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**PROGRAMME PLANNING AND EVALUATION: MONITORING AND
EVALUATION: REVIEW OF SELECTED PROJECTS IN THE
THEMATIC AREA OF MANAGING GLOBALIZATION**

(Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda)

**CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR THE INTEGRATION OF ENERGY AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES**

Note by the secretariat¹

SUMMARY

The present document reviews and highlights the major outcomes of activities carried out under the capacity-building project on integration of energy and rural development policies and programmes (Asian component) during the period 2002 to 2006.

Project activities were carried out by the secretariat at the national and regional levels in collaboration with multi-stakeholder national team members from seven participating countries. The participating countries included Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka from South Asia, and Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam from the Greater Mekong Subregion. The document also describes and analyses the achievements and challenges related to the successful implementation of the project and lessons learned regarding the sustainability of project impacts.

The Committee is invited to review the document and provide guidance for broadening the process of promoting the integration of energy and rural development policies and programmes.

¹ The present document is based on the external project evaluation report entitled "Capacity-building on integration of energy and rural development policies and programmes (Asian component)" prepared by the secretariat (20 March 2006).

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Introduction

1. The ESCAP project “Capacity-building on integration of energy and rural development planning” took shape following the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg and the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development held in Bali. The project was launched in August 2002 with a budget of approximately US\$ 400,000. The project is aimed at strengthening national capacities in comprehensive rural development through the integration of energy and rural development policies. The ultimate goal of the project is to improve the access of the rural population to clean and affordable energy services in participating countries. Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam were chosen as participants due to their interest in and readiness to participate in the project.

2. The project aimed at strengthening national capacities for comprehensive rural development through the integration of energy and rural development policies. The project placed emphases on identifying energy needs in rural development activities. These activities included agriculture, education, infrastructure, financing and health. In addition it prepared a strategy for integrating such concerns into rural development policies and programmes.

3. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation² recognizes the important role that access to clean and affordable energy services plays in poverty eradication. The Sustainable Energy Development Action Programme, endorsed at the High-level Regional Meeting on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2000, stressed the need to develop “policies to promote energy utilization for poverty alleviation by ensuring energy availability at affordable prices” and to promote “promoting the application of renewable and other clean technologies in the region” to increase access to energy services for rural populations (see E/ESCAP/1206, annex I). Capacity-building and the exchange of information and experience are identified as key tools in the implementation of the programme.

4. An external evaluation was undertaken between December 2005 and February 2006, after completion of the project, to assess the project’s performance as per the provision of the project document. As per the terms of reference for the evaluation, the objectives were as follows:

(a) To assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency as well as the expected impact and sustainability of the project’s substantive elements;

(b) To assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency as well as the expected outcomes of the project’s management arrangements with specific focus on the cross-disciplinary nature of the project.

² Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap I, resolution 2, annex).

I. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

5. The evaluation was based primarily on the synthesis report prepared by ESCAP, supplemented by comments from national team members of participating countries, ESCAP energy resources section programme staff and field visits to Nepal and Viet Nam. The project's overall impact was positive. Notable achievements include: establishment of network communications at the national and regional levels, dissemination of training material for capacity-building of 250 professionals, development of national strategies for policymaking and inclusion of gender consideration in the planning processes. The primary challenges faced by the national team members of the participating countries during the project were: (a) limited coordination among institutions and organizations in the national teams; (b) insufficient human resources or expertise; (c) lack of sufficient financial resources and data; and (d) inadequate information and data exchange. The following were the major impacts gained from project implementation.

6. *Establishment of expert group network and activation of inter-agency linkages.* Multisectoral, multi-stakeholder national teams were formed. The teams consisted of government officials involved in rural development or energy policy planning and implementation, academic/research institutions, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, associations/unions in each of the participating countries. This approach provided the necessary leverage and legitimacy for promoting the integration of energy and rural development. These national teams took the lead role in initiating dialogue among the parties involved in energy and rural development and implementation of national level project activities. The active involvement of the national team members during the project implementation activities facilitated in building stronger personal and professional relationships between individuals and institutions for future cooperation and collaboration.

