

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Greater Mekong Subregion Sixth Meeting of the Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD-6) Phuket, Thailand 21-22 April 2005

Introduction

1. The Sixth Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD-6) was held in Phuket, Thailand on 21-22 April 2005. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Royal Thai Government hosted the meeting in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
2. The theme of WGHRD-6 was *“Improving the Competitiveness of the Greater Mekong Subregion.”* The overall objective of the meeting was to strengthen further GMS cooperation in HRD and capacity building. The specific objectives of the meeting were: (i) to review the progress of GMS cooperation in HRD; (ii) to identify priority subregional needs; (iii) to discuss and agree on new proposals for subregional cooperation; (iv) to share ideas with development partners on areas of common interest and meaningful partnerships; and (v) to submit ideas/inputs on HRD to higher authorities in the GMS.
3. The meeting was held in plenary and break-out sessions and consisted of the following sessions: opening session; review of GMS Program and Strategic Directions in HRD; presentations of Country Statements; review of ongoing initiatives in the subsectors of Health, Education, and Labor; presentations on new initiatives in Health, Education and Social Development; general discussions on said initiatives; break-out sessions to identify priority needs in Health, Education and Labor; presentations of breakout sessions results in plenary; discussions on how to further advance GMS cooperation in HRD; and closing session. The Agenda and Program of the meeting is attached as [Appendix 1](#).
4. The participants included government representatives from the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Union of Myanmar, the Royal Thai Government, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Also present were representatives of multilateral and bilateral organizations, as well as regional academic and research institutions. The list of participants is attached as [Appendix 2](#).
5. The first day session was chaired by Mr. Apinan Phatarathiyanon, Deputy Director-General, Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Thai Government, and co-chaired by Mr. Jean Pierre Verbiest, Country Director, ADB Resident Mission in Thailand.
6. The second day session was chaired by Mr. Apinan Phatarathiyanon, Deputy Director-General, Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA) and co-chaired by Mr. Myo Thant, Principal Economist, Social Sectors Division, Mekong Department.

Opening Session

7. Mr. Piamsak Milintachinda, Director-General, Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Thai Government extended on behalf of the Thai Government, his warm welcome to all the participants. He expressed his thanks to ADB for co-organizing the meeting with Thailand. In his remarks, he stated that HRD is an important element in the development process. He recalled that at the WGHRD-5 in Yangon, Myanmar last year, the Working Group agreed on a number of projects which were subsequently included in the plan of action endorsed by the 13th GMS Ministerial Conference held in Vientiane, Lao PDR in December 2004. Mr. Piamsak was pleased to note that the WGHRD-6 had chosen the theme of improving competitiveness, a topic which has become one of the priorities of Thailand, in terms of value-adding to and promoting excellence in the country's products and services. He pointed out that the decisions to be arrived at this meeting would be submitted to the 2nd GMS Summit in July in Kunming, PRC. He encouraged the active participation of everyone and wished all the participants fruitful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Phuket. A copy of his welcome remarks appears as [Appendix 3](#).

8. Mr. Jean Pierre Verbiest, Country Director, Thailand Resident Mission, ADB, welcomed everyone to the meeting in behalf of ADB and expressed his thanks to the Government of Thailand for hosting the meeting. He noted the presence of many development partners, including regional research and academic institutions as a clear manifestation of interest in the very important topic of human resource development. He stated that HRD would continue to be a priority sector under the GMS economic cooperation program under the guidance of the GMS Ministers. He pointed out that the WGHRD-6 theme, ***“Improving the Competitiveness of the Greater Mekong Subregion”*** has emphasized that continued improvements in health, education, and labor productivity of the people in the subregion are key to the long-term growth and development of the GMS. Mr. Verbiest mentioned three issues that gave added significance to the meeting, namely: (i) timing – in light of the forthcoming 2nd GMS Leaders' Summit on 4-5 July 2005 to which the achievements and discussions of the meeting would be submitted; (ii) emerging connectivity of the GMS through physical infrastructure projects that will facilitate cross-border mobility of people and concomitant new problems such as cross border trafficking in labor and new issues such as labor skills, movement, and competitiveness; and (iii) other challenges in HRD such as HIV/AIDS, SARS and avian flu along with older problems like malaria, and constraints in providing access to basic education and care to the poor. He expressed confidence that the meeting would lead to new or renewed partnerships and networking arrangements that would address these challenges and support sub-regional cooperation in HRD in an effective and sustainable manner. He stated that ADB alone cannot support the various initiatives required to address these emerging issues and looks forward to the support and cooperation of the other development partners under mutually meaningful partnerships. Finally, he wished everyone a successful meeting. A copy of his welcome remarks appears as [Appendix 4](#).

GMS Program/Strategic Directions/Involvement of Development Partners and Private Sector

9. Mr. Myo Thant, Principal Economist, Social Sectors Division, ADB gave a presentation on the Greater Mekong Subregion which recently has included Guangxi Autonomous Region of PRC. He briefed the participants on the GMS Economic Cooperation Program that involves nine priority sectors, including HRD. He highlighted the three building blocks or guide posts for attaining the GMS vision of growth, equity and prosperity for the sub-region, namely, enhanced regional **connectivity**, increased **competitiveness**, and increased sense of **community** (3 Cs). Mr. Thant also mentioned the expansion of regional cooperation such as Development Triangle, ACMECS, BIMSTEC, India-Myanmar-Thailand transport corridor and strengthening of cooperation with development partners and the private sector through the Mekong Development Forum and regular consultations during Ministerial and working group meetings, as important developments that have further enhanced cooperation in the GMS. He also briefed the participants on recent strategic directions emanating from the 13th GMS Ministerial Conference held in Vientiane in December 2004, particularly the major points stressed in the Joint Ministerial Statement and accompanying Plan of Action related to GMS subregional cooperation in HRD. Among these were the emphasis on the role of the private sector and broader engagement of development partners in the GMS Program; the need for a coordinated regional response to address the spread of communicable diseases; the role of regional institutions and academic networks in capacity building, and a strong endorsement of the Phnom Penh Plan to implement learning programs, and the offers from Thailand and PRC for special training programs. He called the attention of the meeting to the challenges for the WGHRD, namely: (i) Focus vs. number and extent of challenges; (ii) Three different groups (health, education, labor); (iii) Lack of institutional memory; (iv) Difficulty in designing “regional” projects; and (v) Limited resources (technical and financial).

