Case Study on South–South Cooperation

PRC–ADB Knowledge-Sharing Platform

Asian Development Bank
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Foreword

ADB and PRC both have stories to tell the emerging economies—accounts of decades of development knowledge and experience that would serve as a valuable source of learning and an excellent starting point for regional cooperation and collaboration. The need to share development knowledge with other developing member countries and emerging economies around the world led PRC and ADB to establish a joint knowledge-sharing platform (KSP) in 2009.

The aim of the KSP is “to share knowledge, facilitate dialogue, and strengthen partnerships and networks among the governments of the PRC and other developing countries in Asia and the Pacific Region (the region).” Its focus is on emerging issues and challenges faced by developing countries in the region.

ADB brings to this partnership its strength in knowledge management, dissemination and sharing, all aimed at mobilizing resources and maximizing returns on its regional experience. PRC, in turn, contributes its wide and deep development experience and its desire to be more engaged on South–South cooperation.

The KSP was launched in 2009, through a regional workshop on sustainable urbanization, and has successfully held two other regional workshops. The most recent workshop held in 2011 attracted 70 participants from 13 countries. The KSP has become an established program to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange between the PRC and other countries in the region.

This case study documents the rationale and genesis of the KSP, examines how it contributes to the effective exchange of knowledge and experience, evaluates its strengths and weaknesses, outlines the lessons learned, identifies challenges, and maps out the next steps needed to achieve its strategic goals.

Robert Wihtol
Director General
East Asia Department
Executive Summary

The People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) established a knowledge-sharing platform (KSP) in 2009 on key issues and challenges facing developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. The KSP aims to contribute to sound management and policy making and to promote regionally inclusive development. ADB plays the role of facilitator promoting evidence-based learning between the PRC and other ADB developing member countries (DMCs) and helps to conceptualize, design, and finance KSP activities.

This case study documents why and how the KSP was conceived and how it facilitates knowledge exchange among countries. It also critically assesses the platform’s successes and failures, especially those related to the challenges identified by the Task Team for South–South Cooperation (TT-SSC), highlights key lessons learned, and examines the steps required for it to meet its ultimate goal of promoting South–South cooperation for improved policy making and aid effectiveness.

The first international workshop under the KSP was held in November 2009 in Shanghai, on sustainable urbanization. Based on its success and the positive feedback from participants and the MOF, a second international workshop was held, in November 2010 in Beijing, on transport infrastructure as an instrument for economic and social development. A third workshop, on agricultural and rural development, was held in Beijing in November 2011. A technical assistance project titled Promoting Partnerships for South–South Cooperation has been approved to scale up and support the KSP. The expected outcome is improved sector policy making and capacity building.

The KSP has thus far proved to be a successful, country-led way to share experiences. It has addressed several aspects of the Accra Agenda for Action, which in turn serves as the frame of reference for the TT-SSC. Priority areas include (i) spousing ownership and mutual accountability, (ii) addressing development challenges, (iii) establishing champions and incentives, and (iv) promoting triangular cooperation.

The KSP workshops have led to spin-offs including the collaboration between the East Asia Department of ADB and the College of Architecture and Urban Planning of Tongji University in Shanghai. The collaboration led to the establishment of an Urban Knowledge Hub to share good development practices among DMCs.

The MOF and ADB are now working to position the KSP as a credible and influential source of development knowledge for the region. With greater resources, it can serve as a platform to facilitate exchanges between countries leading to policy dialogue and recommendations and to enhanced regional cooperation.
Context and Background

With the Asian Development Bank (ADB) serving as knowledge intermediary the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) Ministry of Finance (MOF) initiated a knowledge-sharing platform (KSP) in 2009 to facilitate dialogue and to strengthen partnerships and networks on issues and challenges confronting the PRC and other developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. It was founded on the premise that the development experience of the PRC would be relevant to other ADB developing member countries (DMCs) and that the PRC could in turn draw lessons from their progress. It further aims to contribute to sound management and policy making as well as to inclusive regional development.