7. *Development of resource material and capacity-building.* ESCAP collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme Regional Centre in Bangkok and international and national experts, to develop generic guidelines and training materials on the core issues related to integrating energy and rural development planning. These materials were designed to help the participating countries to develop a strategy to initiate the integration process. Five of the seven participating countries have used these guidelines after making minor adjustments to suit their individual needs context. Two countries, namely Myanmar and Viet Nam, have translated the guidelines into their national languages, making the appropriate modifications to suit their national need. A total of 24 trainers from eight countries were trained in Bangkok on integrating energy and rural development and in developing the country strategy. About 250 professionals have been trained at the national level.

8. *Development of national strategy paper for consideration by decision makers.* The national strategy papers have been built around national priorities and targets for growth and poverty alleviation with an emphasis on energy and rural development in the respective participating countries.

The process of developing national strategies has resulted in multiple realizations and benefits for national team members: (a) comprehensive understanding of the status of energy and rural development in their respective countries; (b) awareness of inconsistencies in legal provisions and procedures due to distribution of energy portfolios among multiple agencies and lack of appropriate recognition of the complementary role of the energy and development sectors; (c) acknowledgement of synergies that can result from integrated planning; and (d) the existence of data/information previously thought not available.

9. Concerned government agencies have already started to share critical information with one another and adopt an integrated planning approach in their annual planning cycle. The national energy policies and national development plans that were formulated after the initiation of this project have recognized and incorporated the integration concept. The national strategy papers which have been developed by each of the participating countries, though not yet endorsed by the respective Governments, have been extensively referred to in the development of new policies and annual plans.

10. *Gender mainstreaming.* Gender mainstreaming has already been recognized as a crucial element that has remained grossly neglected in the development process. However, interventions are under way to ensure that corrective measures are taken. Gender mainstreaming has also been taken up as a priority issue leading to development of a gender strategy and action plans. The generic integration guidelines are quite comprehensive in their explanation on how gender mainstreaming could be applied to energy and rural development initiatives. National teams have also ensured the inclusion of a gender expert in their team so that national strategies do not overlook gender issues in the energy and development linkages.

II. MAIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES

11. The project activities were carried out at the regional and national levels. The activities implemented during the project period are listed below.

Level	Summary of project activities
Regionally initiated and nationally implemented	<p>Building of national teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National teams in seven participating countries were constituted with representation from government institutions, non-government institutions, research institutions and financial institutions among others. • Experts from other selected countries have been invited to participate in the regional meetings and workshops.
Regional	<p>Expert group meeting on the integration of energy and rural development policies and programmes, 25-27 June 2003</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource persons prepared background papers on country experiences in integrated rural development, policy analysis on integrating energy issues in the process of planning, developing and implementing rural development policies and programmes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National team members discussed issues related to integration of energy and rural development as well as advantages and barriers for improving such integration. These discussions were based on the background papers. Project concept, objectives, activities, implementation modalities and the roles and responsibilities of the national teams were also discussed.
Regional	<p>Development of guidelines on the integration of energy and rural development policies and programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the outcome of the expert group meeting, draft guidelines were developed and circulated for comments. Guidelines were finalized during a review meeting (25-26 September 2003). <p>The finalized guidelines were published in December 2003.</p>
Regional	<p>Regional training workshop on the integration of energy and rural development policies and programmes, 12-14 May 2004</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training materials were developed for the workshop.
National	<p>Contractual agreement between ESCAP and participating countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters of agreement were signed with lead agencies for implementation of national level activities.
National	<p>National workshop I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National training courses and materials were developed by each of the participating countries. Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam prepared their training material in their local languages. National training workshops were held in all participating countries.
National	<p>National workshop II and national strategy paper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the guidelines and input provided by the participants of national workshop I, the core national team members drafted the national strategy paper. Several consultative meetings were held to refine the draft. National workshop II was held to discuss and finalize the draft strategy paper. National strategy papers finalized by the national teams.
Regional	<p>Exchanging experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The regional concluding workshop was held from 21 to 23 September 2005 to share findings and experiences, discuss outcomes and lessons learned, and discuss sustaining the project initiatives.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

12. The national teams of participating countries have expressed concern about the lack of availability of data for the preparation of their national strategies. Even when data was available, it was outdated and not of any practical use for their purposes. However, a significant amount of data has been identified and compiled during the preparation of the national strategy. This indicated that data did exist, but had been fragmented or scattered. It was difficult to find this information due to a lack of a centralized data collection and storage arrangements. It would have been beneficial if data/information related to energy and rural development was centrally stored and made available

upon request. Such an arrangement would also reduce the chances of wasting resources on generating raw data that already exists. The effort spent on duplicating existing data could have been used to improve existing databases by focusing on qualitative enhancement of data or periodically updating it.