10. Mr. Thant reiterated the objectives of WGHRD-6 as enumerated in paragraph 2 above. In summary, Mr. Thant stated that the Working Group on HRD has done a lot, but now it faces yet a new and exciting beginning, as it were, in light of the many new and emerging challenges and issues that confront the subregion. A copy of Mr. Thant’s presentation appears as [Appendix 5](#).

11. The Chairman urged the Working Group to think and work collectively not only among themselves but also with the development partners in formulating a work plan for HRD cooperation. He stated that the philosophy of the Working Group should be self-reliance even as it looks forward to meaningful partnerships with development partners.

Introduction of Delegates and Participants

12. The Chairman invited the GMS country delegates and observers from development partners to introduce themselves to the other participants.

Country Statements

13. Representatives from each of the six GMS countries presented their respective Country Statements in alphabetical order. Their presentations are summarized below. Full copies of the country statements are attached in [Appendix 6](#).

Cambodia

14. Mr. Hou Vudthy, Deputy Director-General, Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, Kingdom of Cambodia, on behalf of his delegation expressed his thanks to the Royal Thai Government and ADB for hosting and organizing the meeting. He stated that the movement of people, especially migration for employment, has become a crucial issue for the GMS governments, together with health and education. He said that the Cambodian Delegation was prepared to share information and exchange views with the other participants on these issues.

PRC

15. Ms. Lu Guoping, Section Chief, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Health, PRC, presented PRC's Country Statement. In her presentation, Ms. Lu discussed the progress in PRC's cooperation in HRD in GMS: 50 trainees from China attended Phnom Penh Plan I training programs. She stated that preparations are underway for the following PRC initiatives: (i) workshop on malaria control in China-Myanmar Border Areas, Kunming, 6-7 June 2005; and (ii) Training workshop on HIV/AIDS Strategic Program Development in Ruili and Muse, on 9-11 June 2005. She mentioned PRC's proposal for the 1st GMS Forum on Communicable Diseases planned to be held in Guilin, Guangxi, China on 29-31 August 2005. She enumerated the challenges for PRC: economic transition related development problems e.g. retrenched workers, rural to urban migration, and shortage of field epidemiologists for public health emergencies. She outlined PRC's offers of assistance, including a donation of US \$ 20 million to the China Fund for Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation (PRCF) to be administered by ADB. On strategic directions, China plans to expand the China-Myanmar malaria and HIV/AIDS training program to involve all the GMS countries. China also proposes the development of a GMS 5-year plan of action for health cooperation. Proposed areas of cooperation are: human resources training on surveillance, epidemic control, management of public health emergencies; disease surveillance, vaccine and drugs; development of cooperative education programs among higher education institutions/universities; establishment of a training base in Kunming to offer training programs to GMS countries; and establishment of distant-learning education program for vocational and skills training.

16. The Chairman expressed on behalf of the other delegates the Meeting's appreciation for the offers of assistance from PRC and welcomed the news regarding the establishment of the Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund. The Chairman expressed Thailand's desire to join hands with PRC in offering assistance to the other GMS countries in capacity building.

Lao PDR

17. Mr. Sengsomphone Viravouth, Deputy Director-General, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Education, Lao PDR, presented Lao PDR's Country Statement. He discussed economic and socio-demographic facts and figures for Lao PDR. He recalled the subregional issues identified at WGHRD-5 in the Education sector as well as those relating to cross-cutting issues (capacity-building, gender, poverty and ethnic minorities). He discussed Lao PDR's responses at the national and regional levels regarding HIV/AIDS preventive education (through the ADB technical assistance for ICT and HIV/AIDS Preventive Education in cross-border areas) and quality

assurance in basic education. He emphasized the need for long-term sustainable capacity building for each country, for utilizing and strengthening existing institutions, and for promoting synergy and pooling of resources from various donors to achieve quality basic education in the GMS and contribute to subregional growth and poverty alleviation.

Myanmar

18. Mr. Ye Myint, Deputy Director-General (Public Health/Disease Control), Ministry of Health, Myanmar presented basic facts and figures about the country. He discussed the major thrusts under Myanmar's Country Development Program and Sectoral Development Plans for Health, Education, and Labor. He also discussed the progress of various national and regional activities under the three sectors that are being pursued under bilateral, and regional cooperation schemes (including ASEAN and GMS). Under *Health*, he identified the following *issues and challenges*: (i) fake/low quality drugs; (ii) drug/insecticide resistance; (iii) access to health services by mobile population at border areas; (iv) multiple languages and cultural beliefs; (v) little access to external assistance. He suggested the following *priority areas for future cooperation*: (i) communicable diseases control in the GMS; (ii) training/institutional networking in the GMS; (iii) information networking; and (iv) operational research. Under *Education*, the following priorities were identified: (i) ICT in education, including distance education; and (ii) decentralized education management. Under *Labor*, he emphasized the need for labor market situation statistics and analysis and expanded skills training to include more occupations/trades for which there is a demand from the private sector.

Thailand

19. Ms. Areeya Rojvithee, Senior Expert on Skills Development, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labor, on behalf of the leader of the Thai Delegation, presented Thailand's Country Statement. In her presentation, Ms. Areeya mentioned that TICA serves as the focal agency for technical cooperation with other countries and development partners. She reported that under Labor, Thailand has implemented training courses to increase productivity and competitiveness of the country's workforce. The Chiang Saen International Institute for Skill Development has been established and it could offer training for GMS countries in the field of labor protection, labor relations, labor standards, labor laws and regulations improvement. Thailand proposes six training courses for cooperation in the GMS, namely: Training on Working Environment Assessment for Labor Inspectors in the GMS; Training of GMS Labor Officials on Labor Standards; Training on Social Security System; Development of Regional Skill Standards, Testing System and Skills Recognition for GMS Countries; Ozone Depleting Substance Phase Out Project in the GMS; and Training for Increasing Productivity for Workforce in the GMS. Thailand will support these training courses and hopes that development partners could get involved. In Education, increased access to education for all is the policy of the Thai Government, together with improving the quality of education and educational standards to enhance the sub-region's competitiveness. In Health, the achievement of health for all is at the heart of Thailand's endeavors towards sustainable development. Partnerships among health and health-related sectors, NGOs, the private sector, UN organizations and donor agencies are emphasized. Enhanced inter-country cooperation to control diseases, particularly at border areas is also stressed. The following areas for cooperation among GMS countries were suggested: traditional medicine, vaccine development, food and drug control,

communicable diseases control and surveillance (HIV/AIDS, SARS, avian flu). Thailand also proposed a training course on HIV/AIDS prevention and control, blood safety, medical service, surveillance, health care financing and health insurance, and laboratory testing for GMS health officials.

