



# Validation Report

---

Reference Number: PCV: UZB 2012-04  
Project Number: UZB 36510  
Loan Number: 2093-UZB  
January 2012

## Uzbekistan: Second Textbook Development Project

Independent Evaluation Department

**Asian Development Bank**

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
BETDP	–	Basic Education Textbook Development Project
IED	–	Independent Evaluation Department
MOPE	–	Ministry of Public Education
PCR	–	project completion report
PIU	–	project implementation unit
RSBFF	–	Republican Special Book Fund Foundation
STDP	–	Secondary Textbook Development Project
TRS	–	textbook rental scheme

## NOTES

- (i) In this report, “\$” refers to US dollars.
- (ii) For an explanation of rating descriptions used in ADB evaluation reports, see ADB. 2006. *Guidelines for Preparing Performance Evaluation Reports for Public Sector Operations*. Manila.

### Key Words

adb, asian development bank, education, education textbook development, program, completion report, uzbekistan, validation

<b>Director General</b>	V. Thomas, Independent Evaluation Department (IED)
<b>Director</b>	W. Kolkma, Independent Evaluation Division 1 (IED1), IED
<b>Team leader</b>	R. Sabirova, Evaluation Specialist, IED1, IED
<b>Team members</b>	A. Anabo, Senior Evaluation Officer, IED1, IED

The guidelines formally adopted by the Independent Evaluation Department (IED) on avoiding conflict of interest in its independent evaluations were observed in the preparation of this report. To the knowledge of the management of IED, there were no conflicts of interest of the persons preparing, reviewing, or approving this report.

In preparing any evaluation report, or by making any designation of or reference to a particular territory or geographic area in this document, IED does not intend to make any judgments as to the legal or other status of any territory or area.

## PROJECT BASIC DATA

PROJECT BASIC DATA				
<b>Project Number:</b>	36510	<b>PCR Circulation Date:</b>	December 2010	
<b>Loan Number:</b>	2093-UZB	<b>PCR Validation Date:</b>	January 2012	
<b>Project Name:</b>	Second Textbook Development Project			
<b>Country:</b>	Uzbekistan		<b>Approved</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Sector:</b>	Education	<b>Total Project Costs</b> (\$ million)	55.00	48.22
<b>ADB Financing</b> (\$ million)	<b>ADF:</b> 0.00	<b>Loan</b> (\$ million)	25.00	18.36
	<b>OCR:</b> 25.00	<b>Borrower</b> (\$ million)	30.00	29.86
		<b>Beneficiaries</b> (\$ million)		
		<b>Others</b> (\$ million)		
<b>Approval Date:</b>	29 Sep 2004	<b>Effectiveness Date</b>	31 Jan 2005	1 Dec 2004
<b>Signing Date:</b>	2 Nov 2004	<b>Completion Date</b>	31 Jul 2009	30 Jan 2010
		<b>Closing Date</b>	30 Jan 2010	9 Aug 2010
<b>Project Officers:</b>	L. Wu D. Walton Z. Karimova B. Gafurov	<b>Location:</b> ADB headquarters Resident mission Resident mission Resident mission	<b>From</b> 2004 2005 2006 2008	<b>To</b> 2005 2006 2008 2010
<b>Validator:</b>	R. Sabirova, Evaluation Specialist, IED1	<b>Team Leader:</b>	R. Sabirova, Evaluation Specialist, IED1	
<b>Quality Reviewer:</b>	W. Kolkma, Director, IED1	<b>Director:</b>	W. Kolkma, IED1	

ADB = Asian Development Bank, ADF = Asian Development Fund, IED1 = Independent Evaluation Division 1, IEOD = Office of the Director General of the Independent Evaluation Department, OCR = ordinary capital resources, PCR = project completion report.