Driving Forces behind the Knowledge-Sharing Platform

Knowledge products and services have consistently been part of the ADB development portfolio and have gained greater prominence as ADB develops strength in managing, disseminating, and sharing knowledge. To deliver growth that is inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and regionally integrated, Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank 2008–2020 articulates the need to advance the knowledge management agenda to better mobilize resources and to maximize returns on the regional experience and comparative strengths of ADB. “Knowledge solutions” are one of five drivers of change to better mobilize resources and achieve greater development impact. ADB supports efforts to find knowledge solutions through four pillars: (i) sharpening the knowledge focus in all ADB operations; (ii) promoting and empowering communities of practice for capturing and sharing knowledge; (iii) strengthening external knowledge partnerships to develop and disseminate knowledge; and (iv) scaling up staff development programs to improve technical skills and to better manage knowledge. The KSP is an excellent example of an ADB knowledge partnership.
ADB produces thematic and geographically specific knowledge products and services that it shares and disseminates through publications, reports, workshops, seminars, and forums. These products and services tap the extensive, explicit, tacit, and implicit knowledge ADB has gained from development financing and interventions in developing countries in Asia and Pacific for the past 45 years. They include several series of working papers produced by in-house economists and specialists in collaboration with external academics (Economics Working Paper Series, Sustainable Development Working Paper Series); regularly published reports (Asia Economic Monitor) and those of a topical nature (What can the People’s Republic of China Learn from Environment Courts of Other Countries?, Community-Based Routine Maintenance of Roads by Women’s Groups); and awareness-raising and multimedia materials (Urban Innovations and Best Practices Series, Learning Curves). Case studies of PRC good practices and innovative development solutions are also featured as impact stories on the ADB website. As of March 2012, ADB had produced 439 publications featuring the PRC in addition to numerous in-house and consultants’ reports for preparing loans/projects.

Although ADB shares information and knowledge through several channels, a more concerted effort was needed to advance and institutionalize knowledge sharing and partnerships as past efforts tended to be ad hoc. While platforms for regional cooperation exist among the PRC and its neighbors and other multilateral organizations, e.g., the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation and the Greater Mekong Sub-region, they are either focused on
specific projects or on economic cooperation in sectors with cross-boundary impacts like transportation, energy, environment, tourism, and trade policy and facilitation.

The PRC has recognized rising global and regional expectations for it to play a larger role in the development of Asia and the Pacific. As a developing country, its capacity to provide loans is limited; however, the breadth and depth of its development knowledge and experience are equally valuable to other developing countries and offer the opportunity for the PRC to work with ADB to exchange knowledge and technology internationally.

The PRC’s 12th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development 2011–2015 acknowledges the need to strengthen friendly relations and to cooperate with neighboring countries to maintain peace and stability and to promote prosperity and development (Chapter 53). It also seeks to enhance cooperation with developing countries through existing global and regional mechanisms as well as by expanding South–South cooperation. In recent years, the PRC has put more emphasis on South–South cooperation as a means for sharing ideas and experiences. The government recognized the need to collaborate closer to home not only to share experiences and ideas but also to foster greater regional cooperation.

PRC and ADB officials concluded that a long-term solution would be to build a formal, jointly managed knowledge-sharing platform to impart good development practices, to facilitate learning between DMCs and the PRC, and
to spur greater South–South cooperation. In this way, the PRC and ADB could work together to strengthen strategic objectives, targets, and expected impacts from knowledge sharing and partnerships and in so doing more effectively harness the potential for South–South learning. The platform could also be interactive using an equitable and participatory approach to enhance ownership and effectiveness and could provide a more systematic and structured channel for South–South cooperation. As a result, the PRC would become a more proactive and equal partner with ADB in knowledge sharing. ADB agreed to serve as knowledge intermediary and to contribute financing.

The triple mandate of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) relies on South–South cooperation to improve aid effectiveness. It addresses the key challenge of building ownership and mutual accountability in horizontal South–South partnerships. In this regard, the KSP has established a framework for joint ownership and mutual accountability between the PRC and ADB (with the PRC taking the lead) that also allows DMC participants to contribute by sharing their own development experiences and lessons. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the challenges in the AAA triple mandate and how the KSP addresses them.