Viet Nam

20. Mr. Nguyen Trung Hung, Expert, Ministry of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs, presented Viet Nam's Country Statement. His presentation focused on the topic of Labor. On the status of population and labor force of Viet Nam, quality of labor force is generally low, 78.78% consisting of unskilled workers. Agriculture labor rate is decreasing, private household sectors play an important role in job generation, labor productivity is low, income disparity between rural and urban areas is increasing. He mentioned the challenges confronted by Viet Nam: underemployment and unemployment, and low productivity of labor force due to poor quality of human resources. He discussed the country's policies on human resource development: development of technical labor force, encouraging vocational training/trainees, encouraging establishment of vocational training schools/centers.

Status of Ongoing WGHRD Initiatives

21. The session covered presentations on the status of various ongoing initiatives under the topics of Health, Education and Labor. It also allowed comments and reactions from the floor as recorded below.

Health

22. Mr. Vincent de Wit, Senior Health Specialist, MKSS, ADB, presented an update on GMS Health sector priorities and current activities covering emerging diseases, HIV/AIDS control, malaria control for ethnic minorities, and the regional Communicable Diseases Control Project. He mentioned the emerging diseases in the subregion: SARS, avian flu, and dengue hemorrhagic fever and discussed ADB's response in the context of technical and advisory technical assistance, the CDC project, and other activities. He also presented the HIV/AIDS trend both as a global and regional issue, as well as the comparative cost for prevention and care vis-à-vis no intervention, the estimated resource needs for HIV in the Asia-Pacific region and the potential sources of funding. He discussed the elements of ADB's proposed strategic directions in response to HIV/AIDS, including leadership support, capacity building, and targeted programs, as well as resources that could be tapped such as ADB's special fund for grant resources (ADF IX) and SIDA Trust Fund financed by the Swedish Government. He also gave overviews of activities for strengthening malaria control for ethnic minorities, of the project preparatory technical assistance for the Communicable Diseases Project, and of the CDC Project itself which will involve three countries (Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Cambodia) and to be pursued in collaboration with WHO. He mentioned that the CDC project would require a total amount of \$45 Million and that ADB would be contributing \$30 Million. The project is linked to PRC's proposal on the 1st GMS Forum on CDC. A copy of Mr. de Wit's presentation appears in [Appendix 7](#).

23. Dr. Rosalia Sciortino, Rockefeller Foundation inquired how the CDC project was related to the Mekong Disease Surveillance Program and whether institutions that were already involved could participate in the ADB initiative. Mr. de Wit responded that GMS

governments would take the lead and that the project would be a long-term, scaled-up initiative that hopefully would provide a comprehensive surveillance response system in the subregion.

24. Ms. Irena V. Sollorano of IOM inquired if migrants have been considered and Mr. de Wit confirmed that this is the case; the issues are regional but the solutions are local and will be discussed in more detail during the breakout session.

Education

25. Ms. Sukhdeep Brar, Senior Education Specialist, MKSS, ADB presented the highlights of the ADB technical assistance for **Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management (Phase I)** that was approved in 2002 and implemented in 2003. She presented the context for PPP, i.e, enhancing capacities in the GMS. In line with the PPP's goal to improve efficiency and effectiveness of development management in the GMS, five (5) major strategic thrusts have been pursued, viz: demand-driven learning programs; developing a core of GMS champions; intellectual capital development; advocacy, outreach and knowledge sharing; and institutional networking and development. She reported on the major accomplishments under Phase I, as follows: (i) Learning Programs: 20 courses conducted in 2003-2004 attended by 300 middle and senior level GMS officials; (ii) Learning Resource Center (formally opened in December 2004 at ADB's Cambodia Resident Mission in Phnom Penh as a one-stop shop knowledge source and information gateway on the GMS); (iii) PPP Fellowship Program (two fellows from Myanmar and Viet Nam); (iv) Top Development Management Program (v) Journal of GMS Development Studies: 1st issue launched in December 2004; (vi) PPP Newsletter's 1st issue released in November 2004, and website launched in September 2004, with monthly updating. A network of capacity building partners has been established involving established educational institutions in the region. The various PPP interventions are expected to generate a multiplier effect from a core of GMS change agents leading to institutional reforms and ultimately to economic growth and development. A copy of Ms. Brar's presentation on PPP Phase I appears as [Appendix 8](#).

26. Ms. Lu, PRC, inquired about the selection criteria and requested that they be made more flexible to allow more candidates to qualify. She further inquired about the status of the capacity building program for National GMS Secretariats, particularly on orientation training for staff of GMS national secretariats regarding policies and strategic directions of ADB. In response, Mr. Thant reiterated the importance of adhering to established selection criteria but the possibility of allowing flexibility would be brought for the consideration of the May 2005 PPP Board meeting in Lijiang. He also mentioned the existence of a technical assistance facility for capacity building for GMS National Secretariats and this would be followed up with the relevant unit at ADB.

