups</p> <p>Summary reports of WGHRD meetings</p>																																			
<p>Activities with Milestones</p> <p>Output 1: Improved cooperation in TVET</p> <p>1.1 Engage the consultant (by Q2 2014)</p> <p>1.2 Pilot test three skills standards in countries where they have not been tested (Cambodia, PRC, and Myanmar) (by Q3 2014)</p> <p>1.3 Review pilot test outcomes of other countries (Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam) (by Q4 2014)</p> <p>1.4 Develop and pilot the framework for the mutual recognition of three additional skills and qualifications in the GMS (phase 2) (2015)</p> <p>1.5 Develop a system for the mutual recognition of TVET teacher training standards (2016–2017)</p> <p>Output 2: Improved cooperation in higher education</p> <p>2.1 Establish APF with AUN and SEAMEO–RIHED (by Q1 2014)</p> <p>2.2 Deliver a series of capacity building workshops on university QA systems in CLM countries (2014–2015)</p> <p>2.3 Pilot and assess the Academic Credit Transfer System Framework for Asia (2014–2016)</p> <p>2.4 GMS countries and participating universities agree with the framework for university QA and credit transfer systems (2017)</p> <p>2.5 Conduct launch workshop and start-up activities on the GMS University Consortium (2014)</p> <p>Output 3: Strengthened national implementation and monitoring of the SFAP</p> <p>3.1 Engage individual consultants (by Q2 2014)</p> <p>3.2 Develop national HRD action plans in each of six GMS countries (2014)</p>		<p>Inputs</p> <p>ADB (TASF-V): \$750,000</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="865 919 1442 1178"> <thead> <tr> <th>Items</th> <th>Amount (\$'000)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Consultants</td> <td>516.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Workshops, trainings seminars, conferences</td> <td>210.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Surveys and studies</td> <td>2.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Miscellaneous administration</td> <td>2.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contingencies</td> <td>20.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund: \$500,000</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="865 1268 1442 1493"> <thead> <tr> <th>Items</th> <th>Amount (\$'000)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Workshops, trainings seminars, conferences</td> <td>410.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Surveys and studies</td> <td>30.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Miscellaneous administration</td> <td>10.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contingencies</td> <td>50.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund: \$500,000</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="865 1619 1442 1871"> <thead> <tr> <th>Items</th> <th>Amount (\$'000)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Consultants</td> <td>213.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Workshops, trainings seminars, conferences</td> <td>227.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Surveys and studies</td> <td>5.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Miscellaneous administration</td> <td>5.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contingencies</td> <td>50.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Items	Amount (\$'000)	Consultants	516.00	Workshops, trainings seminars, conferences	210.00	Surveys and studies	2.00	Miscellaneous administration	2.00	Contingencies	20.00	Items	Amount (\$'000)	Workshops, trainings seminars, conferences	410.00	Surveys and studies	30.00	Miscellaneous administration	10.00	Contingencies	50.00	Items	Amount (\$'000)	Consultants	213.00	Workshops, trainings seminars, conferences	227.00	Surveys and studies	5.00	Miscellaneous administration	5.00	Contingencies	50.00
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<p>Activities with Milestones</p> <p>3.3 Organize national workshops to discuss and finalize the national HRD action plans of each of six GMS countries at the 13th GMS WGHRD meeting (2014)</p> <p>3.4 Arrange and conduct WGHRD13 in Viet Nam (2014), WGHRD14 in Cambodia (2015), WGHRD15 in PRC (2016), and WGHRD16 in Lao PDR (2017)</p>	<p>Inputs</p> <p>Six GMS governments will provide counterpart support in the form of office accommodation, remuneration of counterpart staff, utilities, and other in-kind contributions.</p>
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ADB = Asian Development Bank; APF = advance payment facility; ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations; AUN = Asian University Network; CLM = Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar; GMS = Greater Mekong Subregion; HRD = human resource development; Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic; PRC = People's Republic of China; Q = quarter; QA = quality assurance; RIHED = Regional Center for Higher Education and Development; SEAMEO = Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization; SFAP = strategic framework and action plan; TASF = technical assistance special fund; TVET = technical and vocational education and training; WGHRD = Working Group on Human Resource Development.
 Source: Asian Development Bank.