## I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### A. Rationale

1. The Republic of Uzbekistan continues its transition to a market-oriented economy. The country's basic education system requires improvements in quality and relevance, which should focus strongly on textbooks. The National Program for Personnel Training outlines the government's education sector policies. The National Program for School Education Development 2004–2009 focuses on basic education priorities. In 2004, the government completed the Basic Education Textbook Development Project (BETDP), financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The BETDP focused on the quality and relevance of basic education by increasing the quality, durability, and availability of textbooks and instructional materials, as well as by enhancing the efficiency of the textbook production system. The Second Textbook Development Project (STDP) aimed to build on BETDP and to establish efficient and sustainable nationwide provision of affordable textbooks and instructional materials, supported by institutional and policy reforms.

### B. Expected Impact

2. The STDP aimed to improve the quality of basic education. The project was built on the foundation laid by the BETDP and to expand coverage in key areas through (i) extending affordable textbook provision to all grade levels in all schools; (ii) institutional strengthening of the textbook rental scheme (TRS) and mechanism to ensure its long-term sustainability; (iii) a comprehensive curriculum review and reform related to language of instruction practices,

including approaches to reducing the number of subjects and content requirements; (iv) upgrading school libraries into learning resource centers facilitating teaching–learning processes; and (v) regulatory, institutional, and other support to strengthen private sector capacity to participate in producing learning materials.

### **C. Objectives or Expected Outcomes**

3. The STDP was expected to establish efficient and sustainable nationwide provision of affordable textbooks and instructional materials, supported by necessary institutional and policy reforms.

### **D. Components and Outputs**

4. The STDP comprised four components: (i) strengthening the basic education policy framework, (ii) ensuring the sustainable provision of textbooks, (iii) developing the book publishing sector, and (iv) developing school libraries. Component 1 aimed to strengthen the national curriculum for basic education and to enhance the national assessment and examination system, as well as to conduct policy studies on language of instruction practices and a national information and communication technology development strategy. Component 2 related to continuing activities established under the BETDP to extend the TRS to grades 6, 7, and 8, thereby completing TRS coverage for all core subjects at all grades (except grade 1) nationwide. It aimed to institutionalize the legal mechanism for financial sustainability and proper management of the TRS. Component 3 focused on continuing the activity begun under the BETDP of upgrading skills in the chain of textbook and learning material development, including authorship, publishing, production, and distribution. The component also sought to promote active private sector involvement in textbook production. Component 4 aimed to strengthen and develop school libraries as resource centers for learning and teaching.

### **E. Provision of Inputs**

5. Of the STDP's total \$55 million cost at appraisal, ADB was to finance up to \$25 million (about 45%) through ordinary capital resources. The government was to finance the remainder. ADB was to finance the following inputs (and amounts): (i) instructional materials (\$13.5 million); (ii) equipment and furniture (\$3.6 million); (iii) international and national consulting services (\$1.8 million); and (iv) in-country and out-of-country training (\$0.43 million). The remaining amount comprised costs of interest and commitment charges plus project management.

### **F. Implementation Arrangements**

6. The Ministry of Public Education (MOPE) was the executing agency. The Social Complex of the Cabinet of Ministers established the STDP steering committee, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister. The First Deputy Minister of Public Education served as project director. A project implementation unit (PIU) was responsible for day-to-day project implementation. The PIU staff was mostly transferred from the PIU of the BETDP to ensure continuity while minimizing risks of staffing the PIU with inadequately skilled specialists. The National Curriculum Framework Working Group and consultants were to be based at the Republican Scientific Pedagogical Library and Republican Education Center. The project included international and local competitive bidding for procuring the goods and consulting services.

