

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE (DEC)

Chair's Summary of the Committee's Discussion on 9 April 2008

Special Evaluation Study on Managing for Development Results in the Asian Development Bank: A Preliminary Assessment

1. The special evaluation study (SES) prepared by ADB's Operations Evaluation Department (OED) aimed to evaluate the general progress of ADB's Managing for Development Results (MfDR) initiative in 2007 and to complement other progress reports prepared for MfDR. It was noted that the SES only covered Pillar #2 of ADB's three-pillar MfDR Action Plan, with a full SES planned for 2009 ("Institutional Effectiveness at ADB"). Still, it is notable that ADB is the only MDB to have prepared an independent evaluation of its MfDR activities. The SES engaged both internal and external clients of ADB in surveys, focus group discussions, one-on-one interviews and consultations. Various documents were also reviewed. The survey obtained 41 per cent response rate.

Summary of Discussions

2. DEC expressed concern on the study's findings that there is interdepartmental difference in staff perception: across departments, staff differ in their assessment of the progress of MfDR, implying a lack of staff awareness and ownership of the initiative. One DEC member asked why professional staff were not made fully aware of the MfDR agenda. OED advised that the study had not investigated the causes for the difference in perception and that future studies would explore these interdepartmental differences. One DEC member asked if OED could infer that implementation of MfDR would have been better if there were better incentives for staff.

3. One DEC member inquired about the major impediments to effective implementation of MfDR, and if other multilateral development banks (MDBs) faced similar challenges. He acknowledged that, in development efforts, results do take time to manifest themselves. He also sought clarification on the reason why perceptions of DMCs were also not obtained under the study, and if there were plans to include them in future studies. OED explained that there was no field work done for the study, but succeeding studies would include the DMCs.

4. DEC Chair inquired whether goal congestion hindered the success of MfDR. He also noted with concern that 50 per cent of staff regarded MfDR as a "fad" even after five years of its implementation. One DEC member also commented that given senior Management's critical enabler role in achieving success in MfDR implementation, senior Management needs to be seen as taking on greater ownership in translating support into practice and visibly sustained in the implementation phase.

5. DEC noted the study's recommendation for ADB to pursue "significantly increased effort", as indicated in Scenario 3, in which Management could consider giving greater emphasis on changing established practices to achieve better implementation in a shorter time.

6. In its response, Management pointed out that OED's recommendation and Management's position were similar. Management believed that, given the resource constraints, a combination of intense efforts as suggested under Scenario 3 and a "modest increase in efforts" as recommended under Scenario 2 would be a more practical solution. This will also

allow the review of the MfDR Action Plan, which is scheduled for this year, and the full SES to be completed before a substantial scaling-up is considered.

7. Management stated that the scope of the staff perception survey of MfDR was confined to measuring and monitoring of results only and could have included project implementation efforts as well. ADB would soon move the MfDR to an initiative that follows a top-down, corporate-wide results framework as opposed to the current bottom-up approach. The new approach would better clarify institutional goals of ADB, and help departments/staff to align their activities with such goals.

8. In response to a question from DEC, Management also pointed out that discussions between ADB and ADF donors during ADF X replenishment meetings confirmed that ADB's progress on the MfDR agenda, particularly the proposals to adopt the corporate-wide results framework, compare very favorably with other MDBs.

Conclusions

9. DEC welcomed the SES on MfDR and noted that ADB's progress in implementing the MfDR compared favourably with that of other MDBs. DEC agreed that success of MfDR requires strong support from senior management.

10. DEC recommended a careful analysis of the interdepartmental differences in staff perception about MfDR. A comparison with other MDBs as well as other governments implementing MfDR would also be useful. DEC also deemed it necessary to examine if goal congestion and multiplicity of desired outcomes were impacting the success of MfDR.

11. DEC recommended that Management step up its effort in implementing MfDR through a suitable combination of Scenario 2 and Scenario 3 contained in the report.

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Chair, DEC