Labor

27. Ms. Manoshi Mitra, Senior Social Development Specialist, MKAE, ADB, made a presentation on **Labor Issues in GMS: ADB Initiatives**. She cited the phenomenal rise in economic migration and labor mobility across the long, porous borders in the GMS that are determined largely by seasonal patterns in agriculture and diversity in economic opportunities, among other factors. In addition to economic migration, other types of migration are also taking place including irregular migration, asylum seekers,

refugees, forced migration, etc. She pointed out that economic migrants who often are undocumented and uneducated are vulnerable to the risks of trafficking because they are outside the protection of the law and potentially at the mercy of unscrupulous employers. Human trafficking is a major concern in the sub-region and GMS governments are committed to combating all forms of trafficking. She mentioned several international and regional initiatives in this regard, including ASEAN Hanoi Plan of Action, Bangkok Declaration on Irregular Migration, Manila Process, Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking, among others. The GMS countries are working to combat trafficking through the COMMIT process. She cited other developments such as improved transportation links and growing tourism developments in the GMS, which foster growth and contribute to poverty reduction but also have negative impacts e.g. migration and human trafficking.

28. Ms. Mitra reported on ADB's anti-trafficking initiatives. A proactive measure has been taken by adopting a set of guidelines for the Bank's various infrastructure projects in order to mitigate negative consequences, including human trafficking, of such projects. ADB has also financed activities to address this issue. One of these is a technical assistance on ***Preventing the Trafficking of Women and Children and Promoting Safe Migration in the GMS***, now being implemented in cooperation with UNIAP. The TA is supporting COMMIT activities, the setting up of a regional training center, and development of the training curriculum. It also involves research for setting-up community-based referral systems to combat trafficking. An MOU has been signed by the participating countries to work together on substantial areas, including training programs, field work in the cross-border areas where patterns of migration and tourism activities are increasing, information campaign to reach ethnic minorities, economic pilots, and a regional workshop to be held in Manila in October 2006. Other measures to promote safe migration such as legislation for protection of migrant workers are also being pursued.

29. Ms. Mitra also reported on another ADB technical assistance ***on ICT and HIV/AIDS Preventive Education in the Border Areas of the GMS***. The outputs include regional and national training curricula, training of trainers, ICT-based materials in local languages, video programs in ethnic minority languages, and radio programs aimed at isolated communities, among others. A copy of Ms. Mitra's presentation under this session appears in [Appendix 9](#).

Discussions

30. IOM stressed the importance of legal framework, e.g, the MOU on labor migration and trafficking in addressing the issue. She stated that IOM looks forward to the implementation of the MOU as the best way to address the problem.

31. UNIAP stressed the importance of managing migration in a constructive way and stated that they have been working closely with GMS governments. With the support of ADB, a subregional plan of action has just been developed and is now being reviewed by GMS governments for finalization in May 2005. He cited the support and cooperation that ADB, IOM and other partners have extended in this regard.

32. Thailand remarked that the issues and responses discussed regarding anti-trafficking are compatible with the thrust and objective of Thailand's new proposal on Community Development Program to be presented later for the meeting's consideration.

33. In concluding the session, the Chairman acknowledged the various activities and initiatives that the ADB and other development partners are undertaking to address the issues discussed.

34. Copies of the Project Status Report Forms under this session are attached as [Appendix 10](#).

New Initiatives

35. This session covered presentations on new initiatives under the topics of Health, Education, and Social Development by participants from selected GMS countries, development partners, and ADB, followed by comments/reactions from the floor.

Health

36. Mr. de Wit, ADB, started his presentation with a summary of the Performance of Health MDGs as follows: On Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger, malnutrition is declining due to better food security but not in line with target. On Reduction of Child Mortality, the trend is half of what is needed to achieve target of 4.5% decline per year due to perinatal infections and malnutrition. On Improvement of Maternal Health, maternal mortality is declining but remains very high among the poor ethnic minorities. On Containing HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS is being reversed in Thailand and Cambodia at high cost and is expanding in other countries in the region. He pointed out the emerging diseases in the region such as SARS, avian flu, and dengue hemorrhagic fever and the need for risk reduction, preparedness, surveillance and response, and rehabilitation measures. He enumerated the various regional responses to emerging diseases, notably those organized by governments in coordination with and with technical support from agencies/organizations such as WHO, FAO, OIE, ADB, JICA, CIDA, BTC, ASEAN, MBDS, etc. Mr. de Wit reported also on the HIV/AIDS situation in Asia and the regional responses to the epidemic led by governments in coordination and with funding and technical support from major donors like the Global Fund, DFID, USAID, WB, UNAIDS, SIDA and ADB. He showed the pattern of public sector health expenditure in the subregion which remains low. He argued for health sector reform and identified the following health sector priorities for regional collaboration: (i) control of communicable diseases; and (2) pro-poor health system development to achieve MDGs, including technology transfer for health system development. A copy of Mr. de Wit's presentation appears as [Appendix 11](#).

37. Ms. Lu Guoping, Section Chief, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Health, PRC, presented PRC's proposal on the **1st GMS Forum on Communicable Diseases and other Health Initiatives**. The proposed Forum is intended to be an integral part of the ADB Communicable Diseases Control Project discussed earlier. Ms. Lu recalled that this initiative was endorsed by the 13th GMS Ministerial Conference held in Vientiane in December 2004. It aims to (i) contribute to policy, strategic study, regional coordination and information sharing; and (ii) enhance mutual understanding on disease information sharing, surveillance, reporting, and prevention mechanisms. Expected results are better understanding of each other's communicable diseases control mechanisms, identification of focal points in each country for outbreak notification and assistance coordination, and determination of specific measures for further collaboration. The 3-day Forum is tentatively scheduled on 29-31 August 2005 in Guilin,

Guangxi Autonomous Region. Intended participants are experts in disease control, entry-exit quarantine and international health from the GMS countries, including officials and experts from ADB, WHO and other development partners. The forum is proposed to be co-financed by the PRC Government and ADB. A copy of PRC's proposal appears as [Appendix 12](#).

38. The Chairman remarked that the Forum should be seen, not as a one-shot activity, but rather as a continuing process under the CDC program. He suggested that PRC highlight the theme for the first forum; the succeeding events could follow suit.

39. Ms. Guoping confirmed that the forum is intended as a continuing activity to be done on rotation basis among the GMS countries.

40. The representative of Thailand stated that Thailand has related programs in place and that experiences could be shared in this regard; moreover, the forum should complement other existing mechanisms for communicable diseases such as those under ASEAN.

