

Key Points

- Innovative and participatory approaches to capacity building can result in richer engagement and learning outcomes.
- Localizing capacity building activities across the region means more accessible, responsive, and cost-effective programming.
- Developing flagship annual activities enables the building of lasting credibility and reputation. These activities have become opportunities to improve the capacity building program as they allow for benchmarking, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Deepening the sectoral focus of capacity building programs, as well as broadening the participant pool, has led to more targeted implementation among key stakeholders.

Building Development Capacities in Asia and the Pacific: Good Practices and Ways Forward for ADBI’s Capacity Building Programs

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Building Development Capacities in the Region

Since its establishment in 1997, the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) has led innovative research and capacity building in the Asia and Pacific region. As the think tank of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), ADBI is mandated to identify effective development strategies and support the development of ADB’s developing member countries (DMCs).

The objectives of ADBI’s capacity building and training (CBT) activities are (i) to enhance government officials’ awareness and understanding of development policy issues and the challenges DMCs face; (ii) to provide policy ideas; (iii) to share effective practices and country experiences; (iv) to provide forums for dialogue and information sharing; (v) to build consensus on priority issues; and (vi) to create a strong professional ADBI alumni network (ADBI 2017).

To achieve these objectives, CBT activities are designed to be demand-driven, target-driven, and collaborative. CBT activities are delivered via four proven modalities: policy dialogue, course-based training, e-learning, and publications.

The number of CBT activities has increased over the last 3 years, with training workshops dominating 2018. CBT activity themes are guided by ADB’s strategy and operational priorities.¹ In 2018, the majority of CBT activities focused on poverty reduction and inclusive growth, with activities related to infrastructure development and support for middle-income countries following closely behind.

¹ In July 2018, ADB adapted *Strategy 2030: Achieving a Prosperous, Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Asia and the Pacific*. Based on the “One ADB” policy, ADBI’s CBT department has adjusted its priority themes to the following since 2019: (i) addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequalities; (ii) accelerating progress in gender equality; (iii) tackling climate change, building climate and disaster resilience, and enhancing environmental sustainability; (iv) making cities more livable; (v) promoting rural development and food security; (vi) strengthening governance and institutional capacity; and (vii) fostering regional cooperation and integration.



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Highlighting Good Practices in Capacity Development

CBT in ADBI has built expertise in delivering programs aimed at enabling DMCs in various areas of development. Highlighting good practices is a good practice in itself in the field of development work. Identifying what works and what does not work can contribute to bettering programs and achieving better outcomes. In this regard, ADBI’s good practices in capacity development include the introduction of new and innovative capacity building approaches; the localization of the delivery of CBT activities through regional partnerships; a set of standard activities; better coverage and more precise targeting of training recipients; stronger and closer collaboration with ADB; and improved impact evaluation.

Introducing New and Innovative Approaches to CBT Activities

The importance of innovation in capacity building to enhance its effectiveness has been highlighted by the United Nations Development Programme, with the organization investing heavily in innovation (Kumpf 2016). The last 3 years have seen several ADBI CBT programs introducing the use of innovative approaches. Such innovative designs facilitate better learning, which can lead to the better transfer of CBT goals to policy-making. In 2018, these innovations included the incorporation of field visits, the extensive use of participatory formats for initiatives, and the harnessing of information and technology to deliver CBT activities.

ADBI’s annual e-learning course is an example of a newly introduced approach. First offered in 2016, the foundation course aims to share knowledge on Asian economic development and integration with government officials using online learning methods. It targets mid-level government officials, in particular, as the course can provide the necessary foundation

for more theoretically sound policies and is updated regularly to reflect the changes in the Asia and Pacific region. Building on the success of this digital learning space, a series of online ADBI lectures is being organized. The series is being designed as a comprehensive online open course that will make maximum use of expertise within and outside ADBI and is to be made available on a rolling basis.

Experiential learning tools incorporating field visits have also been introduced. An event, Adapting to Aging Asia: Developing Effective Responses and Long-Term Care Systems, was held in Japan last year in collaboration with ADB. It aimed to share knowledge and experience, including the successes and challenges, among Japan and ADB’s DMCs on how to prepare for and adapt to an aging society. In order to maximize the learning outcomes for the diverse group of participants, the event centered on field visits to long-term care facilities outside of Tokyo and integrated lectures from experts to underpin and discuss the applications of the field learnings. Another event, Disaster Risk Management in Fukushima, was delivered in a field-based context. Participants visited multiple facilities in Koriyama City, Fukushima City, Soma City, Shinichi Town, and Minami-Soma Town to better understand firsthand how Fukushima has recovered from the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and rebuilt its local economy.