### Table 1  Key Challenges in the Accra Agenda for Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accra Agenda for Action Mandate</th>
<th>Knowledge-Sharing Platform</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Adapting the aid effectiveness principles</strong> (para. 19a)</td>
<td><strong>Ownership and mutual accountability:</strong> The People’s Republic of China (PRC) and ADB have joint ownership of the knowledge-sharing platform (KSP) and mutually agree on key implementation decisions with the PRC taking the lead. Developing member countries (DMCs) are encouraged to play an active role in KSP activities and to take the lead whenever possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ownership and mutual accountability in horizontal partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information and results management in South–South cooperation for capacity development</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Enriching the aid effectiveness agenda</strong> (para. 19b)</td>
<td><strong>Addressing development challenges:</strong> KSP activities address priorities in development for the PRC and DMCs such as sustainable urbanization and transport infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Addressing development challenges such as climate change through mutual learning and local solutions</td>
<td><strong>Champions and incentives:</strong> Both the PRC and ADB support KSP champions and the KSP has been formally incorporated into development discussions between the PRC and ADB.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Champions and incentives in South–South cooperation and knowledge exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Ensuring complementarities with North–South cooperation</strong> (para. 19e)</td>
<td><strong>Triangular cooperation:</strong> Through the KSP, the PRC (traditionally a recipient country) works with ADB (a major source of development financing for Asia and the Pacific) to expand the scope of engagement with and assistance to DMCs. At the same time, DMCs share their development experiences with the PRC and ADB.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Triangular cooperation based on comparative advantages</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regional and global mechanisms for boosting mutual learning and avoiding one-off, random knowledge exchanges</td>
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ADB and PRC launched the KSP pilot in August 2009 and held the first regional workshop (on sustainable urbanization) in November 2009 in Shanghai. Based on its success and subsequent demand from the MOF and DMCs, the second workshop (on transport infrastructure) was held in November 2010 in Beijing. In November 2011, a third workshop was held focusing on agricultural and rural development, a priority for the PRC in its 12th Five-Year Plan. The KSP has thus evolved into a multiyear program to facilitate regional dialogue and knowledge exchange.

Case Study Methodology

This case study documents why and how the KSP began and how it facilitates regional knowledge exchange. It further examines how the KSP contributes to aid effectiveness and to South–South cooperation and assesses its strengths and weaknesses and the next steps needed to achieve its strategic goals.

The study addresses the following challenges for South–South cooperation:

- ownership and mutual accountability in horizontal partnerships;
- mutual learning and local solutions;
- champions and incentives for technical cooperation and knowledge exchange;
- triangular cooperation based on comparative advantages; and
- regional and global mechanisms for boosting learning and knowledge exchange.

Preparing the study entailed (i) reviewing background documents; (ii) in-depth telephone interviews with key stakeholders; (iii) a stakeholder workshop to discuss the initial findings and challenges identified; and (iv) an assessment of how the KSP fared on key challenges.

The study also asked respondents to share their personal involvement in the KSP then divided them into three groups—champions (primarily the ADB East Asia Department [EARD] and MOF), supporters (other ADB departments and ministries in the PRC that provide content), and participants (workshop participants from DMCs)—and provided each group with relevant questions acknowledging that this feedback represented personal views and did not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the organizations they represented.
South–South Cooperation Activities

Changing the Knowledge-Sharing Landscape

Organization and Structure

By design, the KSP is loosely structured to encompass a variety of activities and channels over the long term giving it the flexibility to address a range of development topics and learning objectives. This flexible arrangement allows the PRC to gauge demand for knowledge sharing from other DMCS and to match that demand with areas that it would like to prioritize in its partnerships with them.

The senior management of ADB and the MOF are committed to collaborating closely on knowledge sharing and capacity building. Discussions on the strategic focus and annual activities of the KSP are on the agenda for country programming discussions with the MOF. An advisor in knowledge management and capacity development from the Office of the Director General of EARD and the Director of the Technical Assistance Division in the MOF coordinate implementation. A joint working group ensures appropriate lessons are gleaned from each event. Day-to-day KSP management involves close collaboration and direct communication among ADB headquarters, the MOF, and other relevant PRC ministries. To build ownership, working group members meet regularly to agree on accountability and to plan and monitor KSP events and results. ADB staff from various departments including senior management, resident missions, regional departments, the Department of External Relations, and the Regional and Sustainable Development Department (RSDD) also contribute to the KSP.

Aligning Knowledge-Sharing Objectives

EARD spearheaded the knowledge management program in 2006 with a request for policy notes from the Urban Knowledge Hub (March 2010).
Executive Director for the PRC on the Executive Board. A knowledge management unit was launched that year in the office of the Director General of EARD to develop products and services and to promote sharing development innovations and experiences with the PRC. The agenda received strong backing from the MOF, and by April 2007, knowledge management initiatives were on the formal agenda of the semi-annual country programming discussions. ADB formalized these initiatives in 2007 through a technical assistance project comprising three components: strategic knowledge products, research capacity planning and building, and knowledge sharing and research networking.

EARD and the PRC jointly managed the program through the Regional Technical Assistance Steering Committee comprising members from EARD and other knowledge management-related agencies such as the ADB Institute, the MOF,

![Figure 1 Driving Forces behind the Knowledge-Sharing Platform](source: Asian Development Bank.)

the ADB resident mission in the PRC, and other relevant ministries. Ministries annually submit proposals for knowledge management projects to the committee through the MOF. The committee then selects projects to receive financial, technical, and managerial support from ADB. EARD sector specialists and other departments such as RSDD, the Office of Regional Economic Integration (OREI), and the Economics and Research Department (ERD) also serve as focal points to support EARD’s knowledge management and sharing efforts while EARD actively encourages its staff to contribute to the KSP.

