

**ADBI Workshop for Asian Think Tanks
Strengthening Knowledge Management & Knowledge Sharing
for Development
ADBI, Tokyo
5 June 2007**

**Welcome Remarks
by
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I. Introduction

Distinguished guests, resource persons, participants, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Asian Development Bank Institute, I welcome you all to this workshop on “Strengthening Knowledge Management and Knowledge Sharing for Development” designed for Asian think tanks and research institutes. This is the first capacity building event that ADBI has organized for our knowledge partners. The participating Asian think tanks and research institutes at this workshop have been identified as premier knowledge institutions from across Asia and they are also our key target audience of ADB/ADBI knowledge products. I am delighted to see so many of you here today.

II. What Is the ADB Institute?

Let me start by introducing the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) to you. ADBI is a subsidiary of the Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB), which assists its developing member economies (DMCs) in achieving economic growth and development on a sustainable basis, improving the living standards of the

people, and reducing poverty. Poverty reduction is ADB's and ADBI's overarching objective.

ADBI was established in Tokyo in 1997 with the aim of helping ADB's DMCs identify effective development strategies and improve the management capacity of their agencies and organizations. This mandate is implemented through ADBI's research and capacity building programs. The Institute currently focuses on four priority areas—poverty reduction, regional cooperation, private sector development and governance.

ADBI is one of the four knowledge departments within ADB—the others being the Economics and Research Department, the Regional and Sustainable Development Department, and the Office of Regional Economic Integration, which are located in Manila. In 2006, these four departments introduced internal coordination arrangements to improve synergies and avoid duplication in their knowledge activities. The departments agreed to examine existing quality control processes, produce their joint work program for the ADB Board of Executive Directors, and jointly prepare major flagship publications. The first collaborative ADB-wide flagship study—*Emerging Regionalism: Ten Years after the Crisis*—was launched early this year to be completed in early 2008, and ADBI is actively participating in this project as a major collaborator. The second one—*Infrastructure and Regional Cooperation in Asia*—is being led by ADBI and slated for completion in late 2008.

III. New Directions for ADBI

A recent report by the Eminent Persons Group, commissioned by ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda, projected that by 2020, Asia will be dramatically transformed into a region that has largely conquered extreme poverty, with 90 percent of its people living in “middle income” countries, and a region that comprises 45

percent of global GDP (at PPP exchange rates) and 35 percent of world total trade.¹ The report stated that, to continue delivering relevant development assistance for our clients in the new Asia, ADB must change radically and adopt a new paradigm for development assistance. Specifically the report recommended a change in its strategic directions: (i) moving *from* fighting extensive poverty *to* supporting faster and more inclusive growth; (ii) *from* economic growth *to* environmentally sustainable growth; and (iii) *from* a primarily national focus *to* a regional and ultimately global focus.

The report went on to further suggest that ADB must realign operations and focus its work on six core areas:

- Infrastructure development;
- Financial sector development and intermediation;
- Energy and environment;
- Regional integration;
- Technological development and innovation; and
- Knowledge management.

On *knowledge management*, the Eminent Persons Group recommended that ADB should position itself as the premier regional platform for information sharing and exchange. The Group also recommended ADB management to consider “making more effective use of the ADB Institute by aligning its priorities and work program more closely with the Bank’s mainstream work so that it can provide the intellectual underpinning for country operations and other Bank priorities.”

Having received a series of recommendations from the Eminent Persons Group, ADB has begun to review its Long-term Strategic Framework to transform itself

¹ Asian Development Bank, “Toward a New Asian Development Bank in a New Asia.” Report of the Eminent Persons Group to the President of the Asian Development Bank (March 2007), Manila.

into a knowledge bank for the new Asia. We are now exploring our future directions and focus areas, including *infrastructure development, financial sector development, regional cooperation and integration, and knowledge management*. This exercise is expected to further sharpen ADBI's strategic prioritization of knowledge activities.

IV. What Is Knowledge Management?

The workshop in the next few days will discuss details of knowledge management for economic development and the role of think tanks and research institutes, but let me briefly summarize what I think is key to knowledge management.

Knowledge is one of the most powerful and valuable assets of any individual, group, organization or country, which requires constant investment for renewal. For any developing economy, knowledge for development is vital for successful policy formulation and implementation to promote economic growth, development and poverty reduction. Knowledge is often defined as facts, discoveries, information, ideas, truths, or principles acquired through experience, association, education, study, investigation, observation or situation (see Appendix). However defined, to add value, knowledge must be relevant and useful and be operationalized. From the perspective of a development institution like ADB or ADBI, such value should lead to higher growth, sustainable development and a reduction of poverty. Therefore we need to address knowledge on binding constraints to inclusive growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Knowledge management is a systematic process of identifying, creating, capturing, storing, organizing and disseminating knowledge to help improve the performance of an organization. An increasing number of global institutions, think tanks and research institutes are putting in place knowledge management

as a core strategy to achieve organizational objectives and improve efficiency, productivity and competitiveness. Effective knowledge management programs must be tied to organizational objectives and designed to deliver specific outcomes, such as learning best practices, shared intelligence, improved performance, greater competitive advantage, and knowledge creation. Strong leadership, an articulated strategy, organizational culture for appreciating knowledge, and effective ICT support are essential for success.