## II. EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE AND RATINGS

### A. Relevance of Design and Formulation

7. The project completion report (PCR) considered the project *highly relevant*. The STDP was consistent with the country's development priorities on education, in particular with the National Program for Personnel Training. It was consistent with ADB's operational strategy for Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup> The STDP was built on past ADB assistance to develop affordable textbooks for basic education.<sup>2</sup> The STDP comprised sequenced support to extend the TRS established under the previous project to grades 6, 7, and 8, thus completing full TRS coverage of basic education comprising grades 2–9. ADB was a lead development partner in the education sector and with the STDP; it extended its support to the national education reforms process. At appraisal, during implementation, and at completion, STDP remained consistent with Uzbekistan's education needs and with ADB's strategies, including Strategy 2020.<sup>3</sup>

8. Design of the STDP was based on BETDP success, and its scope focused on continuing the work initiated by the BETDP with an additional priority on school library development. The STDP was implemented unchanged throughout the project. Implementation arrangements for were designed appropriately to focus on achieving the intended objectives. As the PCR notes (para. 27), and as had been the case for the BETDP, MOPE was appointed as the executing agency. It retained BETDP PIU staff to continue the work with no interruptions.

9. The STDP initiated substantial policy reforms of the national curriculum, institutionalization of the TRS, and private sector involvement in the textbooks publishing sector. The PCR candidly lists some points that could have helped to improve STDP design and implementation related to a possible technical assistance grant for capacity strengthening, better cost estimates for libraries renovation, provision of more details on requirements for the curriculum, and a learning assessment and examination system to expedite the project implementation. This validation agrees with the PCR's *highly relevant* rating.

### B. Effectiveness in Achieving Project Outcomes

10. The PCR assesses the project *effective*. It rightly notes that the project established a sustainable textbook provision system. The STDP built on the success of the previous BETDP, however, it had expanded the TRS system. Commendably, the STDP introduced several policy regulations about establishing the textbook provision system. Component 2 on ensuring the sustainable provision of textbooks included institutionalization of the legal mechanism for financial sustainability and proper management of the TRS through establishing the Republican Special Book Fund Foundation (RSBFF). Policy work included the improved regulations and accountability initiated by the government's resolutions. The project failed, however, to establish a sustainable training system for publishers and printing specialists as was expected at the design stage. It is not clear how such needs will be addressed in the future and whether there will be institutional sustainability for authorship and publishing training capacity. Similarly, the participation of private textbook publishers in large numbers was not fully resolved due to the limited number of licenses issued.

<sup>1</sup> ADB. 2000. *Country Operational Strategy: Uzbekistan*. Manila.

<sup>2</sup> ADB. 1997. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loans to the Republic of Uzbekistan for the Basic Education Textbook Development Project*. Manila.

<sup>3</sup> ADB. 2008. *Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank, 2008–2020*. Manila.

11. At appraisal, the project design framework had emphasized efficient and sustainable nationwide provision of affordable textbooks as well as of other learning and teaching materials. Overall, outputs under component 1 related to strengthening the national curriculum were achieved. The national student assessment system implementation was partly achieved. Although the PCR states that MOPE revised the national curriculum, syllabi, and student assessment system, it is not clear which curriculum, syllabi, and learning assessment improvements were phased in and for what grades. Thus, it is difficult to evaluate how the performance targets were met for the improved curriculum and syllabi. The PCR's section on effectiveness in achieving outcome clearly states the outcome related to textbook provision. More reference could have been made to the project framework's performance and targets indicators established at appraisal, comparing them at completion to substantiate exact achievement of outcomes. This validation concurs with the PCR's *effective* rating.

### **C. Efficiency of Resource Use in Achieving Outputs and Outcomes**

12. The PCR assesses the project *efficient*. The total project cost at completion was \$48.22 million of which ADB financed \$18.36 million and the government financed \$29.86 million. This is less than the \$55.00 million equivalent envisioned at the design stage. Funds utilization was 73.4% of the cost estimated at appraisal. At the government's request, ADB cancelled \$6.5 million. Para 69 of the original report and recommendation of the President estimated the economic internal rate of return for the project at 30%. The PCR does not specify an internal rate of return at completion. According to Appendix 7 of the PCR, the TRS performance is satisfactory. The project delivered such social benefits as sustainable provision of textbooks to students in the country, with about 13% of students from families in need of social support receiving subsidies from the government in the form of free textbooks. The STDP's assumptions on TRS recovery were valid regarding the expected benefits of the improved curriculum.