Education

41. Ms. Anita Horton, Resource Mobilization Officer, Mekong Institute, presented a paper on the ***Role of the Mekong Institute in Improving GMS Competitiveness***. She stated that the Mekong Institute, which was conceived as a GMS assistance project of New Zealand, Khon Kaen University, and the Royal Thai Government in 1996 has since been transformed in June 2003 into a GMS institution under a joint charter signed by the six GMS Governments. The Institute has evolved as an autonomous, international organization that provides high-quality, market driven learning programs that are supported by a GMS-focused program of research. Ms. Horton presented the role of MI in the GMS as a region-building institution; its strategic management plan in support of the overall GMS strategy involving the 3 Cs; planned products and services for the period 2005-2010; priority topics and professional development courses, regional seminar series, policy consultation series, research and networking activities; and financial strategy and funding plans. She emphasized that MI's programs are projects-based and intended not only for professional enhancement/development but also for building human connections/networking and developing synergistic relationships among participating academic and research institutions. She underscored the importance of GMS countries' support and involvement to develop and strengthen the MI as a regional resource. She stated that the strength of the MI is through expanded relationships with other regional entities such as PPP, GMSARN, GMSTEC, GMSBF, ACMECS, CLMV Triangle, and the GMS National Secretariats. A copy of Ms. Horton's presentation appears as [Appendix 13](#).

42. Ms. Lilita Pacudan, Project Specialist, GMS Academic and Research Network (GMSARN) gave a presentation on behalf of Ms. Tess del Rosario, Secretary-General, GMSARN. She outlined the features of ***GMSARN***, a regional network of eleven (11) universities from six (6) GMS countries, established in 2001. She presented the Network's objectives, organizational structure, focus areas (environmental management, infrastructure planning and management, ICT development, and small and medium scale enterprises development), information dissemination activities, and current research initiatives in environmental management and e-business development services. She also described GMSARN's development research agenda for the Mekong

sub-region focusing on 4 Ps: Protect (biodiversity conservation), Prevent (mitigate negative impacts of infrastructure corridors in GMS), Promote (entrepreneurship and economic prosperity; and Provide (opportunities for growth). Ms. Pacudan highlighted the strengths of GMSARN member institutions: their reputation as leading institutions that receive substantial national support and have the capacity to respond to professional needs, their influential alumni and networking capability at national, regional and international levels. She stated that GMSARN will work further towards building self-reliance, strengthening its commitment to sustainable development in the GMS, enhancing academic and research expertise, and promoting extensive networking activities even beyond the borders of GMS. A copy of Ms. Pacudan's presentation appears as [Appendix 14](#).

43. Ms. Brar, ADB, discussed the extension and expansion of PPP Phase I into the **Phnom Penh Plan Phase II** under a technical assistance facility provided by ADB. Phase II will cover a continuation of Phase I activities as well as new learning programs on various topics (infrastructure, managing state reforms, project feasibility and design, etc.), new capacity building partners, new activities including a distinguished speakers series that will feature eminent world figures, development management dialogue that will foster exchange of ideas through video conferencing, alumni program, intellectual capital development through twinning and joint research activities, institutional networking and development, and impact assessment of the program. Financing for PPP II will come from several sources, namely, ADB, NZAID, France, and PRC. A copy of Ms. Brar's presentation appears as [Appendix 15](#).

Social Development

44. The Co-chairman conveyed to the participants the sincere apologies of the World Bank's representative, Mr. Pierre Fallavier, who could not attend as originally planned. Mr. Fallavier, however, provided a paper on the World Bank's **GMS Labor Migration Program: Impacts and Regulation of Labor Migration in the GMS**, a copy of which was distributed and is attached as [Appendix 16](#).

45. Mr. Thant made a special presentation on why labor and labor issues have emerged as an important consideration in the GMS scheme of cooperation, namely, (i) ensure competitiveness of the GMS; (ii) ensure that benefits of regional cooperation are equitable; (iii) increasing movement of people and labor due to connectivity; and (iv) regionalization of production processes. He recalled the different initiatives that have so far been pursued such as: Cooperation in Employment Promotion and Training in the GMS in 1997; the WB study on labor migration; and cross-border trafficking activities. He also mentioned the various labor-related proposals that had been made in past WGHRD meetings that have not been acted upon mainly due to funding and staff constraints. These proposals were on labor inventory study, labor market information study, labor standards, skills training and standardization, regional mechanism for management of studies, upgrading of institutions, and training of workers. He suggested for the meeting to discuss the demand for these proposals, determine the interest from development partners and the possible involvement of the private sector. Mr. Thant further suggested that the break-out session on labor consider these issues more closely and come out with concrete action-driven recommendations. Mr. Thant mentioned that ADB is prepared to organize a conference on labor later this year and that ADB would try to source funds if the GMS countries would confirm that such a conference would be useful. A copy of Mr. Thant's presentation appears as [Appendix 17](#).

Discussion

46. IOM expressed interest and support for ADB's initiative that would help clarify labor migration issues in the subregion.

47. Ms. Mitra emphasized the need to dignify labor by considering all the related-issues, not only training needs. The proposed conference could be a starting point for an ADB project in the future. She suggested that the ILO and social science faculty/researchers be invited to provide critical inputs to the discussion of labor issues, such as studies on the impact of cross border migration.

48. UNAIDS cited the inclination to separate human trafficking from labor issues; he stated that labor issue is fundamental to development concerns.

49. Thailand mentioned a proposal under ASEAN on prevention of people trafficking in Southeast Asia through a coordinated approach; four GMS countries are participating and each has set up trafficking specialized units.

50. Rockefeller Foundation mentioned the Mekong migrant network composed of NGOS that are studying migration trends in the Mekong. A publication is coming out on trends and impact assessment of migration in the region.