Participatory tools for decision-making are also among the innovations introduced in the past year. Breakout sessions, especially as part of large conferences and workshops, have provided avenues where participants can engage more actively. Such short sessions provide more comprehensive outcomes from CBT activities as they enable increased opportunities to capture a broad range of nuanced perspectives. In addition, participatory approaches also enhance not just the speaking skills of participants for them to be more articulate and confident in pitching in their ideas but also their listening and analytical skills as participants need to collaborate and

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eventually present their policy ideas. This is particularly useful for decision makers as every decision is made in collaboration with other government agencies. The Engaging CSOs in Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals workshop in September 2018 used a variety of participatory approaches, including group work, thematic breakouts, and design-thinking techniques to capture diverse voices. These enabled the project team to develop a more comprehensive and inclusive range of policy recommendations.

ADB is developing further initiatives that adopt more participatory formats. The use of APISNOTE as a workshop facilitation application is one such initiative. “APISNOTE is a web-based application [that connects] people together ... enabling a visual approach for the idea creation process” (Nakajima et al. 2018). Having recognized this, the CBT department has endeavored to train its facilitators to use APISNOTE for CBT events. Such events have included the Leadership Capacity Building Program for Public–Private Partnership in Fecal Sludge Management and the Development Partner Roundtable and Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Sanitation in Asia, both conducted in 2018. Another event that aims to adopt a more participatory format is the week-long training workshop to be held later in 2019 with Stanford University’s Leadership Academy for Development. The workshop aims to teach government officials how to become effective reform leaders and how sound public policies can be formulated in complex and contentious settings.

Localizing through Regional Partnerships

ADB’s CBT activities have become increasingly regionally widespread, and, in 2018, three-fifths of the CBT programs were conducted outside of Tokyo (where ADB is based). The localization of CBT programs has three key benefits: programs are more accessible to participants in

hard-to-reach regions, such as Central Asia and the Pacific; CBT programs are more responsive to the specific needs of the beneficiaries, governments, and partners; and the delivery costs are reduced as target participants are travelling shorter distances and are away from their regular work for less time.

While hosting CBT activities outside of Japan can be challenging logistically, this is offset by increased collaboration with localized regional partners. This creates the opportunity to fortify partnerships and better engage with DMCs in various subregions in Asia and the Pacific. A large proportion of CBT activities outside Japan has been conducted in Southeast Asia, but efforts are being made to expand to other regions, such as Central Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific. Localizing events to engage the different regions and subregions has resulted in more and stronger partnerships as well as alternative funding schemes resulting from these partnerships. This collaboration with regional partners also enables the pooling of diverse knowledge resources that are specific and targeted to regional needs. The ADBI–Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute Workshop on Horticultural Value Chain Development in Antalya, Turkey, gave representatives from CAREC member countries the space to critically review and consider how to improve the value chain structures for horticultural products specific to the regional context.

Through the strategic delivery of CBT activities outside of Japan, new partnerships developed in 2018 included those with the Central Bank of Mongolia, Mongolia’s Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund, the Human Resources Development Service of Korea, the Office of Presidential Advisory Council in Indonesia, and the Selangor Water Management Authority in Malaysia. These were in addition to the existing partnerships with strong development organizations in the region, such as the Korea Development Institute, the Foundation for Development Cooperation, Yokohama City, and the ASEAN+3 Regional Macroeconomic Office (AMRO).

Offering a Standard Set of Annual Activities

Having built expertise and partnerships, ADBI's CBT program has developed a standard set of activities that are held every year. For instance, collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has yielded a strong set of annual activities. One such recurring activity is the OECD-ADB Roundtable on Capital Market and Financial Reform in Asia, which has been held since 1999 and was started as a response to the Asian financial crisis. It is an annual forum for discussion among capital and financial market regulators, policy makers, experts, practitioners, scholars, and international organizations on issues related to capital market and financial reform in Asia.