13. It took more than a year to field international consultants to implement activities under component 1 related to the National Curriculum Framework Working Group. Establishment of that group lagged behind the initial schedule due to delay in selecting international consultants. During project implementation, it took more than a year for the Cabinet of Ministers to issue a resolution on establishing the RSBFF. Additional delays related to complying with the requirements for selecting 1,000 school libraries (as per the initial design, under component 4) to receive equipment and materials as well as untimely deliveries by suppliers of library equipment. At appraisal, the main output of component 3 was to establish a sustainable institutional base for upgrading professional, commercial, and management skills in book development. While resources were used for training at the Tashkent State Institute of Textile and Light Industry, the intended training system base was not established.

14. While completion of project activities was delayed by 6 months, it took almost 8 months to settle the imprest account and get the financial closing. A large amount available for research studies and consultant services was not utilized, indicating that delay in selecting a consulting firm also left insufficient time to complete activities important for achieving the STDP outputs. Disbursement under the learning materials category was held up by almost 2 years due to a delay related to RSBFF. The initial cost of materials for textbook provision to grades 6–8 was financed by the government and later reimbursed by ADB. The PCR noted high PIU staff turnover starting in 2007 due to better salary opportunities at that time in the private sector and international organization. This validation agrees with the PCR's *efficient* rating.

## D. Preliminary Assessment of Sustainability

15. The PCR rates the project *most likely sustainable* and points out that achieving competency-based and student-centered learning will be a long-term process. The government seems fully committed to continue reforms on the education policy frameworks, curriculum and syllabi development, and improving the student assessment system. The textbook development and provision efforts led to establishing the RSBFF with the aim of reliable national coverage with textbooks and learning materials for each student in the country. The RSBFF has been legally established and TRS operationally institutionalized. The PCR provides details on the funds available at the end of the project that indicate sustainability in view of the estimated rental fees, total revenue collection, and textbook cost escalation due to the use of imported paper. Long-term sustainability of the TRS depends on many factors, however, as listed in Appendix 7 of the PCR: (i) extending the textbooks life cycle, (ii) a rental fees formula aimed at cost recovery, (iii) reducing the number of titles to be printed, (iv) moving to a long-term curriculum framework, and (v) student-centered learning. Also, privatization of large printing and publishing houses was not achieved during the implementation period as envisioned at appraisal. Such companies could have played an important role in ensuring long-term sustainability in textbooks provision in Uzbekistan. The Independent Evaluation Department's Country Assistance Program Evaluation report notes concerns over the sustainability of publishing and printing houses unless they are able to diversify their businesses.<sup>4</sup> The TRS had insured availability and affordability of the textbooks for all schoolchildren in the country, and allowed the very poor students to borrow textbooks free-of-charge from schools.

16. The PCR assessment of sustainability (para. 42) does not include the issue as to sustainability of the institutional base for training textbook authors and publishers. Strengthening of the institutional base for upgrading professional, commercial, and management skills in book development was not achieved. The PCR's para. 19 and its Appendix 1 (page 20, "Main Activities for Component 3") do point out, however, that since establishment of a permanent local training base was not achieved sustainability remains an unresolved issue.

17. Sustainability of the library development component requires funds to renew book stocks and cover recurrent expenditures plus operation and maintenance costs. The PCR does not discuss sustainability of the 1,000 libraries which were turned into information resource centers. The PCR's para. 21 does note that the government will need to allocate more resources for expanding the library centers nationwide and provide adequate financial and human resources to sustain them. Nevertheless, this validation is of the view that the reforms undertaken by STDP are *likely sustainable*.