13. There was growing acknowledgement that the integration of energy and rural development was necessary. The participating countries were active in formulating national strategies to facilitate such integration processes. However, operationalization of such integration processes would require formal endorsement by the respective national Governments as it requires changes relating to institutional realignments, clear delineation of roles and responsibilities to ensure effective inter-agency coordination and cooperation in energy and rural development planning, implementation and monitoring.

14. New institutional processes would require thorough orientation and specific capacity-building initiatives to address knowledge and skill gaps. This would no doubt require dissemination of the guidelines and training materials to meet the development needs of people ranging from policymakers to the grass-roots level for their constructive involvement. This might warrant thorough review of the developed guidelines and content adaptation that goes beyond simple translation (a) to suit country context, (b) to localize the concepts, illustrations and examples, and (c) to adopt adult learning techniques in an effort to ensure effective transfer of knowledge and skills.

15. Although the energy and rural development portfolios were distributed among many government agencies, national level priorities and programmes primarily determine their planning and implementation. Some of the countries have concrete legal and policy frameworks which have enabled them to delineate energy and rural development objectives and strategies clearly while others have generic development objectives. Thus, the national strategies developed by each of the participating countries were aligned to their respective national priorities in energy and rural development. Some of the participating countries have developed these national strategy papers as an outcome of this project while others have reviewed and updated existing national strategies with emphasis on the integration of energy and rural development.

16. The project, originally planned as a two-and-a-half year project, was extended to four years. Given the significance of the projects goal, it might be worth expanding the scope of work to include capacity-building at the grass-roots level. This could be conducted in pilot areas in order for their input to be included in strategy formulation. However, ESCAP could also provide technical support that leads to the endorsement of the strategy paper.

17. The process of entering into contractual agreements for collaboration with national government institutions was challenging and time-consuming. The inherent complications resulted in delays in starting the project. However, this would have been hard to avoid as the lead institution needed to be identified and selected with care. This was especially true because projects of this nature require inter-agency cooperation, mobilization of a wide range of stakeholders, technical competency

and an official portfolio mandate. In addition, it was necessary to secure political support to facilitate the endorsement of policy recommendations in the form of national strategy papers. Political support also played a critical role in ensuring the implementation of the new integration policy. Given the critical role that the lead institution was to assume, there might have been a need to build/enhance the institutional capacity of the lead institution.

18. Even when the right institutions are identified, they may lack adequate political support or the capacity to provide technical leadership. Thus, a balance must be maintained between choosing the right institutions with legitimate mandates and the ability to give impetus to project implementation.

19. It was expected that there would be differences in the technical competencies of professionals involved from each of the participating countries. This created a need to assess their respective knowledge/skills and prepare a plan to address their individual development needs. It also illustrated the need for technical backstopping to ensure that the project makes uniform progress and meets its objectives on time.

20. As per the letter of agreement, the formal relationship and communication between ESCAP and the participating countries was primarily limited to those institutions responsible for national level activities. Technical support was provided through individuals in these institutions during regional meetings or teleconferences. The two national workshops provided ESCAP with the opportunity to visit the participating countries. However, the fixed agenda of the workshop did not permit all of the national team members to interact with resource personnel from ESCAP. If such an interaction programme had been foreseen and scheduled, the national team members would have had the opportunity to interact extensively and benefit from the sharing of experiences. These visits could also be extended to include courtesy visits to key relevant decision makers. At these visits, the decision makers could be briefed about the project, its rationale, the progress made by the national teams and the support required to ensure its success. Upon request, meetings could also be held with other development partners engaged in energy or rural development to explore the possibilities of complementing the ESCAP initiative. If the national team required more technical support than ESCAP could provide, the support could be met through the provision of external resource personnel.