Another such event is the Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia, which is conducted in collaboration with the OECD and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and has been held since 2011. This unique roundtable is important in two ways: first, it provides government officials from labor ministries and institutions with a platform to discuss innovative approaches to effectively managing labor migration-related issues across the region; and second, it produces an annual report based on the proceedings of the roundtable with a statistical annex to show global labor migration and remittance flows and stock. The data of the annex are supplied by the participating government officials. ADBI has also collaborated annually with the Japan Fair Trade Commission on the East Asia Top Level Official's Meeting on Competition Policy. This activity has been organized annually to exchange views and experiences on the design and implementation of competition policies and good practices among competition authorities in East and Southeast Asia.

Other examples include knowledge-sharing activities conducted in partnership with educational institutions, such as the University of Tokyo, Keio University, and Hitotsubashi University in Japan. Utilizing ADBI's expertise, the courses allow master's students from different Asian countries to gain an understanding of key economic development issues.

These activities can be considered as flagship activities, signifying ADBI's developed capacity in delivering

expertise and knowledge in specific issues. These activities enable the building of lasting credibility and reputation and have become opportunities to improve the CBT program as they allow for benchmarking, monitoring, and evaluation.

Improving Depth and Precision to Better Reach Different Audiences

In 2018, a total of 1,926 participants attended CBT activities. Participants come not just from governments but also nongovernment organizations, academia, and various think tanks. Of the participants in 2018, 45% were government officials from ADB DMCs, reflecting the continued thrust of the CBT program to deliver tools to assist governments in conducting effective policy-making. While senior government officials tend to be the target audience of many CBT activities, 2018 saw a surge in the number of junior government officials. This is reflective of the importance of equipping future leaders with the necessary skills to formulate and implement development policies. Specific activities, such as the annual ADBI E-Learning course, are also targeted at mid-level government officials.

CBT activities have also been designed to have a deeper sectoral focus, including women, the aging population, and migrants. One such event is the Asian Women Leaders Program, which targets senior female government officials who are in positions to influence their countries' public finance and development policies. The program provides leadership capacity development to strengthen participants' knowledge, skills, networks, and confidence. In addition to eminent female leaders motivating and mentoring participants with their experiences and insights, the Asian Women Leaders Program invites trainers to run workshops on techniques to improve the skills required for communication, negotiation, and building alliances. Each year, the program focuses on women leaders from specific sectors. In 2018, the program targeted women leaders in infrastructure-related ministries, including transport, energy, urban planning, environment, and water.

To address the specific sectoral concerns of the aging population, in addition to the event *Adapting to Aging Asia: Developing Effective Responses and*

² As part its *Strategy 2030*, ADB reinforces a "One ADB" approach, bringing together expertise and knowledge in a range of areas across the institution (ADB 2018).

“ADBI–ADB collaboration deepens the complimentary and mutually beneficial partnerships through jointly organized events and connects up-to-date knowledge products with on-the-ground realities.”

Long-Term Care Systems, mentioned earlier, another such event looking at the various socioeconomic impacts of aging is Aging Populations and Their Impact on Fiscal Sustainability in the PRC, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, held in cooperation with AMRO and the Korea Development Institute.

The previously introduced ADBI–OECD–ILO Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia devotes a session each year to focusing on vulnerable migrant workers in specific sectors. In 2018 and 2019, for example, it explored the recruitment processes, working conditions, and benefits, such as the earnings and remittances of migrant workers, in the areas of electronics and domestic healthcare. The implementation of sessions with a sectoral focus has encouraged participating government officials to review their current memoranda of understanding and bilateral agreements and their implementation of national laws to strengthen the protection of vulnerable groups of migrant workers.

In an effort to reach a wider audience, CBT also hosted in 2018 the Multimedia Webinar: Scaling Up Solutions for Non-Sewered Sanitation and Fecal Sludge Management, for which the recording is available online.

Building Stronger and Closer Collaboration with ADB

ADBI remains cognizant of its parent institution, and this partnership is continuously growing under the framework of “One ADB.”² In 2018, CBT organized 16 events together with ADB (ADB 2018).