## E. Impact

18. The PCR sees the project as having contributed to improving the quality of basic education and establishing efficient and sustainable provision of affordable textbooks and learning materials for grades 2–9. The TRS was developed and became fully operational as per the government's priority. The project ensured a social protection mechanism for the poorest 15% of students by providing them with free textbooks. A new national curriculum framework was approved, new syllabi were completed, and new principles for an assessment system were phased in together with the new national curriculum. The government removed restrictions on the earnings of textbook authors, and the size of royalties is now defined according to a Cabinet of Ministers decision. About 1,000 school libraries were upgraded with new book stocks and

<sup>4</sup> ADB. 2011. *Country Assistance Program Evaluation for Uzbekistan*. Manila.

equipment and became information resource centers, thus providing more resources for students. The PCR did not provide an explicit rating on impact according to the guidelines for preparing a PCR, other than to state that the project has had a positive social and educational impact. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students' learning has improved due to availability of textbooks. This validation laments the absence of hard evidence but acknowledges that impact in this area may take years to materialize. It assumes that an impact will be gradually felt and therefore concurs with the rating of the project impact as *significant*.

### III. OTHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

#### A. Performance of the Borrower and the Executing Agency

19. The PCR assesses the executing agency's performance as *satisfactory*. The government indicated strong commitment to get the TRS fully operational. Before the RSBFF was established, the government stepped in to provide \$10.9 million to finance the TRS, which ADB reimbursed. Performance could have been highly satisfactory but there were some problems. A high turnover among MOPE experts affected the level of commitment to reform the national curriculum framework and student assessment system. The selection of international consultants for the curriculum component was delayed by more than a year, and although para. 8 of the PCR states this fact it does not provide reasons as to what caused the delay. Scrutiny of project files indicates that the delays were caused by some internal issues between the international consulting firm and team leader and also by slow actions by the executing agency and PIU on consultants selection and contract management. According to loan covenant #14 of the STDP loan agreement, MOPE had to implement a project performance monitoring and evaluation system, which was included in a project administration memorandum.<sup>5</sup> This validation concurs with the PCR assessment of *satisfactory*.

#### B. Performance of the Asian Development Bank

20. The PCR assesses ADB performance as *satisfactory*. ADB fielded regular review missions. Further delegation of the project supervision in 2006 to the Uzbekistan Resident Mission improved coordination between ADB and the government. ADB fielded a comprehensive review mission in 2007 which was considered a midterm review. There were no major outstanding issues at that point, and thus no major adjustment changes in scope were required. ADB could have taken a more proactive role in pursuing the government to complete all project activities as designed. In particular, due to the time limit, the executing agency did not conduct the remaining policy studies and study tours as planned. As a result, a portion of the loan was cancelled at the government's request. This validation concurs with the PCR in assessing ADB's performance as *satisfactory*.

---

<sup>5</sup> The Borrower shall have agreed upon a set of indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the project performance with respect to its goals, purposes, and outputs prior to the Effective Date. The Borrower shall cause MOPE to ensure that baseline values of such indicators are established at the outset of Project implementation and monitoring indicators are measured, with the necessary frequency, during the Project implementation. Comments and findings on these indicators shall be incorporated in every other quarterly report to ADB. In addition, indicators for Project evaluation shall be measured at Project completion and three years thereafter. Where feasible and appropriate, the data collected shall be *disaggregated* by gender. The Borrower shall also cause MOPE to submit to ADB a report that summarizes the key findings of monitoring and evaluation with respect to changes that occurred in the three preceding years.



## C. Others

21. The PCR highlighted that with STDP support the government adopted a policy to provide free textbooks to the poorest children in the country, constituting on average about 15% of all children. Local governments and local communities engaged more actively in identifying families in need of social support to receive free textbooks. Under the STDP, textbooks were developed for six minority languages in accordance with the revised national curriculum. Overall, it can be assumed that the STDP had a positive impact on social and minority issues. Out of 27 covenants in total, 25 were complied with. The 2 covenants on enhanced competition and private sector growth were partially complied with.

