

## MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS TO SELECTED CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

### I. Overall Assessment

1. We appreciate OED's Technical Assistance Performance Evaluation Report (TPER) for Environmental Management Technical Assistance (TA) Projects to selected Central Asian countries. The TPER provides a comprehensive cross-country review of ADB's support for improving the environmental monitoring and management capacities in Central Asian Republics (CARs). The TPAR evaluated eight such TAs in four CARs, i.e., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

2. The TPER considers that overall the TAs were partly successful – two of the eight were rated successful, five were rated partly successful, and one was rated unsuccessful. The TPER observed that while most of the TAs were relevant in terms of contributing to the reform strategies and meeting sector priorities, their effectiveness of the TAs in terms of achieving the desired outcome was generally limited. Most TAs have had low sustainability in terms of their outcome and the collective impact of the TAs is assessed “moderate”.

### II. Issues, Lessons, and Follow-Up Actions

3. We take note of three key issues identified by the TPER, i.e., aid coordination, transboundary issues, and the training programs.

4. With respect to the observation that ADB should take a proactive role in transboundary environmental issues, while we support this recommendation, we would like to point out that ADB has already been actively involved in transboundary environmental and natural resource management. Aside from the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program, which provides a useful platform for addressing transboundary issues related to energy and transport, ADB is leading the 10-year program for Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), which involves coordination of five CARs and 11 donor agencies. ADB has been active in assisting countries in transboundary water resource management through a TA on “Improved Management of Shared Water Resources in Central Asia”, which has been brokering an agreement on the Syr Darya River Basin. In addition, ADB is proposing similar interventions on the Amu Darya River Basin.

5. The TPER has identified some valuable lessons for various aspects of the TA design and implementation, including TA strategy, TA design, TA consultants, TA implementation, and follow-on TA. These lessons are both timely and relevant for improving ADB's assistance in the CARs. In this regard, we note that CWRD has recently restructured its front office to form a Safeguards Unit by bringing all the environmental and social development specialists into one team. One of the objectives is to invigorate ADB's assistance in environmental and social safeguards including capacity development and improvement in the legal and institutional framework in these areas.

6. **TA Strategy.** The TPER suggests that the environmental TAs were developed without a clear linkage to the country strategies and programs. It also suggests that this has been corrected through the introduction of country environmental analysis into the country partnership strategy (CPS) development process. In general we agree that the TAs should better reflect the

priorities in the CPS, and will work to improve the CPS and Central Asia Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program to more explicitly assess and address the environmental needs of the CARs.

7. **TA Design.** We agree that the TAs could have benefited from more in-depth consultations with stakeholders on specific needs, constraints, level of development, and technical capacity of the countries. Management will work to enable the design of future environmental TAs to better reflect specific needs of individual countries. Another related lesson is that TA formulation needs to be focused and avoid ambitious designs. We agree with this view. We have been promoting the use of the design and monitoring framework as a tool for defining TA outputs clearly and choosing monitorable and measurable targets for measuring the outcome of TA projects.

8. **TA Consultants.** On TA consultant selection, we agree with the TPER's recommendation that recruitment of consultants should place reasonable weight on their understanding of local realities and encourage use of qualified national consultants. This is consistent with the current ADB-wide movement towards greater use of local expertise.

9. **TA Implementation.** On TA Implementation, high turnovers of staff administering TAs are an ADB-wide issue. Effective and timely communication among executing agencies, consultants, and ADB officers is also important for TA success. An effective way to improve communication is to delegate, to the extent possible, TA implementation to Resident Missions (RMs). We support the continued strengthening of the RMs to take on greater responsibilities in TA processing and administration.

10. **Follow-on TA.** We agree with the TPER's suggestion that follow-on TA projects should be built on the outputs of the earlier TAs. The TAs have helped establish a firm basis for regional cooperation on environment, helped define the environmental agenda, and have strengthened the environmental capacity in the CARs. We note that this is an ongoing agenda and more assistance is needed to assist the countries to mainstream environmental considerations in economic development, strengthen information sharing, and to foster cooperation on management of shared resources.