

I. Project Information

Project Code	QDIEN
Project Title	APO-Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) Joint Study on the Impact of COVID-19 on SMEs: 4th Round
Project Start	06 May 2024
Project End	31 December 2024
Project Price	PHP 433,260.00 (total) GAA: PHP 200,000 and External Fund: PHP 233,600
Client Organization	Asian Development Bank Institute

II. Project Team

Project Manager	Pauline Marie S. Villar
Team Members	Eunice M. Botero, Ador G. Paulino, Queenielyn I. Rodaje
Supervising Fellow	Monica D. Saliendres
Consultants/Resource Persons	N/A

III. Project Details**Project Description**

In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), the Asian Productivity Organization (APO), and the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) will conduct an international survey to grasp the business status of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) since early 2020. The survey's fourth wave in the Philippines will be conducted in May-June 2024.

The APO and ADBI expect the following countries to participate: Bangladesh; Cambodia; India; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Mongolia; Pakistan; the Philippines; and Viet Nam.

Project Objective

The study aims to determine the impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in APO member countries; publish a report that could assist member countries in planning for effective strategies that will help SMEs to better recover from the pandemic; and to obtain evidence that will guide the Asian Development Bank and policymakers to explore possible assistance to SMEs affected by COVID-19.

Focus Area	Policy Reform Agenda dev't, policy review, policy advocacy, Productivity-driven development
Project Type	Technical Assistance
Project Beneficiary	SMEs
Regional Coverage	Nationwide

IV. Project Accomplishments**Key Activities Implemented****1. Pre-Implementation**

The project commenced with comprehensive preparatory activities, including the determination of project requirements and preparation of the budget and financial plan. A detailed project design was developed, encompassing the work plan, task delegation, and preparation of the respondents' directory from previous survey rounds. Significant coordination with the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) was undertaken for the questionnaire development, where the research team reviewed the template questionnaire and provided inputs for enhancement. Prior to full implementation, the questionnaire underwent a pre-testing phase to ensure clarity and

effectiveness. The feedback and comments from the pre-test respondents were carefully reviewed and incorporated into the final survey instrument.

2. Implementation

The survey proper was launched through SurveyMonkey on 27 May 2024, with data collection continuing until it was closed on 9 July 2024. This fourth round presented unique challenges in data gathering, as several SMEs from previous rounds reported business closures, making them ineligible for participation. Additionally, some eligible SMEs expressed heightened concerns about data privacy, despite assurances of confidentiality. The research team maintained regular communication with ADBI throughout the data collection phase, as they provided weekly updates on the number of data collected per country. Close monitoring of response rates and completion status was conducted, with the team implementing various follow-up strategies including email blasts and follow-up texts and calls to encourage participation.

3. Post-Implementation

The post-implementation phase marked several significant achievements, including the successful acquisition of the complete cross-country dataset from ADBI on August 9, which had been pending since 2021. A notable milestone was the presentation of preliminary results at the Philippine Economic Society 62nd Annual Meeting and Conference, which led to the development of a working research paper. The team conducted a debriefing session on the completed data collection and immediately organized a free online seminar as a token of appreciation for the survey respondents, which 35 respondents attended on 4 October 2024. Final activities included the preparation of the terminal report, consolidated feedback to ADBI, and project closure documents, ensuring all deliverables met the required standards and objectives.

V. Major Outputs

1. 305 valid survey responses
2. 35 online attendees to the online seminar, "Mighty SMEs Sizing Up Your SME's Potential through Lean Six Sigma and Total Quality Management"
3. Cross-Country Dataset from 2020 to 2024
4. Presentation entitled "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Philippine Small and Medium Enterprises" during the Philippine Economic Society 62nd Annual Meeting and Conference on 7 November 2024
5. Project Terminal Report

VI. Project Impact

The fourth round of the Joint Study on the Impact of COVID-19 on SMEs has yielded several critical insights that significantly contribute to understanding the evolving landscape of SME resilience and recovery. The research revealed important trend shifts in SME performance, with a general decrease in reported revenues from 2021 to 2024, alongside an encouraging evolution in business maintenance strategies that showed fewer layoffs and temporary closures compared to previous periods. Most notably, the study identified a strong correlation between ICT infrastructure improvements and business performance, with data showing that MSMEs who enhanced their ICT capabilities increased their odds of higher sales by 6.34%.

The study's impact extends beyond academic contributions, providing evidence-based insights for policymaking and program development. The findings regarding the significant gap between received and needed government support, particularly in digital technology adoption, have immediate implications for policy frameworks. The research has been particularly valuable in identifying the critical role of digitalization, with results showing that training programs related to digital technologies were both the most commonly received and most needed form of support for SMEs. These findings, presented at the Philippine Economic Society's 62nd Annual Meeting and Conference, contribute to the growing body of knowledge on SME resilience and digital transformation, while also providing concrete recommendations for sustainable support mechanisms that can be implemented by government agencies and development institutions.

VII. Lessons Learned

1. Implementing adaptive data collection strategies proved essential in this longitudinal study. The combination of push-to-web surveys and computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), along with an intensified follow-up protocol using multiple channels (email, SMS, and phone calls), proved effective in maintaining response rates. This multi-modal approach helped overcome response fatigue and ensured data quality throughout the survey period.
2. The transition in institutional leadership highlighted the importance of comprehensive project documentation and clear communication protocols. The experience of revising mobilization documents and providing project context to new administration led to the development of more concise and direct reporting approaches.
3. Significant advancements in analytical capabilities marked this research phase. The introduction of multinomial regression analysis complemented ADBI's standard analysis, enhancing the team's capacity to conduct independent data analysis. This new technical capability, combined with Python coding skills for dataset analysis, strengthens DAP's ability to provide more comprehensive insights in future research projects.
4. The longitudinal nature of the study (2021-2024) underscored the importance of maintaining standardized survey instruments while documenting evolutionary changes. This approach not only ensured data comparability across survey rounds but also created a valuable reference for future multi-year studies, particularly in tracking long-term economic impacts.
5. Direct access to real-time monitoring and data collection platforms emerged as a critical need for future implementations, particularly SurveyMonkey's monitoring features, would have allowed for more responsive adjustments to data collection strategies and real-time tracking of response patterns.
6. There is a need for stronger institutional partnerships, particularly with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), to access up-to-date SME databases. While the team utilized data from DTI Tradeline Philippines and existing survey databases, having access to DTI's updated database of SMEs would significantly enhance contact accuracy and potentially improve response rates through valid email addresses and telephone numbers. This points to the value of establishing formal data-sharing arrangements with key government agencies for future survey implementations.

VIII. Attachments

- Certificate of Project Closure ([LINK](#))
- Project Debriefing ([LINK](#))
- One Point Lesson ([LINK](#))

Prepared by:**PAULINE MARIE S. VILLAR**
Project Manager, QDIEN**Noted / Approved by:****ARNEL D. ABANTO**
Vice President, Productivity and Development Center**Notes:**

1. Project details on Section I-III can be generated thru PMIS based on PMs Inputs.
2. Project Managers are required to accomplish Section IV & provide Section V to reflect results of project implementation.
3. Project Managers can update/adjust the pre-filled sections(I-III) based on actual data.