Along with lending and non-lending programs, the KSP should be viewed as a central solution for establishing knowledge management as one of the three key pillars of ADB engagement with the PRC and for influencing ADB engagement with other DMCs. In this regard, the KSP is an institution-wide knowledge management initiative (Figures 1 and 2).

Implementing the Knowledge-Sharing Platform

The KSP has evolved into a multi-year program with increased funding. The primary output is an annual workshop on a specific theme jointly agreed upon by ADB and the MOF held in the PRC for local officials and those from regional DMCs. To ensure a good mix of learning opportunities, various resource persons

Figure 2 Stakeholders’ Engagement with the Knowledge-Sharing Platform

EARD = East Asia Department; ERD = Economics and Research Department; OREI = Office of Regional Economic Integration; RSDD = Regional and Sustainable Development Department.

from the PRC, DMCs, and ADB participate as speakers. In addition, the workshops feature site visits that showcase development projects in the PRC and input from international consultants and third-party organizers.

ADB expects improved policy making and capacity building and enhanced awareness among PRC and DMC participants of best practices as outcomes from the workshops. For the MOF, the desired outcomes include deeper PRC engagement with DMCs and increased understanding among DMCs of the PRC development model. In turn, DMCs expect to gain practical insights and concepts that can be applied in their countries and possibly to expand the scope of direct cooperation with the PRC.

**Flexible Activities**

The KSP is now an umbrella for other knowledge sharing initiatives including regional ones (Figure 2) and has allowed ADB to make knowledge partnerships with PRC centers of excellence. Examples include the Urban Knowledge Hub partnership with Tongji University’s College of Architecture and Urban Planning in Shanghai to collate and share good urban development practices and the regional research center on water security with Peking and Tsinghua universities. ADB is also considering supporting the PRC Ministry of Environmental Protection’s newly established China-ASEAN Environment Cooperation Centre.
Participation in the Knowledge-Sharing Platform

The KSP workshops have attracted senior participants from government and academic institutions from 10–14 DMCs over the past 3 years. For the initial workshop in 2009 (sustainable urbanization), officials up to the director general level were invited as it was a pilot. About 30 participants came from 10 DMCs: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR), Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. PRC participants numbered 20 and were from the MOF, Shanghai Finance Bureau, National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), and urban development experts from the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, the Urban Planning and Small City Development Center, and the Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Institute. The workshop was supported by 18 ADB staff members from EARD, the resident mission, RSDD, and urban development specialists from the Southeast Asia and Central and West Asia departments.

The second workshop (transport infrastructure) attracted 40 participants from 14 DMCs: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The level of representation was raised to vice minister with the attendance of the PRC Vice Minister for Finance. The 30 PRC participants were from the MOF, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Environmental Protection, NDRC, the Bureau of Transportation of Heilongjiang Province, and academics from China Academy of Transportation Sciences and China Agricultural University. Of the
total, 15 came from the MOF underlining its strong commitment to the KSP. ADB was represented by its Vice President and 15 staff from EARD, the resident mission, RSDD, and the Private Sector Operations Department.

More than 70 officials, researchers, and academics from 13 DMCs attended the third workshop (agricultural and rural development). In addition to the 24 delegates from PRC and 14 from ADB, the workshop attracted 33 participants from 12 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam. This workshop targeted vice ministers/permanent secretaries, directors general, or their equivalents from line ministries and agencies responsible for agriculture, rural development, comprehensive planning, and finance. In addition, organizers invited participants and speakers from research institutions, the private sector, and international organizations.

**Resources for the Knowledge-Sharing Platform**

KSP workshops require substantial resources. Staffing can be the equivalent of 1–3 person months from both ADB and the MOF over a lead-up period of up to 6 months. A similar amount of preparation time is also needed from support staff at both organizations. External consultants are separately engaged to support ADB and the MOF in the lead-up to the event and to assist in moderating the workshop.

Financing originally came from small-scale technical assistance (SSTA) resources that provide up to $225,000 for an event, supplemented by in-kind contributions from ADB and the MOF primarily in the form of staffing and speakers. In December 2011, a technical assistance grant of $750,000 was approved from the Technical Assistance Special Fund. This will support upcoming KSP workshops and publications on their results including policy notes.