V. ADBI Approach to Knowledge Management and Knowledge Sharing

As explained earlier, ADBI conducts Research and Capacity Building and Training (CBT) activities. Our Research program focuses on development issues with strategic implications for development thinking and policy formulation, including identification and distillation of good practices, and production of learning methods and related materials. The CBT program focuses on training and workshops in priority areas with broad distribution of training materials in various media such as CD-ROMs, books as well as online materials. This combination of Research and CBT puts ADBI in a unique position. ADBI's research outputs can be a useful input to the CBT programs for senior officials and trainees from developing member countries. Interactions with these officials and feedback from the CBT programs can also be useful for identifying Research topics. Essentially we try to benefit from the synergies of Research and CBT.

Let me briefly touch on the core aspects of ADBI's knowledge management, although you'll hear more about them over the coming days. Currently, our knowledge management strategy focuses on the following:

- Provision of *vision* by looking ahead the next 10-20 years with a focus on Asia's medium- to long-term development issues of strategic importance;
- Emphasis on *quality, relevance and impact* of Research and CBT activities;

- Careful identification of needed knowledge through interactions with DMC policy makers, officials, researchers and other stakeholders;
- Creation and acquisition of relevant, high-quality knowledge through original research and analytical work;
- Dissemination of knowledge products to target audiences (DMC policy makers, think tanks, researchers and intermediary audiences of ADB HQ staff and media) through publications, the website and outreach activities;
- Provision of CBT services to help our target groups share knowledge (including on best practices) for economic development;
- Collaboration of knowledge activities with key stakeholders, including DMC governments, think tanks and research institutes, other international organizations and institutions, and ADB Headquarters in Manila; and
- Maintenance of dedicated professional staff qualified to develop and manage knowledge in house or in collaboration with our knowledge partners, or to acquire it from outside.

Our website, a key communication and dissemination tool, recently received international recognition with an honorable mention in the inaugural Web for Development awards. Other tools for sharing knowledge with the international community include: the Distinguished Speaker Seminar Series; ADBI News, the quarterly newsletter; e-newsline, a free daily roundup of development-related stories in the Asia region; and lunch seminars with internal and external presenters speaking on topics in our key areas of interest.

V. ADBI's Collaboration with Asian Think Tanks and Research Institutes

Collaboration and partnership with Asian think tanks and research institutes are critical for ADBI's strategic approach to knowledge management. These knowledge institutions are influential bodies affecting DMC policy making and

advocacy so that they are one of the most immediate target audiences of our knowledge products. In addition, I believe strengthening mutual ties among knowledge institutions within Asia will contribute to the creation of synergies in knowledge activities throughout Asia and to the ongoing development of research and policy dialogue in the region. In 2006, ADBI published a directory of Asian think tanks providing contact details and program summaries of over 70 think tanks from 26 countries in Asia that are primarily involved in development research. I wish to continue to update the directory over the coming years.

This week's workshop is the next step towards enhancing collaboration for knowledge management and knowledge sharing among Asian think tanks and research institutes. I hope this will lead to the establishment of a workable networking relationship for further collaboration and partnership among Asian think tanks and research institutes. ADBI is happy to play the role of a facilitator and convener. We look forward to hearing about your knowledge management efforts, including ongoing research activities, in your own institutions.

VI. Concluding Remarks

With these issues in mind, I am confident that this workshop will provide you with an opportunity to establish or reinforce networking, evaluate your own knowledge management and knowledge sharing strategies, and identify key policy issues of mutual interest for research. I hope that the workshop will turn out to be valuable in helping make your institutions even more effective in your own countries in terms of policy debate and advice so that your economies can achieve sustained and balanced economic growth and development. I wish you great success in your discussions in the workshop, and I look forward to learning about your recommendations and conclusions.

Appendix: Various Definitions of Knowledge from Dictionaries

- **American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language:** (1) the state of fact of knowing; (2) familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study; (3) the sum or range of what has been perceived, discovered, or learned; (4) learning; erudition; and (5) specific information about some thing.
- **Cambridge Dictionary Online:** understanding of or information about a subject which has been obtained by experience or study, and which is either in a person's mind or possessed by people generally endorsed.
- **Merriam Webster Dictionary:** (1) the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association; (2) acquaintance with or understanding of a science, art, or technique; (3) the range of one's information or understanding; (4) the circumstance or condition of apprehending truth or fact through reasoning; and (5) the fact or condition of having information or of being learned.
- **MSN Encarta Dictionary:** (1) *information in mind:* general awareness or possession of information, facts, ideas, truths, or principles; (2) *specific information:* clear awareness or explicit information, e.g. of a situation or fact; (3) *all that can be known:* all the information, facts, truths, and principles learned throughout time; and (4) *learning through experience or study:* familiarity or understanding gained through experience or study.
- **Oxford English Dictionary:** (1) information and skills acquired through experience or education; (2) the sum of what is known; and (3) awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation.