

Results from ADB's Commitments at the 3rd World Water Forum



In March 2003, at the 3rd World Water Forum (3WWF) in Japan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed to four new initiatives, each one intent on raising awareness, skill levels, and investments. What has happened with those initiatives in the past 3 years? What actions have those initiatives inspired? The 4th World Water Forum in March 2006 in Mexico City is a timely opportunity to take stock of progress.

Water for the Poor—Partnerships for Action

Background. This is a country-level partnership of financiers, civil society, and developing country governments to improve the quality and level of water investments for the rural poor. ADB and partners have piloted the initiative in Viet Nam.

Outcomes. ADB and partners have helped the Government of Viet Nam identify the connections between rural poverty and water management. Dialogues, studies, and pilot projects have informed not only the Government, but also donors and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) on how to design and implement water projects in ways that are more effective in reducing the country's rural poverty specifically. This important groundwork with institutions and pilot communities has led to a strong pro-poor national strategy for water resources management. The partnership is helping six provinces in the central region to better manage water resources and services in their jurisdiction. At local levels, two leading international NGOs, CARE and World Vision, have developed improved ways of community participation in the new project. Another international NGO partner, International Development Enterprises, is helping improve the rural poor's access to water supply and sanitation through new, market-led, small-scale approaches. The partnership also conducted a successful joint-donor review of rural water supply and sanitation programs in the country, as basis for further investments.

Water for Asian Cities Program

Background. ADB and UN-Habitat joined forces in this program to catalyze improved levels of pro-poor investments in urban water and sanitation. The program spans three phases—building the capacity of participating governments, preparing sound projects with participating communities and governments, and mobilizing the financing to implement those projects. ADB and UN-Habitat agreed to make available \$500 million in ADB loan financing, and \$5 million each in grants between 2003 and 2008.

Outcomes. The partnership between ADB and UN-Habitat is on track and has already reached the third phase in projects in India and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The program has prepared reform frameworks, conducted training on governance and institutional efficiency, and identified urban water supply and sanitation projects for financing. Highlights from Madhya Pradesh, India, include the collaboration

between four urban local governments and the international NGO, WaterAid, to upgrade sanitation levels in targeted slums. In Nanjing, PRC, an innovative project identified through the program has been included in ADB's country program and strategy, securing ADB's support through a technical assistance grant in 2005 in preparation for loan approval in 2007.

Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO)

Background. ADB, Japan Water Agency, and ADB Institute (a think tank and high-level training center based in Tokyo) decided to support the establishment of NARBO to create an active regional community of river basin organizations (RBOs), to build capacity in existing and new RBOs, and facilitate knowledge sharing among members, supported by training programs and workshops on implementing integrated water resource management (IWRM).

Outcomes. NARBO was successfully established in 2004, and more than 50 organizations have joined as members. Indonesia chairs the network, with Sri Lanka serving as vice chair. Seven trainings and workshops on IWRM implementation had already been completed on topics prioritized by member RBOs. ADB, in collaboration with the International Water Management Institute, has introduced a performance benchmarking service for RBOs supported by peer reviews, which is being piloted in 10 river basins.

Gender in Water Partnership

Background. ADB and the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) agreed to work together to promote the importance and skill of gender mainstreaming in ADB water projects, as well as in activities of developing countries in Asia.

Outcomes. The partnership has sponsored training for ADB staff to sharpen their skills in conducting gender assessments in water supply and sanitation, irrigation, and water resource management projects. Training has also been an important intervention in ongoing projects, such as in Cambodia, where project officers and their government counterparts learned together how to enhance their work through gender assessments and action plans. Two important studies were also completed—an evaluation of gender mainstreaming in ADB project designs (the Gender Scan report) and a good practice case study—and are informing both partners of lessons learned for future gender mainstreaming.

Supporting Initiatives

In addition to these four commitments at the 3WWF, ADB also conducted several follow-up initiatives in other important areas raised at the forum.

Innovative Financing Modalities

At the 3WWF, the much anticipated report by the Camdessus Panel on water financing put countries and the international water community on notice that annual investments in water supply and sanitation services in developing countries need to double. Later that year, ADB launched an innovation and efficiency initiative that has resulted in new financing modalities, products, and streamlined business processes, such as multi-tranche financing, subsovereign and nonsovereign public sector financing, local currency financing for the public sector, refinancing, financing syndications and risk-sharing arrangements, and flexibility in commitment charges. ADB's Water Week 2004 also focused on financing and governance for the poor.

Subregional Cooperation

Following the presentation of regional action plans at the 3WWF by small island countries and the Central Asian republics, ADB provided grant funding to support their implementation. In the Pacific, ADB is helping the island countries to better cope with their natural vulnerabilities to severe weather extremes and limited groundwater. ADB is continuing its partnership with the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) by supporting the implementation of the regional action plan, as well as expand the knowledge base on water management and climate change. In Central Asia, ADB provided a grant to further support management of transboundary rivers.

From Flood Control to Flood Management

ADB experience influenced a paradigm shift at the 3WWF from flood control towards flood management. For centuries, the accepted approach to dealing with floods was to control them—or at least attempt to—by building large, expensive infrastructure that would contain and keep all of a river's water on course. Too often, reality has dispelled the effectiveness of this approach when these tall man-made embankments have caused more damage than what they intended to prevent because of engineering and governance oversights. Supported by ADB's assistance after the forum, several countries, including the PRC and Indonesia, have reformulated strategies and designed projects adopting the flood management approach, including structural and nonstructural interventions. Living with floods and managing floods are now understood to be a more viable option in many cases, so long as people are aware of the risks and are prepared for them. ADB has also worked with journalists, RBOs, and government officials to support these new directions.

For more information, visit www.adb.org/water or e-mail water@adb.org.