**Workshop on Sustainable Urbanization, Shanghai, 2–6 November 2009**

The workshop brought together 50 senior government officials and resource speakers from participating DMCs to share knowledge on sound urbanization strategies, good practices, and common challenges in urban planning, urban renewal and expansion, and urban finance. The workshop included visits to the Shanghai City Plan Exhibition Hall, Suzhou Creek, and Suzhou City. The desired outcomes were improved urban policy making and capacity in urban management and enhanced awareness of urban best practices and emerging issues and challenges.

ADB and the MOF contributed speakers and staff while DMC participants provided independent consultants and resource persons to prepare content. The budget was $300,000 with ADB contributing $225,000 for the costs of external...
consultants, event logistics, and travel costs for participants and resource persons. The PRC covered the remaining costs of $75,000 through in-kind contributions from the central government and the Shanghai Municipal Government. Actual expenditures were two-thirds of the approved budget.

**Evaluation**

The workshop succeeded in sharing best practices and emerging issues and challenges in urban development. A technical assistance completion report documented post-event outputs and outcomes and indicated that the participants rated the workshop as successful overall and asked that more be organized. The report further noted that participants valued the workshop as an effective networking tool for policy makers to pave the way for future South–South cooperative initiatives. Participants indicated that more time should be allotted for group discussions to broaden the scope for sharing experiences.

**Lessons and Recommendations**

The workshop program should balance field visits and discussions so that participants have adequate time to absorb lessons and experiences from the field. Participants would benefit from briefing notes for each session and from undertaking field visits beforehand so that experiences can be discussed during the workshop. Resources should be allocated to generate a high-quality publication out of the workshop and to disseminate it widely. The visibility of the KSP must be raised to attract high-level participation from DMC governments.

**Positive Impacts**

The event in Shanghai led to future collaboration between EARD and the College of Architecture and Urban Planning of Tongji University in Shanghai. They teamed up to establish the Urban Knowledge Hub to continue to share urban best practices within the PRC and with other DMCs. ADB contributed $225,000 for this initiative, and Tongji University provided in-kind support in the amount of $75,000. The Urban Knowledge Hub disseminated KSP products at a regional workshop in October 2009 and established an ongoing partnership with the university.

**Workshop on Transport Infrastructure, Beijing, 8–11 November 2010**

Permanent secretaries, vice-ministers, and directors general were invited to this workshop. Supported by 15 ADB staff, the event attracted about 70 senior government officials from 14 DMCs and the PRC. The workshop program covered (i) the role of transport infrastructure in promoting economic and social development; (ii) strategies for road network development and planning road
infrastructure; (iii) financing transport infrastructure; (iv) institutional capacity building to support high performance in developing and operating transport infrastructure; and (v) addressing adverse impacts of transport infrastructure and its contribution to poverty reduction. The workshop agenda included five sessions and field visits to the National Road Networking Monitoring Center of the Ministry of Transport, the high-speed rail between Beijing and Tianjin, and other transport infrastructure projects in Tianjin.

Evaluation

The consensus of the participants was that the workshop was very successful in supporting South–South knowledge sharing. DMC participants found several aspects of the PRC experience to be relevant in their countries; however, they felt that case studies on the transport systems of other developing countries were not as well covered and that there were fewer opportunities to share their own development experiences.

Lessons and Recommendations

DMC participants saw potential for South–South cooperation in the transport sector and suggested that ADB and the MOF expand the KSP to include more South–South high-level and working-level knowledge sharing in transport and other related sectors. The MOF also floated the idea of holding KSP activities in other DMCs.

Workshop on Agriculture and Rural Development, Beijing, 8–11 November 2011

More than 70 officials, researchers, and academics from 13 DMCs attended this KSP workshop on successful policies, institutions, and practices in agriculture and in developing rural areas. It sought to promote discussion on challenges and strategies for sustainable agricultural and rural development and to support policy dialogue and future cross-border collaboration among the PRC and other DMCs.

This event targeted vice ministers/permanent secretaries and directors general or their equivalents from line ministries and agencies responsible for agriculture, rural development, comprehensive planning, and finance. In addition, organizers invited participants and speakers from research institutions, the private sector, and international organizations.

Participants attended four presentations on two or three related topics featuring one PRC speaker and one DMC speaker: (i) modern agriculture and value-chain development; (ii) applying agriculture research; (iii) rural infrastructure and green rural development; and (iv) financial development in rural areas. The workshop
was followed by field visits to the Biogas Cooperative at Dongjiecun Village, Baibi Township, Anyang County; the Henan Yongchang Feitian Starch Sugar Co., Ltd.; and the Henan Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

**Evaluation**

During the feedback session, participants said the workshop provided them a forum to discuss various subjects with their counterparts in other DMCs. Since the participants were allowed to freely interact, they learned from each other and felt this was useful. They also learned from the field trips. In addition, they said that they learned a lot from projects implemented in the PRC that could be replicated their countries, and the PRC in turn learned from creative designs in India and Pakistan.

