

Course on Living Standards Strategy Formulation: The Uzbekistan Case

**Opening Remarks by Raymond Renfro, Director, Capacity Building and Training, ADB Institute,
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Mr. Nasrit din khodzhaev, Mr. Perlas, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to you all. On behalf of the ADB Institute, I would like to welcome you to this training course on Living Standards Strategy Formulation: The Uzbekistan Case. This one held in Tokyo will help you in the important task of preparing a national living standards or poverty reduction strategy for the next ten years.

The course is financed entirely by ADBI and was designed and prepared in partnership with staff at ADB's headquarters in Manila, including Ms. Lourdes Adriano, the officer in charge of TA 3781 for Uzbekistan. This course is directly related to the TA. Mr. Manuel Perlas of ADB's Uzbekistan Resident Mission will shortly present the opening remarks, followed by Mr. Nasrit din khodzhaev, the head of the Uzbekistan government delegation and representing the Cabinet of Ministers.

Today we have 13 senior government participants from several of the important ministries of Uzbekistan, plus one from the civil society and the Deputy Team Leader of the TA. We are very pleased that ADB and ADBI could assist you with this important task. Since 1999, poverty reduction and raising living standards has been the overriding or main focus and objective of ADB's work.

Objectives of the Course

The main objectives of this workshop are to equip participating government officials with useful concepts and skills for the development of a poverty reduction strategy, and also to promote the successful implementation of the previously mentioned TA, the final outcome of which will be a comprehensive 10-year poverty reduction strategy. Through the course, you will become familiar with modern methods and modalities of poverty reduction strategies. Several interesting country examples will be provided of how successful poverty reduction strategies were developed and implemented. Many of you have been participating in the development of the living standards strategy for your country and the debate surrounding its preparation, and many of you are experts in your own sector. The challenge before you is to look beyond your sector and work with others in the development of an integrated strategy that will have a long-term and sustainable impact on reducing poverty and raising living standards.

An executive summary and evaluation report will be produced at the end of the workshop. This course is not, and should not be perceived as just a one-off or ad hoc event. The summary proceedings of the training outputs will be posted on the ADBI's website, that is linked to ADB's website. Also, a self-instructional CD-ROMs will be developed from the training event here for expanded distribution to a wider audience in Central Asia, using partner institutions in the developing member countries, such as AIT, AIM, and other centers of excellence in Asia. ADBI places considerable importance on networking among partner institutions.

Work at ADBI

The ADB Institute was established in 1997 in Tokyo as a subsidiary of ADB. ADBI's activities focus on (i) research and (ii) capacity building and training, and are organized under four strategic headings: (a) poverty reduction, (b) governance, (c) private sector development, and (d) regional

cooperation. Regarding capacity building and training, we find that the demand for sustainable, wide-reaching training of DMC public officials and private sector stakeholders throughout the Asia and Pacific region is very large. Partnering with ADB, other donors, and key institutions, ADBI will work to help meet this gap in development assistance. We will continue to support some of ADBI's core products of the past that are in high demand and need. Also, ADBI will actively pursue several new topics and develop new products.

We have decided to give a new focus on making more effective use of information and communication technology and web- or internet-based technology. We have found that traditional classroom training has had limited outreach, audience, and impact. Planned ICT applications include original CD-ROM production and dissemination with regional and country-specific partner institutions, training their staff as trainers, and translating training products into local languages, as needed. We will also identify the training needs of middle- and senior-level management in cooperation with partner institutions in DMCs. ADBI will be prepared to engage in longer-term capacity building of these institutions, and conduct joint monitoring and evaluation of training activities.

We have started an interesting new project this year that involves using external experts to review development-oriented CD-ROMs in the Asia region. These reviews are posted on the ADBI website. We currently have 8 reviews on our website. These are similar to book reviews, and we believe that we are the only institution regularly reviewing developmental CD-ROMs in the world. This project is rapidly expanding, and has so far received very positive feedback.

We have also started a daily e-newsletter that is available on our website. Every morning at ADBI, a small group reviews interesting articles in Asian newspapers and journals and posts the 10 most interesting ones on the website and mails to subscribers' email addresses. You may also want to be a regular subscriber to this free and highly popular service.

In the near future, the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) of the World Bank Institute in Tokyo will become a useful tool of ADBI for various international workshops and conferences, as well as distance learning and policy discussions.

Concluding Remarks

Returning to the course, we are fortunate that we have eminent resource speakers with us today. This course and seminar will be very interactive, with ample opportunity for discussions and the sharing of ideas and experiences. I believe that the participation of so many experts and practitioners from a broad spectrum of sectors and countries will greatly enrich the discussions.

Your active participation in the discussions will be an integral part of the success of the course and the end product itself: a comprehensive and long-term living standards strategy, that you can take back to your country for further discussion with your colleagues and partners in development in the government and civil society.

In your course materials are some useful guides to services available in the Kasumigaseki Building, as well as a map of that includes this building, your hotel, and popular restaurants nearby. We have informed His Excellency, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Japan, Dr. Ochilov Mirsobit of the course, and he may surprise us with a visit this week. Please let us know if we can assist you in any way during your stay in Tokyo. Thank you very much and I wish you success during the 10-day course.