

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE
Chair's Summary of Committee Discussion on 7 December 2012

I. Special Evaluation Study (SES): Knowledge Products and Services: Building a Stronger Knowledge Institution (IN.357-12)

1. DEC discussed the SES on Knowledge Products and Services which rated ADB's efforts in implementing the knowledge management (KM) agenda as less than successful. While ADB's KM efforts were found to be responsive in providing an enabling environment, the report also found the KM agenda less than relevant with stakeholders' needs and demands. DEC discussed the report, noting Management's agreement with the recommendations, which include: (i) improving the incentive structure for pursuing knowledge activities in tandem with lending; (ii) enhancing enabling technologies to facilitate better knowledge sharing; (iii) improving capture of tacit knowledge; and (iv) intensified knowledge use and outreach using traditional and social media, among others.

2. **Strategic directions.** DEC welcomed IED's report and echoed the importance of becoming a stronger knowledge institution given ADB's limited financial resources, stressing knowledge is ADB's core business and that it will be less relevant in the region without it. Members agreed that ADB's advantage over any other commercial lending institution is the combination of knowledge and learning with financing that impacts development effectiveness. DEC also envisaged financing as a crucial platform for knowledge to be visibly demonstrated. DEC noted Management's positive efforts such as the creation of the new vice presidency, the establishment of the Knowledge Sharing Services Center and the draft action plan envisaged in 2013 (a DEC member considered this should be a strategy document to be discussed at the Board), and looked forward to the Board being consulted about the action plan¹ before it is finalized. DEC was also pleased that Management would explore the possibility of identifying signature knowledge areas, as part of its overall strategy of serving as knowledge nexus for Asia and the Pacific.

3. **Improving technology platform and incentive structure.** DEC members inquired further on Management's efforts to address technological gaps and staff incentives for knowledge sharing. It was informed that technology issues are being addressed through the draft Information Systems and Technology Strategy III which would codify ADB's explicit knowledge including economic, thematic and sector information and would feature improved collaboration platforms. As for the incentive structure, DEC noted that ADB is gradually scaling up capacity as could be gleaned from slightly higher staff and budget resourcing, while it emphasized the need to align human resource practices toward knowledge incentives for staff. Some DEC members suggested an awards system for innovative work and incentives for staff work on Communities of Practice (CoPs). Some DEC members also agreed with IED's findings on the need to calibrate and maximize the potential of CoPs in knowledge generation and cross-sector knowledge sharing.

4. **Results framework, outreach and partnerships, and untapped tacit knowledge.** DEC inquired whether the envisioned results framework for knowledge products and services will be reflected in the new corporate results framework, and was pleased that Management is working with Strategy and Policy Department in incorporating indicators that assess how knowledge work contributes to outputs and impact. DEC members stressed the need to improve internal and external outreach and partnerships with developing member countries, especially to understand the needs correctly and thereby prioritize among alternative actions, and also supported Management's indication that it endeavors to undertake partnerships with centers of excellence also as a way to sustain financing for knowledge products and services. DEC underscored the importance of tapping into staff's tacit knowledge and exploring South-South cooperation in regard to partnerships.

5. **Best practices within ADB, the role of resident missions (RM) and country knowledge plans.** DEC recognized best practices within ADB such as the institutionalization of Southeast Asia Department's knowledge strategy framework and East Asia Department's Regional Knowledge Sharing Initiative, established jointly with PRC's Ministry of Finance. DEC members echoed concerns about

¹ It is envisaged that the Board will be consulted through an informal Board seminar.

knowledge being HQ centered and inquired about ways to actively involve RM staff in knowledge sharing. DEC supported Management drive to involve RMs in knowledge sharing as an organizational process that is beginning to take root, replacing old approaches where RMs used to shy away from disseminating knowledge work or taking a lead on a particular issue. DEC supported the proposed approach whereby the new action plan will support the preparation and implementation of country-specific knowledge plans, where individual knowledge solutions are linked to current and planned investment operations. DEC encouraged the staff to be more innovative by proactively providing the clients with knowledge services and products to serve their shifting needs. DEC was pleased to note that as clarified by staff, institutional arrangements are in place to ensure that knowledge capture components are integrated in the design of technical assistance projects.

II. DEC 2013 Work Plan

6. DEC discussed and approved the 2013 work plan with meetings spread out throughout the year, focusing on strategic issues and covering a mix of studies and broader reports.