## IV. OVERALL ASSESSMENT, LESSONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Overall Assessment and Ratings

#### Overall Ratings

Criteria	PCR	IED Review	Reason for Disagreement/Comments
Relevance:	Highly relevant	Highly relevant	
Effectiveness in Achieving Outcome:	Effective	Effective	
Efficiency in Achieving Outcome and Outputs:	Efficient	Efficient	
Preliminary Assessment of Sustainability:	Most likely sustainable	Likely sustainable	While the government made commendable efforts to establish a fully functional textbook rental scheme, privatization of the publishing and printing houses was not achieved. This could have contributed to the sustainability of textbook provision. The training center for upgrading skills of authors, publishers, and printers was not established and this raises a question regarding the sustainability of training provision. Long-term sustainability depends on considerations for a long-term curriculum and review of the rental fee formula.
Borrower and Executing Agency:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Performance of ADB:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Impact:	Positive	Significant	
Overall Assessment:	Successful	Successful	
Quality of PCR:		Satisfactory	

ADB = Asian Development Bank, PCR = project completion report, IED = Independent Evaluation Department.

22. As it followed on from the BETDP, the STDP was inherently consistent with the previous project design. There were several technical delays during the project's implementation related to selecting international consultants and procuring goods for the selected libraries. The implementation experience shows that it is important to strengthen the executing agency's technical capacity on procurement in order to ensure timely compliance with procurement procedures under ADB-financed projects.

23. The PCR rated the STDP as *highly relevant, effective, efficient, and most likely sustainable*. This validation concurs with the PCR ratings except for that on sustainability, because sustainability issues of textbook development and private sector participation were not fully resolved. In the long run, there are several issues to be considered by the government to ensure sustainability of the TRS and textbook development.

## **B. Identification of Lessons**

24. This validation concurs with the PCR lessons. In addition, this validation emphasizes that institutional capacity building is critical in monitoring and evaluating the project. Policymakers need to be able to monitor the results and impact of the intervention in order to track the success of a reform project. ADB should continue working with the government to support the education sector reforms in Uzbekistan. Another important lesson from this project is that development of textbooks and related teaching aids needs to be meticulously synchronized with the new curriculum development in order to avoid any delays and lost time.

## **V. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP**

### **A. Monitoring and Evaluation Design, Implementation, and Utilization**

25. Although a set of 72 project monitoring indicators was developed with the help of ADB experts, no data were collected in relation to these indicators at baseline, during implementation, or upon project completion. One of the PCR recommendations for project implementation indicates a need for better assistance to the executing agency in strengthening capacity for monitoring and evaluation as to achieving qualitative targets. However, the PCR does not describe the situation of monitoring and evaluation during project implementation. The PCR does not substantiate the project's impact with quantitative and qualitative data collected according to the planned project performance and evaluation system. Both the Central and West Asia Regional Department of ADB and the Government of Uzbekistan could have benefited from listing a full record of achievements, had there been proper monitoring and evaluation data collected.

### **B. Comments on Project Completion Report Quality**

26. The PCR's quality is *satisfactory*. It is clearly written and includes relevant information. In general, the PCR's statements are well argued. Some sections of the PCR could have been strengthened by providing more substantive details.

### **C. Data Sources for Validation**

27. Data sources used included (i) the report and recommendation of the President in relation to the project, (ii) back-to-office reports and aide memoires from ADB missions, (iii) the ADB PCR, and (iv) the government's PCR.

### **D. Recommendation for Independent Evaluation Department Follow-Up**

28. This validation recommends no follow-up by the Independent Evaluation Department.

## **REGIONAL DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT VALIDATION REPORT**

On 13 January 2012, Director, Independent Evaluation Department, Division 1 (IED1), received the following comments from the Uzbekistan Resident Mission (URM), Central and West Asia Department (CWRD).

I have no further comments on PVR.

The report is well written, and provides a good assessment of project performance in terms of outputs and impacts as well as the conditions that contributed to such performance.