

ADB HOLDS KNOWLEDGE-SHARING MEETING ON JFPR PROJECTS IN TAJIKISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

A three-way videoconference was held last June 14 between ADB Headquarters and the Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Resident Missions on two recently completed JFPR projects in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan -- "**JFPR 9008-TAJ: Tajikistan Rural Poverty Reduction Project**" and "**JFPR 9010-UZB: Innovative Poverty Reduction in Karakalpakstan.**"



Above left, JFPR Coordinator Megumi Araki speaking to the audience led by Alternate Executive Director for Japan Mr. Atsushi Mizuno, Dir. Katsuji Matsunami, and Principal Director Werner Liepach (left to right). Above right, the video screen in the Uzbekistan Resident Mission shows the three videoconference sites.

Organized by the Office of Cofinancing Operations (OCO) and Central and West Asia Regional Department (CWRD), the meeting was attended by high-level representatives from the Government of Tajikistan, led by Mr. M. Davlatov, State Advisor to the President on Economic Policy, Mr. N. Buriev, Head of Economic Reforms and Foreign Investments Division and concurrently ADB Alternate Governor for Tajikistan, and Mr. Sh.Sokhibov, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Finance; and from the Government of Uzbekistan, led by Mr. A. Tuychiev, Head of Department, Ministry of Economy, Agriculture and Water, and Ms. Djamilya Niyazova, Deputy Member of Parliament and Chairwoman of the Business Women Association, Karakalpakstan Branch.

Also in attendance were the heads of the NGOs that acted as Implementing Agencies for the two projects: CARE and Aga Khan Foundation for JFPR 9008, and Business Women Association for JFPR 9010. Representatives of the Japanese Embassies in Dushanbe (led by Charge d'Affaires Mr. Hirosh Takahashi) and Tashkent were also present, as was the Deputy Representative of JICA in Tashkent. At ADB HQ, officers and staff from Operations Departments, from Finance and Administration, and from the Board of Directors attended the videoconference.



Officials from the government, the Japanese Embassy, donors, and implementing NGOs officials gather at the Tajikistan Resident Mission in Dushanbe with Country Director Neeraj Jain and ADB staff (left), and at the Uzbekistan Resident Mission in Tashkent (right) with OIC Donneth Walton and staff.

OCO Principal Director Werner Liepach and CWRD Director General Juan Miranda underscored the importance of disseminating lessons from the two projects to ensure that they are able to influence the design of larger ADB projects, as well as the policies, programs and projects of the host governments. DG Miranda underscored the role that JFPR can play in building up the limited capacity of implementing and executing agencies which is often a constraint to the successful implementation of projects. Noting the large size of the Fund, he said that the respective management teams within the Regional Departments should be accountable for their level of utilization of the Fund. He also added that mission leaders who prepare JFPR projects should be recognized for their work. He proposed the creation under JFPR of mini-funds which can be used to support small poverty-targeted projects within the region, and the financing of poverty assessments and consultation activities which are pre-requisite to loan projects.

The presentations on the two projects focused on the design, the results, and lessons learned, both from the projects' successes as well as failures. Key among these lessons were that project design should be kept simple, and components and implementing agencies kept to a minimum; and that projects should have clear exit strategies to ensure that project gains will be sustained. The reports were followed by an open forum which was chaired by CWRD's Director for the Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Division Katsuji Matsunami. Questions raised by the audience dealt with the quality of participation from the stakeholders, the impacts that the projects have had on ADB's Country Strategy and Program (CSP) for the two countries, and on the countries' policy environment in general. There was discussion on the sustainability of the interventions and the observed impacts, such as the benefits generated from the microfinance activities, and the improved social cohesion arising from the participatory processes that were employed.

Alternate Executive Director Atsushi Mizuno, speaking for the Government of Japan, expressed his appreciation for the JFPR Series which he said has been a useful vehicle for sharing lessons learned. He also congratulated the project staff, the Executing Agencies, and the Implementing Agencies for the successful implementation of the two projects. He encouraged OCO to continue the knowledge-sharing sessions and to help accelerate the utilization of JFPR funds and thereby expand the benefits from JFPR in the region.

JFPR Coordinator Megumi Araki thanked the participants at TJRM, URM, and at headquarters, and announced that OCO will continue the JFPR Series with upcoming meetings focusing on health and nutrition, and microfinance.