

## Signing of Technical Assistance for Early Childhood Development Project 17 February 2003

Dr. Waqar Masood Khan, Secretary, Economic Affairs Division, and Mr. M. Ali Shah, CD-PRM, signed an agreement for a \$500,000 ADB technical assistance grant to Pakistan to prepare an Early Childhood Development Project on 17 February 2003. The TA is under the Japan Special Fund.

Around 40 percent of Pakistani children are either severely or moderately malnourished, with between 25 per cent and 30 percent underweight at birth. Hospital data indicate that the average pregnancy weight gain by mothers is only 6 kilograms, half the recommended gain. About 47 percent of women of childbearing age are chronically energy-deficient. Education remains inequitably distributed, with about 15 percent of boys and 50 percent of girls not entering primary school.

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) project aims to improve children's quality of life and learning capability by improving the care of pre-school children and mothers through a comprehensive approach. This integrated approach includes nutrition and health care, intellectual, social and physical stimulation, as well as economic and family planning opportunities. ECD interventions are cost-effective. They reduce poverty, and boost social and economic development.

The project will also improve the capacity of local government and NGOs in planning, financing, and monitoring ECD activities. It will build on established primary health care services and introduce innovative approaches for the management of child development activities. The Executing Agency will be the Ministry of Women Development and Social Welfare and Special Education (MWDSE).

A Steering Committee, headed by MWDSE, and consisting of the TA's implementing partners (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the Planning Commission, Ministry of Population Welfare, Economic Affairs Division and Ministry of Finance and the Governments of the four Provinces), will ensure that national-local government-community partnerships proceed in a transparent and accountable fashion. The TA is expected to be completed in six months.



**Seated left to right:** Muhammad Ashraf Khan, Senior Joint Secretary Economic Affairs Division; Sideo Murata, Second Secretary, Embassy of Japan, Waqar Masood Khan, Secretary Economic Affairs Division; Marshuk Ali Shah, Country Director, Pakistan Resident Mission; Bob Dawson, Director Budget and Human Resource Division.