Participants also noted that less time was available to DMCs and that the scope of the workshop was too broad for 2 days. They commented that the field visits helped them understand PRC agriculture and rural development but also noted the absence of a visit to a livestock farm and that there was not sufficient time for meaningful discussion.

The assessment was that the, “...overall experience was very good, with interaction made and developed among DMCs.” Participants acknowledged that they aspired to replicate the PRC experience in their countries, that they, “...want to establish collaboration with the Henan Academy of Agricultural Science , and that ADB assistance and cooperation is needed to attain their aspirations.”

**Lessons and Recommendations**

One key lesson from this workshop was the choice of the topic—agriculture—by the PRC. At ADB it is a second-tier priority, but it is quite important to DMCs and to the PRC due to rising food security concerns amid the sudden surge in global prices of food commodities. DMCs are now rethinking their strategies, and the preoccupation has shifted from basic food products to multiple products and matching production with the needs of consumers. The fear of mass starvation has been replaced with concerns about markets, prices, and how to reduce poverty in rural areas and link small land holders to markets—the hallmarks of modern agriculture.

The session topics further illustrated the technological shift toward modern techniques in agriculture as the most popular ones were agriculture research, farmer education, hybrid rice and corn, logistics/marketing, renewable energy and the biogas plant visit, genetic research to increase yield or pest resistance or to enhance crop survival in wet or dry conditions, and renewable energy.

To ensure meaningful and stimulating interaction in all sessions, more attention and care should be given to choosing participants. This is possible by planning at least 6 months before the event. It is also essential to find a theme to which everybody can contribute.
Key Challenges for South–South Cooperation

In its fourth year, the structure, target audience, and deliverables of the KSP continue to evolve. Many aspects of these fundamentals are closely linked and need to be addressed through an integrated approach.

Ownership and Mutual Accountability

International knowledge sharing has increased at all levels; however, as noted in the Asian Development Outlook 2011, there is a lack of harmonization, and communication and coordination are limited. In this regard, ADB highlighted knowledge solutions as key drivers of change in Strategy 2020, particularly external knowledge partnerships. The country partnership strategy (CPS) for the PRC 2011–2015 states that ADB will work, “… with the PRC to play an increasing role in … sharing knowledge … Lending will be primarily for smaller demonstration and pilot-type projects … This, in turn, would facilitate knowledge sharing among executing agencies and with other DMCs through South–South cooperation …”

Both senior management and relevant departments at ADB and the MOF are firmly committed to the KSP. A joint working group of staff from both organizes KSP activities and then manages and implements them. This clearly defined mutual ownership and mutual reinforcement are crucial to the long-term sustainability of the initiative. ADB has approved a technical assistance grant of $750,000 to support KSP activities and publications. As mentioned previously, in its first 3 years the workshops used SSTA funds that are limited to $225,000 per event which meant that additional funding had to be approved activity by activity. The new grant thus makes preparation and planning much easier.
Development Challenges

The KSP shares knowledge on issues and challenges facing developing countries through evidence-based learning and knowledge exchange and by identifying possibilities for South–South cooperation. It selects relevant, mutually beneficial development themes for ADB, the PRC and DMC participants in fields where the PRC and ADB have good development practices to share. ADB regional departments propose DMC participants, and ADB and the MOF jointly finalize the list and invite them.

To maximize its benefits, KSP activities must reach the right audiences. The workshops have addressed development themes that have proved to be of great relevance and interest to the participants. The third workshop, for example, focused on agricultural and rural development, not a core area for ADB but one that it supported recognizing the demand. The forums effectively communicated the experiences of the PRC and helped participants learn from them and apply them in their own countries. Participants also related their own experiences, but more time should have been allotted for this activity.

A case in point is at the regional planning and city cluster development session in the sustainable urbanization workshop, where the participants discussed the PRC’s Suzhou Creek rehabilitation and urban renewal in Taguig City, Philippines, with an overview on urban renewal challenges by the Southeast Asia Department of ADB. To further promote effective learning, some participants suggested...
that field visits could be conducted prior to the workshop. There were also suggestions that different program tracks could be designed for different levels of participants.

