



## Inception Workshop – Development Account Project

*“Strengthening capacities in countries with special needs to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs”*

15-16 May 2014

Venue: Supamitr Room 7<sup>th</sup> floor (Day 1) and Vimarntop II, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (Day 2)  
Royal Princess Larn Luang Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

## DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

### Introduction

This inception workshop organized by ESCAP is the first of a series of activities under the project entitled **“Strengthening capacities in countries with special needs on designing and implementing economic and social development policies to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals”**.

The project focuses on knowledge production and dissemination, with the objective of enhancing the capacity of policy makers and other stakeholders in selected Asia-Pacific LDCs to develop and implement cross-sectoral programmes and activities to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs.

### I. Background

Despite some very serious challenges, Asia-Pacific as a whole has achieved high rates of economic growth and overall development during the last decade. Yet, it continues to show deep social, ecological and economic imbalances. In countries with special needs, in particular LDCs, progress towards reducing poverty and hunger and achieving other MDGs has slowed down significantly, due to inadequate human and financial capacity, furthered by the turmoil in the global economy since 2008.

ESCAP studies have identified a two-pronged strategy for accelerating the progress of LDCs towards achieving the MDGs. First, promote growth in a more inclusive manner, which would not only increase the per capita household income of the poor and speed up poverty alleviation, but also reduce inequality. This would require enhanced productive capacity and improving basic infrastructure for creating productive and decent jobs, boosting agricultural production, and improving service delivery. To achieve these goals, all organs of governments, including line ministries but also different levels of government, must work collectively towards MDG targets.

The second part of the strategy is to mobilize national and regional resources to finance the investment required to reach the other MDGs, including through Public-Private Partnership, reorienting public expenditure towards MDG priorities, augmenting government revenue and making financial incentives MDG-friendly. This requires governments to cooperate with other stakeholders, namely the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Experiences in MDG acceleration indicates that, while financial gaps are a key bottleneck in scaling up service delivery, inadequate institutional capacities for planning, monitoring and delivery of services are equally serious bottlenecks. Even where financial resources are available, the impact is limited if sectoral focus is too narrow; for instance, building a school in a remote area may not be effective in increasing enrolment rates if access to the school is limited. On the other hand, providing access to adequate sanitation also has major health, water, environmental, tourism and other welfare impacts which go beyond immediate benefits. Lack of sectoral coordination may forego opportunities to utilize resources for higher impact.

The purpose of the project is to increase understanding and awareness of policymakers and other stakeholders of the benefits of cross-sectoral policies to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs. It aims to do this by preparing and disseminating knowledge products. These include (i) assessment/analysis of cross-sectoral strategies and policy options for narrowing development gaps and poverty reduction, distilled from analysis of bottlenecks in selected sectoral policies; and (ii) supportive national development strategies to facilitate cross-sectoral approach.

The selected LDCs and sectors for assessment and analysis are:

- a) Bhutan – physical and financial accessibility to education in rural areas;
- b) Cambodia – improvement of water and sanitation in rural areas.
- c) Lao People’s Democratic Republic – physical accessibility to income earning activities in rural areas;
- d) Nepal – linkage of health services and road access in rural areas;
- e) Timor-Leste – improve farm and market logistics and agricultural trade;

## **II. Objectives**

The Inception Workshop will introduce participants to the project, review and define the analytical framework for the country and cross-sectoral studies that will follow, and to exchange information and learn from each other on the recent trends and experiences in the development and implementation of cross-sectoral programmes and policies.

## **III. Format and participation**

The workshop will happen over two days. It will be attended by policymakers from each country in the areas related to the project, in addition to regional experts from academia, NGOs and other private sector representatives from Asia-Pacific LDCs.

## **IV. Expected outcomes**

The inception workshop is expected to recommend guiding principles for developing the analytical framework for the in-depth case studies and training activities that will follow. This will ensure the ownership of the participating LDCs in the preparation of the knowledge products and the capacity development support to be delivered under this project.

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