21. The participating countries recognized the value of the national teams built for project implementation in each of the participating countries. Although the national teams were large, at times it was difficult for all to meet at one time; the national teams formulated smaller working groups to ensure that the commitments made were being met. The national team members have interacted well during the project implementation process and it is hoped that they will continue to communicate as required. However, the formal mandate of the national teams may end with the termination of the project unless there are follow-up engagements or other similar projects that demand the existence of the teams. Nonetheless, a pool of experts have been trained regionally (24) and nationally (250). It might be helpful to maintain an active roster of these experts for information/experience sharing,

future use as resource person(s) or further capacity-building to implement the national strategies on a broader scale. The national network of one participating country did not communicate or interact with other national networks, with all communications taking place between ESCAP and the respective national network. If the project had encouraged such interactions or designed activities requiring joint consultation, then the network would have included teams beyond national borders.

IV. CHALLENGES

22. *Limited coordination among institutions and organizations.* Although the national teams were formed with all relevant stakeholders, it was a time-consuming process to bring all of them together due to the differences in their institutional priorities, interests and levels of commitment. Political changes and staff/leadership changes in some of the member institutions also caused disturbances in the continuity of the work of some national teams, resulting in project implementation delays. Lack of sufficient authority and incentives also prevented the lead agencies from actively following up and ensuring the active participation of stakeholders in a timely manner.

23. *Insufficient human resources.* This was one of several projects in which the national team members were involved. Most national team members, including their support staff, were occupied with higher priority tasks and/or were overloaded. Additionally, since this project dealt with the integration of energy and rural development, knowledge/expertise gaps also existed among those involved in the project.

24. *Lack of sufficient financial resources and data.* This project signaled the first time that integration was being tackled in a systematic manner in the participating countries. Therefore, the required data either did not exist or was out of date or incomplete. Lack of financial resources and time constraints prevented the national teams from establishing accurate baseline data. Thus, it was difficult to identify realistic and quantifiable goals.

25. *Inadequate information and data exchange.* With so many stakeholders mobilized in the national teams, there were some communication gaps within the national networks. Additionally, there was no formal communication between the national teams of the participating countries; any information assistance required from other participating country was channelled through ESCAP. Information exchange with other countries which had implemented such projects was not easy to initiate apart from the exchanges that took place in Bangkok during the regional meetings.

V. SUSTAINABILITY

26. The sustainability of the integration process can be achieved in several ways. Because energy and rural development strategies are formulated at the national level, integration policies require endorsement from the respective Governments. Therefore, the participating countries have initiated an endorsement process designed to streamline integration from the planning stage. Upon successful completion of planning, the respective countries have the national mandate to sustain the integration

process. Some of the participating countries have already made use of the groundwork from the preparation for the strategy paper in their upcoming energy policies and plans. Sustainability may also be possible by facilitating linkages between ongoing energy programmes and rural development programmes. The knowledge gained and the strategies formulated could also be used to generate good proposals for financing considerations with integration perspective that strives to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

VI. CONCLUSION

27. Although the start of the project was delayed and the project period was extended, the intended outcome of the project's capacity-building component has been realized. ESCAP has been successful in mobilizing its internal and external multidisciplinary expertise to ensure that the project activities are conducted to the satisfaction of the participating countries.

28. ESCAP has played an important role at the regional and subregional level with regard to this project. The participating countries need to internalize the project objectives into their national development goals. Furthermore, they need to take an active interest in ensuring the sustainability of the project through domestic resources. This could also be done with support from other international development partners that have a stake in sustainable energy and rural development portfolios. Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam have already initiated some activities and projects in this regard.

29. The project management arrangements and communications between ESCAP and the participating countries have been flexible and responsive. All the participating countries were appreciative towards ESCAP for the support provided, cooperation extended and empathy expressed when project extension requests had to be made.

VII. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

30. The Committee is invited to review the outcome of the project and offer any comments and guidance for the sustainability of the process that has been initiated through this project. It may also encourage countries to consider replicating the concept in their national development plan.

31. ESCAP intends to hold a review workshop to assess the progress being made by the participating countries in the implementation of their national strategies.

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