51. The Chairman congratulated ADB for its initiative to organize a conference in labor with other development partners. He emphasized the need to avoid duplication among the various programs and that harmonization of activities should be discussed during the conference

52. Ms. Chompunuch Ramanvongse, Policy and Plan Analyst, International Economic Strategy Unit, NESDB explained the background of Thailand's concept paper on Improving the Competitiveness of the GMS Community Development. She then introduced Mr. Disnadda Diskul of Mae Fah Luang Foundation to present Thailand's draft **Concept Paper on GMS Community Development Program**. Mr. Disnadda first gave a briefing on the success story of the Doi Tung Project which, with the support of the Royal Family of Thailand, has provided a holistic, integrated approach to the Doi Tung community that used to produce opium as cash crop. The Dai Tung project has been expanded across the border to involve Myanmar. Dai Tung project has provided health care facilities, irrigation system for food security (long term market-driven cash crops like macadamia, orchards), school facilities, etc. Given the success of the Doi Tung Project as a model, Thailand is proposing the new GMS Community Development program that aims to further enhance the efforts of GMS countries to strengthen mechanisms and networks towards sustainable utilization of community-based resources in the region. The proposed project focuses on the adoption by rural communities of sustainable alternative livelihoods through technology transfer and training on best practices and techniques in such fields as public health, vocational education, sustainable alternative livelihoods development, agriculture, processing of food and agriculture products, and tourism. It will be implemented in two phases: Phase I is the pilot phase to be implemented by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation. Phase II will involve other areas in the GMS countries and possibly development partners in the implementation of alternative livelihood development programs in close collaboration with designated government agencies, provincial/local officials, and grassroots

community leaders. Thailand has offered to serve as lead country and to host the proposed program, with the support and cooperation of the other GMS countries. Thailand also requests the funding support of ADB and other donor agencies and the support of the other GMS countries to implement the program. A copy of Thailand's paper is attached as [Appendix 18](#).

53. Ms. Mitra inquired about the level of cooperation from local NGOs in the implementation of the approaches described in the proposal. Mr. Disnadda replied that Thailand prefers 'G- to-G' partnership both at the national, local and grass roots level.

54. Viet Nam inquired about the impact of the livelihood programs on the market. Mr. Disnadda responded that one has to look at the market first and determine demand; it has to be market-driven.

55. In response to a query from Hanns Seidel Foundation, Mr. Disnadda emphasized the importance of getting the community's trust and of the philosophy of teaching the people how to fish rather than giving them fish.

56. Mekong Institute commented that rural labor is an important and critical issue because of the prevailing underemployment among the rural population.

General Discussions

57. Mr. Thant drew attention to the following issues:

- PRC's proposal for a 5-year plan for the health sector; he suggested that the need for such a plan, not only for health but also for the other sectors be clarified during the breakout sessions.
- PRC's proposal for the 1st Forum on CDC. While ADB is prepared to assist, the demand for this activity from the other stakeholders, whether it is intended as a one-shot activity, the involvement of existing mechanisms and entities such as the WHO, and future plans, need to be clarified. He suggested that these issues be discussed in detail in the breakout session. He also suggested that the other GMS countries could respond formally within a certain time frame after the meeting.
- Issue of networks – GMSRN, GMSEC, MI, IRASEC – huge networks, all doing research on GMS that are not connected. How could these networks work together? ADB could explore funding sources for a conference to bring these networks together if there is interest from the countries.
- ADB is prepared to assist in developing a coherent capacity building strategy for the GMS to facilitate cooperation in this area. If the GMS countries are interested in this, ADB could implement a study since some work has already been done.

58. The Chairman remarked that the development of these plans/programs and support from ADB and development partners have to be integrated into the countries' respective national strategies and plans, as well as existing mechanisms like ACMECS. He also suggested to look into the possibility of developing 5-year plans for education and labor.

59. The Co-chairman expressed concern about synergies, for instance of the Mekong Institute with PPP, which have similar programs and similar stakeholders, in light of scarce resources. He suggested that the breakout sessions look into the complementarities and synergies among these initiatives/programs. He indicated his impression that the Working Group is covering a huge area of concern: education, labor, health, which are very difficult to cover in a two-day meeting. He suggested that some thought be given to a possible division of labor and other issues within the Working Group to give more focus to the discussions.

60. Ms. Lu recalled to the meeting that the 1st GMS Forum on CDC is included in the Action Plan adopted by the 13th GMS Ministerial Conference. More discussion on the proposal could be done during the breakout session the following day.

61. KUST remarked that for the proposed learning resource base in Kunming, KUST has the capacity to provide programs and similar networks as PPP and GMSARN and that this meeting has given a good opportunity for coordination and discussion on how to integrate with each other. He called for establishing a mechanism to multi-link universities in the region, e.g., in policy making referencing and research funding. KUST hosted a PPP program this year and as well as a training program for Myanmar officials.

62. Thailand proposed further discussion during the breakout sessions on cross-cutting issues and the prioritization of training needs in the GMS, in light of limited available resources from potential and emerging donors.

Day 2

Summary of Day 1 Discussions

63. Mr. Thant gave a summary of the major items and issues discussed during the preceding day, as follows:

A. Labor

- Key to sustainable development, an important issue;
- Need to cover both training and movement of people (legal/illegal migration) issues;
- ADB's readiness to organize a conference in late 2005 on labor issues if there is confirmed interest from the stakeholders and other development partners.

B. Education:

- PPP as direct outcome of 1st GMS Summit has come a long way. Phase I has made substantial accomplishments.
- Phase II is moving forward with generous support from France and New Zealand.
- There are several offers for training from Thailand and PRC. PRC mentioned about a training center in Kunming. Both KUST and MI have offered their training programs and facilities. At least 2 new training centers are coming up in GMS even as research networks proceed with their existing programs.
- Existing networks like GMSARN, GMSTEC, IRASEC, and DAN could promote intellectual discussion to feed into policy making.

- ADB could possibly provide new funding for a GMS capacity building strategy if there is firm interest from the stakeholders.

C. Health:

- CDC project is to be funded by ADB;
- PRC and Thailand offers of assistance to some GMS countries and which could be expanded to the other countries are noted.
- PRC's proposal on the 1st GMS Forum on CDC which ADB could consider to support subject to further discussion on the long-term objectives, linkages with other existing mechanisms, like WHO; details to be discussed further during the breakout sessions.

