



## Auditing the Lessons Architecture

MANILA, PHILIPPINES - The annual sovereign and nonsovereign **lending volume** of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is typically about \$6 billion, with **technical assistance** usually totaling about \$180 million a year. This does not include **cofinancing** and the counterpart funds that the governments of **developing member countries** associate with ADB's operations, which amounted to about \$8.2 billion and \$4.9 billion, respectively, in 2006 for loans totaling a higher-than-average \$7.5 billion. Plausibly, the return on investment in lesson learning for operational and developmental impact is likely to be high, and maximizing it is a legitimate concern.

There are signs of improvement in evaluation-based learning in ADB. This holds for **policies, strategies, country programs**, and projects, including their design, implementation, results, and associated business processes. But the use of evaluation for learning may be less important than that of other inputs, such as self-evaluation and training, and evaluation results may only marginally support policy, strategy, and operational changes.

In 2007, the Operations Evaluation Department brought to light the contribution that knowledge audits can make to **organizational learning** and

**"In ADB, and most likely in other development agencies, the construction of knowledge is rarely examined, and there has been a dire absence of work to find out what helps or hinders the transfer of knowledge through evaluation studies,"** says Olivier Serrat.

organizational health. With emphasis on the organizational context for learning, *Auditing the Lessons Architecture* showed with a real-life example how knowledge audits open opportunities in strategy development, management techniques, collaboration mechanisms, knowledge sharing and learning, and knowledge capture and storage. The knowledge audit methodology it described can support systematic identification and analysis of knowledge needs, products and services, flows, uses, users, and gaps from the perspective of learning lessons.

Responses to the online, questionnaire-based survey of perceptions conducted as a first exercise in 2007 provide ready and multiple entry points against which the department can take measures to that intent, as well as a comprehensive baseline assessment. They evoked a

### Summary of Perceptions by Area of Competence

Interface	Strategy Development	Management Techniques	Collaboration Mechanisms	Knowledge Sharing and Learning	Knowledge Capture and Storage
OED-OED	✓	X	✓	?	✓
OED-ADB	✓		?	X	X
OED-IEC			✓	✓	✓

ADB = Asian Development Bank, IEC = international evaluation community, OED = Operations Evaluation Department.  
 Note: ✓ = more than half of the items in the questionnaire were rated as "often the case" to "always the case" by most of the respondents; ? = half of the items in the questionnaire were rated as "often the case" to "always the case" by most of the respondents, while the other half were rated as "sometimes the case" to "never;" X = more than half of the items in the questionnaire were rated as "sometimes the case" to "never" by most respondents.

common sentiment that the department can do better in knowledge sharing and learning, and probably also in knowledge capture and storage. Staff of the department believed also that gaps exist in the management techniques that the department applies for **knowledge management**. In these three priority areas, the Five Competencies Framework<sup>1</sup> adopted in *Learning Lessons in ADB* provides a springboard for action. The department chose to kick off knowledge auditing with a survey of perceptions because this tool quickly helps identify gaps in knowledge management. The customer is always right.

**"The emphasis that the publication places on meaning, management, and measurement can help ADB become a better learning organization,"** believes Keith Leonard.

Much as *Learning Lessons in ADB*, which set the strategic framework for knowledge management in operations evaluation, *Auditing the Lessons Architecture* was published to share a formal knowledge product that has implications for development thinking.

#### Associated Initiatives

The survey of perceptions substantiated the basis of the knowledge management initiatives that the department introduced throughout 2007. It clarified the need for others. Among the new knowledge products and services developed that year, *Learning Curves* are handy, two-paged quick references designed to feed findings and recommendations from evaluation to a broader range of clients. *Success Rates* present condensed information on successful ADB projects. The **Evaluation Information System** is an online database of lessons, recommendations, and **ADB Management responses**. The department hosts the secretariat of the Evaluation Cooperation Group. It has also overhauled **ECGnet**, the group's communication tool. *Evaluation Alerts* are targeted information bytes delivered to personal mailboxes. **Methods and guidelines** for using plain English, disseminating findings and recommendations, and conducting exit interviews have been prepared. The **evaluation pages on adb.org** have been refurbished from top to bottom. They are updated daily and are now one of the most accessed first-level directories in **adb.org**. In 2007, the department formulated regional technical assistance for **capacity**

**development in monitoring and evaluation**, expected also to suggest an ADB strategy for evaluation capacity development. The department advertises its knowledge products and services on *ADB Today* and **adb.org** (and through other channels and at several venues) with one-time, near-term, and continuous efforts. The survey of perceptions suggested other opportunities, now nearing completion. They include *Evaluation Chats*, a communication tool that will underpin the formal establishment in 2008 of an evaluation community of practice focused on the conduct and dissemination of strategic evaluations, harmonization of performance indicators and evaluation methodologies, and development of capacity in evaluation and evaluative thinking. The knowledge management initiatives of the department are framed deliberately to increase value-added from operations evaluation, and are managed with **knowledge performance metrics**. Client feedback is sought regularly through various means.

#### Read Online:

**Learning Lessons in ADB**. Available: [www.adb.org/documents/reports/learning-lessons-ADB/strategic-framework-2007-2009.asp](http://www.adb.org/documents/reports/learning-lessons-ADB/strategic-framework-2007-2009.asp)

**Independent Evaluation at the Asian Development Bank**. Available: [www.adb.org/evaluation/documents/independent-evaluation/independent-evaluation-ADB.asp](http://www.adb.org/evaluation/documents/independent-evaluation/independent-evaluation-ADB.asp)

**Acting on Recommendations and Learning from Lessons in 2007: Increasing Value Added from Operations Evaluation**. Available: [www.adb.org/documents/pers/rpe-oth-2007-15.asp](http://www.adb.org/documents/pers/rpe-oth-2007-15.asp)

#### See Also:

**The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization**. Available: [www.amazon.com/fifth-discipline-practice-learning-organization/dp/0385517254](http://www.amazon.com/fifth-discipline-practice-learning-organization/dp/0385517254)

**Organizational Learning: Theory, Method, and Practice**. Available: [www.amazon.com/organizational-learning-ii-theory-practice/dp/0201629836](http://www.amazon.com/organizational-learning-ii-theory-practice/dp/0201629836)

**Knowledge Management Specialist Library, National Library for Health**. Available: [www.library.nhs.uk/knowledgemanagement/](http://www.library.nhs.uk/knowledgemanagement/)

<sup>1</sup> Chris Collison and Geoff Parcell. 2001. *Learning to Fly: Practical Knowledge Management from Leading and Learning Organizations*. Capstone Publishing. The Five Competencies Framework developed by Chris Collison and Geoff Parcell helps to determine priorities for immediate action by selecting the area that will yield the greatest benefits if improved.

ADB. 2008. *Auditing the Lessons Architecture*. Manila. Available: [www.adb.org/documents/studies/auditing-lessons-architecture/in371-07.asp](http://www.adb.org/documents/studies/auditing-lessons-architecture/in371-07.asp)