To ensure that DMC participants maximize the benefits of participating, ADB and the MOF should engage them in the early stages of planning the KSP workshops, for example in selecting the theme selection or designing the program. To reach a wider post-event audience, presentations and papers should be available online and/or disseminated at related events. The presentations at the workshop on sustainable urbanization were, for example, posted on the website of the Asia Pacific Finance and Development Centre, and the findings were shared at the July 2010 launch of the ADB-PRC Urban Knowledge Hub. Communication channels such as virtual networks are also an alternative, but respondents generally agreed that face-to-face contact at workshops is critical for effective learning and that virtual networks tend to lose momentum over time.

ADB and the MOF should also consider the importance of and difficulties involved in evaluating the long-term impacts of the workshops on DMCs. Although ADB and the MOF provide a sense of continuity as the main workshop organizers, DMCs lose continuity because the participants change at each one. Better post-event performance measures that systematically capture the short-term impacts of knowledge sharing are crucial. It is difficult to assess the impact on long-term strategic goals like policy making, but a post-event survey to assess the extent to which participants use what they learned in their daily work could be valuable.
Role of Champions

As stated above, representatives from ADB and MOF form the KSP joint working committee. EARD spearheads discussions with the PRC on the KSP and coordinates with other departments for specific content. As ADB’s focal point for engaging with the PRC, the resident mission serves as the regular communication channel with the MOF and also actively assists with the implementation of KSP activities in the PRC.

At ADB, EARD champions the KSP mainly through the Director General’s office working in tandem with the resident mission. At the MOF, the Technical Assistance Division of the International Relations Department coordinates with ADB. These offices actively engage stakeholders to make the KSP successful and sustainable and to ensure that the appropriate event format and development topics are in place for both sides and for DMC participants. Champions at each institution mobilize staff and financial resources from internal and external sources to implement the workshops, and EARD assigns specialists to design the program and content and to organize them. For example, the Urban and Social Sectors Division of EARD led the sustainable urbanization workshop while the EARD Transport Division in close cooperation with the resident mission and other ADB departments such as ERD, RSDD, and OREI led the transport infrastructure workshop.

ADB provides most of the financing for KSP activities while the MOF makes crucial contributions in kind. This includes working with ADB to conceptualize activities, hosting workshops, identifying and securing suitable resource persons and speakers, and facilitating the participation of DMCs by issuing visas. The MOF also taps the support of other ministries in the PRC and of central and local governments as needed. For example, the MOF enlisted the support of the Shanghai Municipal Finance Bureau and the Tianjin City Government for the first workshop and brought in the Ministry of Transport as co-organizer for the second one.

Within their own organizations, KSP champions have to match knowledge gaps with the internal capacity to fill them. Knowledge sharing at ADB should start from the bottom up with contributions from regional and sector departments. Coordinating and consolidating knowledge sharing within ADB could be improved so that client countries could plan on and use knowledge in a structured and systematic manner.

A strong endorsement from the leadership of ADB and the MOF would provide sustained momentum for the KSP by raising the profile of its events. ADB and the MOF together can enlist senior management support in addition to support from governments in the region.
**Triangular Cooperation**

South–South cooperation should be complementary rather than competitive with or a substitute for North–South cooperation, though one significant difference is that South–South cooperation allows developing countries such as the PRC to share more recent development experiences. This is advantageous as the experiences of developed countries may be too far removed from those of currently developing countries to be applicable or practicable.

It will take time to establish KSP workshops as influential forums for regional development especially as workshop themes and DMC participants change each year. As mentioned previously, it is also difficult to assess the long-term impact of the workshops on DMC policy makers. Nevertheless, the participation and involvement of academic institutes and agencies can build on this partnership to develop strong triangular cooperation. The support of the PRC and DMC governments as well as the wide range of topics and speakers has helped differentiate the KSP workshops from other industry events.

It is crucial to boost or to at least maintain the interest and commitment of DMC participants for the long-term sustainability of the KSP. It should be positioned as a demand-driven, client-oriented platform. As participating DMCs are at various stages of development, the quality of material disseminated at KSP workshops and the quality of the discussions should be enhanced to emphasize their relevance and applicability to home countries.

DMC participants have noted that opportunities to network with government officials and sector experts from the PRC and other DMCs are an important benefit of the KSP workshops. The informal community of regional policy makers and practitioners they establish extends the positive benefits of the workshops and allows the PRC to continue to reach out to DMCs in a cost-effective manner after the events. The PRC has also benefited from knowledge from other DMCs particularly in private-public partnerships and municipal financing. Some respondents also raised the possibility of expanding participation in KSP activities to other multilateral organizations and donor countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea. Multilateral organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank have also expressed interest in the KSP.

The respondents generally agreed that the KSP is both neutral and credible and that it capitalizes on regional similarities in geography, history, culture, and economic development, though some felt that the current format does not provide enough opportunities to learn from the achievements and experiences of other developing countries. The model could be improved by piloting workshops in other DMCs to allow more learning through case studies and site visits.