COST ESTIMATES AND FINANCING PLAN

(\$'000)

Item	Amount
A. Asian Development Bank^a	
1. Consultants	
a. Remuneration and per diem	
i. International consultants	60.0
ii. National consultants	396.0
b. International and local travel	50.0
c. Reports and communications	10.0
2. Workshops, trainings, seminars, and conferences	
a. WGHRD and subgroup meetings	200.0
b. Publications	10.0
3. Surveys and studies	2.0
4. Miscellaneous administration and support costs ^b	2.0
5. Contingencies	20.0
Subtotal (A)	750.0
B. Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund^c	
1. Workshops, trainings, seminars, and conferences	
a. Training program	200.0
b. Workshops, seminars, and conference	200.0
c. Publications	10.0
2. Surveys and studies	30.0
3. Miscellaneous administration and support costs ^b	10.0
4. Contingencies	50.0
Subtotal (B)	500.0
C. People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund^d	
1. Consultants	
a. Remuneration and per diem	
International consultants	165.0
b. International and local travel	40.0
c. Reports and communications	8.0
2. Workshops, trainings, seminars, and conferences	
a. Training program	22.0
b. Workshops, seminars, and conferences	200.0
c. Publications	5.0
3. Surveys and studies	5.0
4. Miscellaneous administration and support costs ^b	5.0
5. Contingencies	50.0
Subtotal (C)	500.0
Total	1,750.0

WGHRD = Working Group on Human Resource Development.

Note: The technical assistance (TA) is estimated to cost \$2,050,000 equivalent, of which contributions from the Asian Development Bank, the Regional Cooperation and Integration Fund, and the People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund, are presented in the table above. Six GMS governments will provide counterpart support in the form of office accommodation, remuneration of counterpart staff, utilities, and other in-kind contributions. The value of government contribution is estimated to account for 14.6% of the total TA cost.

^a Financed by the Asian Development Bank's Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF-V).

^b Includes costs of supplies, materials, communication, translation and interpretation, miscellaneous secretarial support, and other operational costs that may arise during the TA implementation.

^c Established by the Asian Development Bank.

^d Administered by the Asian Development Bank.

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

OUTLINE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONSULTANTS

A. Consultants

1. International Consultant

1. An international consultant will implement two activities under output 1 (improved cooperation in technical and vocational education and training [TVET]): (i) a framework for the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) (phase 2), and (ii) a system for the mutual recognition of training standards for TVET teachers and trainers.¹

a. Output 1: Improved Cooperation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training

2. **Framework for the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications in the Greater Mekong Subregion (phase 2).** The activity will build on earlier work (phase 1) undertaken to develop and pilot skills recognition frameworks within the following selected sectors: welding, automotive technology, and domestic housekeeping) under technical assistance (TA) for Implementing the GMS Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategic Framework and Action Plan (Phase 1).² The TA will develop a framework for the mutual recognition of three additional technical skills and qualifications which will be most critical for development of the GMS economic corridors. Further, in building on the outputs of phase 1, this activity will ensure that the knowledge and information developed earlier will be disseminated and supported by advocacy and knowledge-sharing activities. The activity will review the ongoing efforts to set skills standards at the national level, and ensure that the national standards in GMS countries will be used as a basis for developing the mutual recognition framework at the subregional level. The consultant will

- (i) review and assess the current status of the previously established skills standards under the GMS mutual recognition framework (MRF) in phase 1, and revise and update the framework as necessary in consultation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat;
- (ii) pilot test skills standards in countries where they have not been tested (i.e., Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, and Myanmar) and review pilot test outcomes of other countries (i.e., the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam);
- (iii) start phase 2 preparatory activities and identify and validate three additional skills areas for inclusion in the GMS MRF by conducting skills need assessment surveys in the economic corridors, including skills areas that are important for women and girls (e.g., nursing, elderly care, sewing) and nontraditional skills areas (e.g., construction and logistics) to lift gender stereotypes;
- (iv) develop the GMS MRF including three additional skills sets, and draft guidelines, systems, and processes that are in line with intercountry recognition systems and

¹ This consultant will be a United Nations agency or other specialized agency, firm, or research institute. It is envisaged that the amount to be contracted will be \$0.5 million, comprising (i) a framework for the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications in the GMS (phase 2) (\$0.25 million), and (ii) a system for mutual recognition of training standards for TVET teachers and trainers (\$0.25 million). The detailed terms of reference will be developed in consultation with education subgroups of the Working Group on Human Resource Development.

² ADB. 2009. *Technical Assistance for Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (Phase 1)*. Manila. (TA 7275-REG, \$1.25 million, approved on 29 April).

- processes by conducting workshops and consultation meetings with focal government officials and TVET institutions;
- (v) select and train country GMS MRF staff on competency standards and competency-based curriculum, using Regional Model Competency Standards developed by the International Labour Organization and/or other international competency and/or skill standards as benchmarks; and
 - (vi) pilot and assess the GMS MRF, including the three additional skills areas.

