**MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**(TAP) for the Ministry of Environment (MINAM)**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**PURPOSE**

This mid-term evaluation makes strategic and operative recommendations based on a performance analysis of the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) for the Ministry of the Environment (MINAM). These recommendations are intended to support the project to accomplish its objectives by its completion in 2016. The study seeks to identify obstacles that may be hampering the effectiveness of the TAP by identifying the reasons that the objectives embodied in the project’s results framework have been achieved or not.

**BACKGROUND**

The Technical Assistance Program is implemented under the Assistance Agreements No. 527-0423 and No. 527-0426 between the Peruvian Government and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Program has as its expected result: “to contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources through strengthening the Ministry of the Environment as the lead agency in the National Environmental Management System.” The Program has an implementation period of four years (2012-2016) and a budget of US$12 million.

The TAP has five components – activities –, each one of them connected to a priority MINAM theme and to a lead agency for the respective theme:

* The CITES TAP seeks to advise the MINAM Bureau for Biological Diversity (“*Dirección General de Diversidad Biológica*”, DGDB) regarding the effective application of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES);
* The Valuation TAP seeks to support the Bureau for the Valuation, Assessment and Funding of the Natural Heritage (“*Dirección General de Valoración, Evaluación y Financiamiento del Patrimonio Nacional*”, DGVEFPN) in ensuring that the ecosystems offering environmental resources such as providing water and scenic beauty will be operated in a sustainable manner;
* The SEIA TAP has as its counterpart the Bureau for Environmental Management Policies, Standards and Instruments (“*Dirección General de Política, Normas e Instrumentos de Gestión Ambiental*”, DGPNIGA), with which it generates tools, technical procedures and training in order to strengthen the preventive character of the National Environmental Impact Assessment System ("Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental”, SEIA);
* The Forests TAP seeks to contribute to the management, conservation and sustainable use of Amazon forests, including the financial mechanisms for their conservation. Its counterpart is the National Program for the Conservation of Forests to Mitigate Climate Change (“*Programa Nacional de Conservación de Bosques para la Mitigación del Cambio Climático*”, PNCB);
* The primary purpose of the ACC TAP is to incorporate an Adaptation to Climate Change (ACC) approach into the National Public Investment System (“Sistema Nacional de Inversión Pública”, SNIP). It does this by developing methodological guides, regulatory proposals and technical assistance in coordination with the Bureau for Climate Change, Desertification and Water Resources (“*Dirección General de Cambio Climático, Desertificación y Recursos Hídricos*”, DGCCDRH) of MINAM.

The TAP functions as an Implementation Unit led by a Coordinator that is supported by a small administrative team and five technical coordinators. Each technical coordinator leads one of the five projects that make up the Program. The Annual Operating Plan provides the framework for the execution of TAP activities. The Implementation Unit coordinates this plan with the four Bureaus and the National Program, which function as counterparts representing MINAM. USAID funding for this Program enters the public budget and is executed in accordance with public sector administrative regulations. As such, the Program constitutes a modality for Government-to-Government (G2G) cooperation that is oriented towards increasing counterpart capacity and the sustainability of results beyond the period of USAID funding.

**Evaluation QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

The mid-term assessment of the TAP seeks to answer the following questions:

Q1. In terms of the national and international context: What risks and opportunities does USAID’s Government-to-Government model present in the context of the MINAM TAP with changes in the national agenda?

Q2. How appropriate is the design of the program given trends and dynamics at USAID and the evolution of MINAM?

Q3. What strengths and weaknesses exist vis-à-vis the implementation process of the MINAM TAP?

Q4. How effective is the TAP in this intermediate stage and what critical factors have to be addressed in order to improve it?

These questions provide four focus areas for the evaluation: USAID’s G2G model, the TAP design, project management, and project results. To explore these focus areas, the evaluation uses twelve (12) themes and forty (40) specific evaluation questions. The evaluation employes a qualitative assessment methodology complemented by a review of secondary information to apply the evaluation themes and questions. This approach resulted in sixty-three (63) interviews, four workshops and one case study. The evaluation team used Atlas.ti software to support the analysis of secondary information.

**FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The principal conclusions and recommendations are captured in the following nine points:

1. Relevance of objectives. The priorities defined in the environmental sector’s national policies are presented generically in various documents. These require a disaggregated analysis to orient the TAP investment. For this reason, USAID should continue supporting MINAM to define specific objectives without interfering in its autonomy.

2. Relevance of objectives. Project implementation and performance (both financial and achievement of results) are not meeting expectations. The announcement of changes to the results frameworks is a positive adjustment. The productive relationship that has been achieved between MINAM and USAID, i.e. the development of the coordination mechanisms required to carry out activities and actions, gives rise to the recommendation to extend the TAP implementation period in order to provide time for the activity to build on this cooperation, to achieve project objectives, and to fulfill the commitments defined in the Free Trade Agreement with regard to environmental priorities.

3. Management tools. The participatory modification of the TAP performance objectives is positive and necessary. This will require taking up the challenge of updating the performance monitoring system and addressing the absence of a *Program Description*. The Program Description should describe and update the project’s management tools in accordance with USAID Forward. The majority of respondents recognize the absence of an adequate Program Description as a project weakness.

4. Actions common to all five projects. One of the most important conclusions is that the project is challenged by its dependence on the public administrative system, which is challenged in its ability to carry out joint or crosscutting actions. TAP should support MINAM to strengthen its administrative functions in order to reduce the time and cost of carrying out actions that are common to the five activities.

5. Governance. TAP support for MINAM prioritization at the central level is positive. In order to continue with this process, TAP should establish closer links with the subnational governments to develop local capacities, promote consensus and prioritize investments.

6. Gender focus. The identification of women’s participation in courses, seminars, workshops, etc., helps to demonstrate project interest in developing a gender focus in its activities. TAP should develop a plan that specifies how the project and its activities reflect the principles of gender equity.

7. Coordination with USAID. USAID sector-specific experts have facilitated communication between the front-line departments of MINAM and the TAP. USAID should enhance its role by strengthening USAID representatives’ communication and coordination with the highest levels of MINAM.

8. Coordination measures with the TAP. Internally, TAP does not offer the appropriate management tools to its leadership. These tools should include a *Program Description*, an appropriate detailed position description for the technical coordinators, and a clear chain of command. The project should quickly develop the appropriate instruments and management capabilities to address this limitation.

9. Communications. The project’s knowledge management is weak. The project should develop a communication plan (in the context of the monitoring and evaluation plan) and develop formats that facilitate follow-up on agreed-upon actions.

The TAP has made an important achievement by incorporating a number of resources originating from international cooperation into the Peruvian public sector budget. These can be used to strengthen the capacity of MINAM as the lead agency of the National Environmental Management System (SNGA). However, delays in the initial implementation process and in establishing an understanding of how a program of this nature should function now require rethinking MINAM needs and adapting to the process of consolidation at MINAM. The TAP will need to define a set of specific objectives and performance results that reflect this process and the accompanying changes to optimize results over the remainder of the project.