In the future, the KSP will develop and publish policy documents and post them on its website. The KSP will become an umbrella for other sector activities, particularly regional ones like the Urban Knowledge Hub, to address similar and shared challenges in Asia and the Pacific. While maintaining the current model, the KSP could be expanded into a flagship program for ADB regionally and globally and complement its efforts to become a knowledge bank.
Lessons Learned and Next Steps

The KSP has successfully brought together a wide range of senior officials from DMCs in Asia and the Pacific to discuss the challenges and issues they face. The participants benefited from the discussions at KSP sessions as well as participants’ experiences. Participants would benefit from briefing notes for each KSP session as preparatory guide for discussions.

The KSP has been useful for networking and for establishing a community of regional policy makers. Feedback has been positive, and there is strong demand for learning from PRC’s recent development experience. The KSP still has to ensure that participants have sufficient opportunities to share their own development experiences and to provide adequate ways to address their development issues. The KSP could expand the time allocated for more case studies from DMCs’ development experience. One key challenge will be to keep the network alive. ADB could use social media to sustain it which could also be a unique distribution channel for the latest publications and policy developments.

The KSP provided field visits to participating officials which enabled them to have adequate time to absorb lessons from the KSP discussions and experiences from the field. Participants would benefit from undertaking field visits beforehand so that experiences can be discussed during the KSP workshop. The KSP should balance field visits and discussions so that there is adequate time to internalize lessons and experiences from the field.

The KSP discussions on PRC projects provided opportunities for lessons on best practices as well as approaches to problems encountered. The lessons present opportunities for possible replication in other DMCs. In turn, PRC gathered lessons from creative designs of projects in other DMCs like India and Pakistan.

The scope of the KSPs could cover more sector-specific subjects or issues in order to elicit more discussions on current challenges and opportunities and address country-specific approaches.

The KSP experience, when documented through a publication, is disseminated widely. The visibility of the KSP must be raised to attract high-level participation from DMC governments. Resources should be allocated to generate a high-quality publication out of the KSP workshops and to disseminate the publications widely.
The KSP paved the way for the establishment of knowledge partnership with Tongji University in Shanghai for the urban knowledge hub and the Asia-Pacific Center for Water Security with Tsinghua and Peking universities. The challenge is to carry the knowledge partnership forward to a higher level by mainstreaming knowledge-sharing in all priority sectors and expanding opportunities of South-South cooperation including the possibility of establishing a PRC–Latin America Cooperation initiative.

The PRC’s development path could serve as a regional model for other developing countries. The government has significant organizational strengths and can mobilize resources on a large scale and organize events with high-level government participation and support and is thus ideally suited to mobilize regional DMCs to share knowledge and exchange information. The MOF can garner domestic support and the support of its counterparts in other developing countries and is well placed to establish a platform with other ministries in the PRC. There are also learning opportunities from PRC cooperation with African countries that can strengthen South-South cooperation in Asia.

The KSP workshops are intended to serve as a credible and influential regional sources of development knowledge. The current workshop format provides an overview of the main policy and development challenges that each country faces but does not provide enough details or make connections between the presentations and the participants’ particular developmental challenges. To address this, the workshops could include a broader range of speakers and panelists from academia and non-government organizations, saving the contributions of senior government officials for the discussion sessions. Future KSP forums could also provide a more informal setting for networking and discussions to encourage participants to share more in-depth knowledge and experiences.

The KSP can facilitate both regional cooperation and policy dialogue for regional cooperation on specific topics, and it can be further developed into a broader channel for regional cooperation. The challenges that it faces are identifying themes of mutual interest to the PRC, DMCs, and ADB and assessing how knowledge sharing can have an impact on policy makers. Setting the right parameters for future activities requires more in-depth investigation and early collaboration with other DMCs and high-level support from ADB, the PRC, and DMCs. To further strengthen the KSP, the MOF and ADB must actively promote high-level forums on knowledge sharing and capacity development. ADB is well placed to continue to support South-South cooperation and even to expand its staff and financial resources to advance this platform.
Case Study on South–South Cooperation
PRC–ADB Knowledge Sharing Platform

This publication showcases the beginnings of the People’s Republic of China–Asian Development Bank knowledge sharing platform, its context, activities, challenges, and lessons learned. It concludes by mapping out the next steps to bring it to its strategic mission.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB’s vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region’s many successes, it remains home to two-thirds of the world’s poor: 1.8 billion people who live on less than $2 a day, with 903 million struggling on less than $1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.