3. System for mutual recognition of training standards for technical and vocational education and training teachers and trainers. This activity will complement the work on the GMS MRF by developing a system for the mutual recognition of training standards for TVET teachers and trainers. The work will be based on the outputs of developing and piloting the GMS MRF in selected skills areas (welding, automotive technology, and domestic housekeeping) conducted under phase 1, and will include three additional skills areas to be identified as critical for the development of the economic corridors in the GMS. The consultant will

- (i) map the current situation of training for TVET teachers and trainers in the six GMS countries;
- (ii) review teacher training outcomes of pilot-tested countries (i.e., the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam) and continue the teacher training for countries that have not been pilot-tested (i.e., Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, and Myanmar);
- (iii) identify and develop a comprehensive teacher training program for the mutual recognition system of training for TVET teachers and trainers in the three additional skills areas;
- (iv) draft guidelines, systems, and processes that are in line with intercountry recognition systems and processes by conducting workshops and meetings with focal government officials and TVET teachers and trainers;
- (v) develop training manuals for TVET teachers and trainers in relation to the GMS MRF by including gender sensitivity (e.g., encouragement of women and girls into nontraditional skills areas such as construction and logistics to lift gender stereotypes);
- (vi) select and train country GMS MRF staff in six GMS countries; and
- (vii) conduct competency-based training and assessment training for TVET teachers and trainers in the pilot schools in six GMS countries.

2. Individual International Consultant (3 person-months, intermittent)

a. Output 3: Strengthened National Implementation and Monitoring of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan

4. Regional human resource development cooperation specialist. The specialist will assess the implementation progress of the GMS Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP), 2013–2017.³ The specialist should have at least 10 years of experience in project development and management, policy analysis and research, social development, regional cooperation, and country coordination in the GMS. The specialist should have an advanced degree in development economics, business administration, or other related fields. More specifically, the specialist will

³ ADB. 2013. *Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Human Resource Development in the Greater Mekong Subregion, 2013–2017*. Manila.

- (i) collect and validate the baseline and percentage increases in skilled labor mobility by 2022 (the TA impact performance target and indicator in the TA design and monitoring framework) within 6 months of the TA commencement;
- (ii) analyze current policies and emerging priorities for HRD in the GMS and those priorities identified for the region by the Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD);
- (iii) review strategies and action plans of other GMS sector working groups, especially in tourism and agriculture;
- (iv) consult with WGHRD members; government officials of health, education, and labor ministries; staff at resident missions; and other key stakeholders including development partners, the private sector, and civil society;
- (v) help GMS governments review and identify institutional arrangements to support and sustain HRD cooperation initiatives in general, and the work and the structure of the WGHRD and its subgroups in particular;
- (vi) consult with development partners in ensuring complementary approaches for sustaining efforts for regional cooperation on HRD in the GMS, and identify suitable sources of cofinancing initiatives where possible in support of the SFAP, 2013–2017 and the regional investment framework HRD sector pipeline;
- (vii) attend the WGHRD meetings and provide support as necessary; and
- (viii) prepare the draft midterm and final reports on the implementation progress of the SFAP, 2013–2017 which will be presented at the relevant WGHRD meetings.

3. Individual National Consultants (about 90 person-months)

a. Output 3: Strengthened National Implementation and Monitoring of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan

5. **Human resource development strategy specialist** (36 person-months, intermittent). The specialist will assist the Asian Development Bank (ADB) HRD focal point (TA project team leader) and sector focal points (sector specialists) in conducting reviews and providing advice on the implementation of the SFAP, 2013–2017 and the TA. The specialist should have at least 5 years of experience in project management, policy analysis and research, social development, regional cooperation, and country coordination. The specialist should have an advanced degree in development economics, business administration, education and skills development, or other related fields. More specifically, the specialist will

- (i) assist the ADB HRD focal point and sector focal points in (a) providing technical advice on the development of a national action plan; (b) supporting the work of the WGHRD; (c) supporting country-level implementation of the SFAP, 2013–2017 by national HRD working groups, including the development of national HRD action plans, monitoring, and reporting to the WGHRD on progress in implementation; (d) preparing resource papers and monitoring and updating the national HRD action plan; and (e) planning, conducting, and reporting on activities of the WGHRD and its subgroups, including the WGHRD meetings; and
- (ii) supervise the work of national action planning specialists in preparing the national HRD action plans of six GMS countries and participate in ADB missions as required.

6. **National action planning specialists** (54 person-months [6 persons each for 9 months], intermittent). Each specialist will be responsible for assisting the government ministries in developing a national HRD action plan in one of the six GMS countries. The specialists should have quantitative and qualitative analytical skills and preferably have at least 5 years of

experience in planning, policy analysis and research, social development, national coordination, and regional cooperation. The specialists should have a postgraduate degree in development economics, business, HRD planning, or other related fields and should have good English proficiency and excellent communication and coordination skills. More specifically, the specialists will

- (i) organize and administer national workshops and meetings to discuss and prepare the national HRD action plans of each of six GMS countries; and
- (ii) draft the national HRD action plans in reference to the SFAP, 2013–2017 in coordination with members of the WGHRD and subgroups of the concerned government ministries and agencies.