64. He noted that certain concepts have been brought out: Labor, new diseases because of the expanded connectivity happening in the GMS, competitiveness of GMS in the increasingly globalized world. While funding is getting more and more scarce, there are funds from non-GMS sources that could be tapped e.g. WB, UN system, ASEAN-Japan fund. Another issue that has come to fore is regionalism and the many existing mechanisms like ASEAN, ACMECS, BIMSTEC, etc. that need to have a coordinating mechanism so that technical and financial resources are harmonized more effectively. Still another issue is the need for networking not only among the GMS governments but also with the various development partners and donor agencies.

65. The Chairman thanked the co-chairman for his comprehensive summarization of the previous day's discussions.

Break-out Sessions on Needs under Health, Education, and Labor

66. This session consisted of simultaneous break-out sessions under the Health, Education and Labor sectors. Mr. Thant briefed the participants regarding the rationale for the simultaneous breakout sessions, i.e., to allow more intensive and focused discussion among specialists of issues under the three sectors. He invited the development partners to join the sessions. He called attention to the background notes for each sector, the information note/guidelines for the breakout sessions, and status of the development matrix that were provided in the meeting kits. He explained the background behind the development matrix which lists the projects that the countries have agreed to be important. He requested the break-out sessions to review and determine which projects/activities are important, which could be set aside, and what could be added. Each group was asked to select a team leader from a GMS country. An ADB staff would assist in facilitating the discussion.

67. The Chairman commented that at the Yangon meeting last year, each breakout session came out with a list of projects. The current break-out sessions were requested to update the past year's list. He emphasized the importance for the groups to come up with projects that are feasible and can be implemented by way of providing inputs in kind from the GMS countries if external resources could not be tapped. He stated that feasibility and implementation are more important considerations rather than the number of projects.

68. Mr. Thant also cited the need for the Working Group to provide inputs to the 2nd GMS Summit Joint Declaration; to discuss how to address cross-cutting issues and how

	<p>⇒ equivalent standards; recognition of educational attainment at all levels</p> <p>⇒ promotion of student mobility in the GMS</p>	<p>educational institutions to promote their networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and implement a TA on Institutional Networking to improve quality of basic school education • Conference/regular meeting among networks with research focus: MI, RIHED, GMSTEC, GMSARN 	Short-term
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71. Lao PDR as break-out group leader reported that the group agreed that quality of basic education is something that is best done at the national level. At the regional level, interventions can be made for capacity building to plan, manage, and administer delivery of basic education. Networking is considered critical to enable the GMS countries to benefit from existing institutions that already have the facilities and expertise. The sharing of experiences in different alternative approaches for tapping funding modalities is also useful. The group also discussed certification at different educational levels, certification/recognition of educational attainment in other countries to allow students to move from country to country. The issue of transfer of credits could be addressed in the future. The group also discussed the status of the ADB TA on ICT for HIV/AIDS Preventive Education, lessons learned that could be useful when the TA implementation is reviewed this year. The group concluded that the long-term solution is to mainstream preventive education in the regular curriculum.

72. SEAMEO representative remarked that SEAMEO and UNESCO coordinated the first phase of the HIV/AIDS preventive education project. SEAMEO is providing seed money for Phase II. Although ADB has dropped Phase II of the project, still there is demand from the GMS countries for the project; this will require coordination among the countries. SEAMEO can also help search for other sponsors. ADB's continued help in coordinating some of the activities would be appreciated.

73. In response to Viet Nam's expressed concern about the effectiveness and impact of the training component of the project, SEAMEO clarified that the project is not a training program but rather implemented by local schools.

74. The Chairman remarked that preventive education for HIV/AIDS is an important intervention. Although there may be some difficulties in implementation, it should be realized that different methodologies are applied depending on the circumstances and culture of each country.

75. Thailand stated that the Ministry of Education has been working with TICA in training teachers and principals of neighboring countries. It has also offered support for doctoral scholarships to students from Laos and Cambodia and provided training courses on career development, educational management development, HRD, and international cooperation. Training in HRD for Cambodia and services of language expert to Yangon University have also been provided.

76. The Chairman requested Thailand to take the lead in developing the concept papers on the quality assurance and networking projects in consultation with other GMS countries. He also requested the Education group to prioritize the projects and do additional work to refine the details.

77. MI suggested that focal persons from each country be identified before proceeding with the longer term expanded programs.

78. Lao PDR explained that given time constraints, the Education group agreed on the principles and that his delegation will need to consult relevant government authorities and coordinate also with the GMS national coordinator.

LABOR GROUP

SECTOR	PRIORITY ISSUES DISCUSSED	RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN	TIME FRAME
Labor	A. Capacity Building B. Labor Mobility	<p>1. Regional Conference on Labor and Labor Mobility in the GMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support from ADB • Participants: GMS Countries, ILO & other UN Agencies, UNIAP, IOM, NGOs, donors • Senior level government participants from Ministries of Labor, Foreign Affairs, Health, Social Welfare & Development, Interior, Education, Women Affairs • Provincial officials 	Second half 2005
		<p>2. RETA on Labor Issues (ADB to prepare draft concept paper in consultation with GMS governments</p> <p>Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention & protection for migrant labor through support to implement existing agreements on employment cooperation • Regional skills 	Approval of RETA in time for July 2005 GMS Summit

		standards, testing system and skills recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for increased productivity for workforce • Training on social security systems • Training on working environment assessment for labor inspectors • Training on labor standards 	
		3. Workshop on Community Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on concept paper from Thailand • May be organized back-to-back with Regional Conference on Labor and Labor Mobility • Participants: GMS countries, NGOs, international organizations, Mae Fah Luang Foundation • ADB to seek appropriate resources for workshop 	Implementation in time for July 2005 GMS Summit

79. Thailand as leader of the break-out group on Labor presented the group's report as summarized above. The group's recommendations include the following:

- Regional Conference on Labor and Labor Mobility in the GMS;
- Creation of cluster Regional Technical Assistance (RETA) on Labor issues;
- Concerning the Regional Skills Standards, Testing System and Skills Recognition Project, the group agreed to adopt the ASEAN Skills Standard because the GMS countries are also members of ASEAN + 3 (PRC, Japan, Korea).
- Workshop on Community Development (Mae Fah Luang border development)

Discussion:

80. Mr. de Wit remarked that the group's recommended actions should be coordinated with other groups like the World Bank since the latter has done a study/paper on labor.