B. Implementing Agencies

1. Output 2: Improved Cooperation in Higher Education

a. Strengthen Capacity of University Quality Assurance System

7. **Association of Southeast Asian Nations University Network.** The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) University Network (AUN), as an implementing agency, will conduct an activity that will build capacity of university quality assurance in the GMS. The activity aims to strengthen the capacity of university quality assurance systems and personnel in less-developed GMS countries such as Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar (CLM countries) based on the AUN-Quality Assurance system as a platform. The activity will (i) enhance and strengthen the knowledge on quality assurance system implementation and management; (ii) build a large pool of qualified university quality assurance personnel in CLM countries; and (iii) establish a quality assurance system and ensure quality assurance implementation to leverage the quality of higher education in CLM countries. The university quality assurance capacity building is open to CLM participants from both AUN and non-AUN member universities. CLM participants will be trained by AUN-Quality Assurance personnel from AUN member universities. Capacity development will be conducted in the form of training the trainers of university quality assurance personnel. The AUN-Quality Assurance Guide to AUN actual quality assessment at program level will be the main document that is used during the training. More specifically, the AUN will

- (i) prepare an established quality assurance instrument and systems and a quality assurance handbook at each participating university;
- (ii) undertake training of 10 batches of quality assurance personnel (each batch comprising a maximum of 30 participants for a total of 300 quality assurance personnel) who will be able to implement a quality assurance system at their own university or faculty;
- (iii) produce a network of 300 quality assurance personnel who understand quality assurance in their respective countries, and ensure the establishment of an AUN-Quality Assurance network in the GMS with linkage to the ASEAN region;
- (iv) organize three national conferences in each of the CLM countries that aim to bring together most of the trainees experienced in quality assurance system implementation and program assessment and allow them to share experiences and good practices with the expert team; and
- (v) prepare a quality assurance handbook for universities in CLM countries.

b. Pilot and Assess the Academic Credit Transfer System Framework for Asia

8. Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization–Regional Center for Higher Education and Development. As an implementing agency, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization–Regional Center for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO–RIHED) will pilot and assess the Academic Credit Transfer System Framework for Asia (ACTFA). To facilitate student mobility across borders in the GMS, the region’s diverse higher education systems need to be harmonized through a permeable and transparent credit transfer system among universities in the GMS. Encouraging and supporting students to study abroad is a major strategy to develop a well-trained international workforce. ADB has provided SEAMEO–RIHED with funding support under Phase 1 to undertake policy action research to create a regional credit transfer system framework. The action research comprised four phases: explore, experiment, experience, and expand. In the explore phase (Phase 1), SEAMEO–RIHED proposed a regional credit transfer system framework, referred to as the ACTFA. The ACTFA aims to boost student mobility in the region by enhancing the effectiveness and applicability of existing credit transfer systems or schemes. More specifically, SEAMEO–RIHED will

- (i) recruit universities to participate in the pilot project, and coordinate with a focal point of each selected university to discuss the ACTFA and a pilot implementation plan;
- (ii) pilot the ACTFA in the GMS for one to two academic terms (experiment phase);
- (iii) evaluate and share lessons from the pilot project including data and synthesis of lessons learned (experience phase); and
- (iv) disseminate the research results and make the ACTFA available for adoption by universities (expand phase).

c. Greater Mekong Subregion University Networking

9. SEAMEO–RIHED will promote university networking in the GMS which complements the existing AUN with 30 leading (first-tier) universities in Southeast Asia. The objectives of the GMS university networking are to (i) strengthen and accelerate cross-border collaboration among universities located along the economic corridors; (ii) facilitate student and faculty exchange; and (iii) build teaching and research capacity of universities. The GMS university networking will also strengthen governance and management through leadership development programs and improve quality of universities in the GMS, which will help universities in the GMS to reach ASEAN and Southeast Asian regional standards. This GMS university networking can be called the GMS University Consortium and will involve first-tier universities by linking their academic and staff resources with second-tier universities. The GMS University Consortium initially includes 18–24 universities comprising 3–4 universities in each of six GMS countries. The main output under the TA is the initial start-up of the GMS University Consortium by holding its launch seminar. The SEAMEO–RIHED will identify funding from external sources to implement various activities of the GMS University Consortium. More specifically, SEAMEO–RIHED will

- (i) provide the secretariat function of the GMS University Consortium;
- (ii) confirm the initial member universities of the GMS University Consortium;
- (iii) prepare and conduct the launch seminar of the GMS University Consortium by coordinating with the concerned governments, participating universities in the GMS, and partner universities outside the GMS; and
- (iv) explore external funding from governments, development partners, philanthropic foundations, participating GMS universities, and partner universities outside the GMS.