81. IOM responded that they have worked with the WB on labor migration and that perhaps the GMS effort could source co-funding from the WB and ILO. IOM stated that they could coordinate efforts on this.

82. Regarding the community development program, Thailand clarified that this is not a one-time event but rather a long-term effort. The workshop will serve as venue to brainstorm on how GMS countries view the project and agree on a parallel approach for a long-term effort in rural development.

83. The Chairman remarked that Social Development can cover a lot of topics and that if it is accepted as a subsector under HRD, it could cover not only labor, but also community development and other topics as well.

84. The meeting endorsed Thailand's proposal for Community Development after some discussion.

85. Mr. de Wit inquired if there is any scope for combining cross-cutting issues such as migrants with issues that cut across Health, Labor, Education and how such issues will be taken up.

86. IOM gave its point of view and experience in other regions that migration is better discussed in the regional context. The Chairman agreed that migration should be discussed at the regional level. In the meantime, migration will be subsumed in the Labor sector until a clearer regional framework on the cross-cutting issues pertaining to migration has been defined.

87. Mr. Thant remarked that timing is very important, with the 2nd GMS Summit coming up. The Working Group has to take advantage of this event and needs to act quickly. Regarding the proposed new RETA, work has to be done quickly. Regarding the workshop on community development, he suggested that the concept should be clear by the time of the Summit. Thailand needs to consult quickly with the GMS governments and other entities.

HEALTH GROUP

SECTOR	PRIORITY ISSUES DISCUSSED	RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN	TIME FRAME
Health	1. Communicable Diseases Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveillance & response system • Role of WHO and other agencies • shortage of health workers, vaccines and drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement PRC-proposed Forum on CDC to discuss how to improve coordination and identify need for investment; • CDC project (to consider inclusion of Myanmar); what could be done in terms of emergency response in the event of an outbreak. 	Letters of invitations by July; Forum in August 2005
	2. HIV/AIDS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordination and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operations research on how to control HIV/AIDS 	

	learning from each other; UNAIDS as coordinator; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technology transfer • integration of HIV/AIDS into mainstream health services 	in the field to be supported/linked to the CDC project, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct studies on harm reduction, counseling; • workshop to feature available research data 	
	3. Health system development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRD • Access to health care services by migrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPP • Orientaton meeting on health care development 	
	4. Health Sector Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic sharing of info about health systems • Inventory of what is happening in the region 	

The Way Forward

88. Mr. Thant initiated the discussion in this session by calling attention to the following points:

- a. expansion of networks with various development partners. The directory of participants in this meeting is an initial step towards expanding the network that WGHRD-6 has set in place.
- b. how to make the Working Group more effective in its work since it is focused on several activities under the three sectors; how many participants to invite to next year's meeting and the need to consider designating focal persons to take things forward. Two ways of handling this issue could be: (i) to add a fourth person (the GMS national coordinator), if funds would permit; and (ii) through archiving which has been started this year with a CD ROM of WGHRD-related meetings and background materials.
- c. how often the Working Group should meet? Maybe an annual meeting would be sufficient if a fourth person were to attend.
- d. recommend to higher authorities in the GMS to separate labor from the WGHRD and retain education and health sectors.
- e. cooperation in labor, agreement that labor is an important issue; should be reflected in the Joint Summit Declaration, together with HIV/AIDS.
- f. improve the work of the Working Group; need to add more hours for discussion in view of the wide scope covered by the sectors.

Reactions/Discussions:

89. Thailand supported the suggestion to separate labor under another working group.

90. PRC stated that the idea would be reported to the GMS national coordinator to get their response. PRC suggested that a fourth person be included if labor would continue to be covered under WGHRD. PRC fully supported the inclusion of HIV/AIDS in the Joint Summit Declaration.

91. Mr. de Wit suggested more time for discussion and to devote at least 1 ½ days for focus discussion in each sector.

92. The Chairman suggested that more consultations be done regarding the idea of separating labor and possibly the health and education sectors as well under separate working groups.

93. In response to Thailand's query about the meeting's action on the concept paper on community development, the meeting recognized that the concept is a good and useful model to learn from in terms of addressing MDGs and the needs of ethnic minorities. It was agreed that endorsement of Thailand's proposal be reflected in the 2nd GMS Summit Joint Declaration.

94. Regarding the expansion of networks the Chairman emphasized the need for coordination among donors. He noted that many subregional frameworks exist: ACMECS which has more than 200 projects; GMS framework; ASEAN; BIMSTEC. At the same time GMS countries have bilateral programs. HRD is covered practically everywhere, hence coordination is important. The Chairman agreed with the need to designate a national focal point for HRD as the fourth person to attend the Working Group meeting. In future WGHRD meetings, the organizers could consider starting with the breakout sessions and providing more time for sectoral discussions. ADB was requested to consider adding more days for the Working Group meeting.

95. Cambodia and Lao PDR suggested that preparations be made early and for participants to be given access to information so that they could come better prepared.

Closing Session

96. Viet Nam indicated its agreement to host the next meeting of the Working Group. The exact venue and date will be determined later. It was agreed that ADB would send an official letter in behalf of the GMS countries to seek Viet Nam's written agreement to host the next meeting and to indicate the venue and date, as well as the theme of the next meeting. Subsequently, Viet Nam's reply would be conveyed by ADB to the other GMS countries.

Closing Remarks

97. In his closing remarks, the Chairman expressed his gratitude and appreciation to all the participants and wished everyone a pleasant journey home.

98. Mr. Myo Thant in his closing remarks stated that the meeting allowed a better understanding of the wide-ranging issues under health, education, labor. The recommendations arising from the meeting will be brought to the attention of the higher authorities in the GMS, e.g., the Senior Officials Meeting, the GMS Ministers, and the 2nd GMS Summit. He thanked all the GMS delegates and development partners who

came and participated in the meeting as well as the Royal Thai Government for hosting the meeting in Phuket.