Working with different thematic groups in ADB, ADBI has compiled a comprehensive set of CBT activities targeting various development issues. Examples include events such as “Developing Clean and Effective Energy Systems in the 21st Century” with the ADB Energy Sector Group; “Strategies for Financing Social Protection to Achieve the

SDGs” and “Adapting to Aging Asia: Developing Effective Responses and Long-Term Care Systems” with the Social Development Thematic Group; the “ADB–ADBI Forum on Governance and Institutions” and “Strengthening Open Budget Practices in Asia” with the Governance Thematic Group; the “Overweight and Obesity in Asia and the Pacific” session within the “Smart Health System Actions against Non-Communicable Diseases Obesity” and the “Fiscal Policy Training Workshop: Tax Policy Design and Health Impact in Asia” with the Health Sector Group; the “5th Asia Women’s Leadership Program” with the Gender Thematic Group; and the “Transport Forum” with the Transport Sector Group.

Evaluating Impacts

The CBT program currently implements an impact evaluation framework designed to monitor the scope and reach of its activities in terms of the diversity of its audience and its partnerships. Corresponding to the three-pronged goals of ADBI in terms of CBT (ADBI 2017), the framework aims to measure how CBT activities impact participants’ agency for policy change and policy-relevant knowledge sharing and how the activities can lead to an ADBI professional alumni network. The impact evaluation framework endeavors to measure how receptive participants are to the knowledge shared during a CBT activity and how they perceive it to be useful for their work and positive policy changes. Ultimately, the impact evaluation framework aims to measure how well the CBT activities translate to policies.

CBT is currently introducing three layers of evaluation: exit evaluation surveys, mid-term self-assessment, and long-term impact analysis surveys of CBT flagship events. Online exit evaluation surveys are conducted immediately after CBT activities to measure participants’ overall perception of events and the extent to which they learned new policy ideas that are relevant to their current positions. The objective is to determine how

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CBT will contribute to effective policy changes in DMCs. As for the self-assessment, CBT conducts structured interviews to capture information that may have been missed in the exit evaluation survey. The self-assessment aims to receive participants’ feedback on a deeper level to be able to identify specific needs for ADBI’s future knowledge products. In addition to the interviews, a post-assessment survey is used to evaluate how the results of the activities measure up against the goals that were set when the activities were being designed. The self-assessment process produces a final brief with a self-assessment table that analyzes and summarizes the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of CBT activities. Lastly, the long-term impact analysis survey aims to evaluate how recurring CBT flagship activities contribute to the three-pronged goals using systematic statistical modeling.

Toward Effective Capacity Development: Challenges and Ways Forward

The good practices outlined above admittedly represent challenges for the future—there is a clear need to further innovate ways to better deliver learning and capacity development, improve coverage and partnerships, continue to build expertise by setting a set of recurring core activities, improve precision and reach, and strengthen the partnership with ADB. These call for the never-ending goal of improving the work program to build capacity in Asia and the Pacific.

In 2018, to harmonize with ADB’s *Strategy 2030*, new priority themes were introduced, and developing CBT programs for aligning these themes is an ongoing process. These themes are essential to ADBI’s role in facilitating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through knowledge sharing for effective policy-making in the region. Going forward, to effectively facilitate this critical alignment, a number of recommendations can be considered.

In addition to the growth and challenges highlighted, knowledge production and management are two key areas that warrant further improvement. Documentation of the policy analyses and recommendations resulting from CBT activities can feed into more evidence-based research to link theory with practice. Such information can be utilized to improve and direct the CBT program of activities (Dalkir 2003).

Managing the knowledge gathered and accumulated is another challenge. This pertains to making the best use of knowledge for the improvement of CBT activity design through collecting and mapping expertise both within and outside the organization. Finding experts to deliver relevant, digestible, and appropriate training materials tends to be time-consuming. Creating a database of experts and knowledge products is one of the recommendations for the future work program. In terms of identifying what knowledge has been produced, there are already several working papers, policy briefs, and other published works online. Assessing what has been disseminated online should also be considered (Dalkir 2003).

Further, transferring the results of CBT activities to effective policy-making is a significant challenge. The CBT program currently implements an evaluation system that looks at how receptive participants are to the goals of the activities. In 2018, a significant proportion of participants reported CBT activities as being excellent. While this is an achievement, evaluating how well this translates into actual policy improvement remains a daunting task. The establishment of a network of ADBI alumni can enhance the development impacts of the CBT program. Former participants can provide important feedback for the monitoring and evaluation of CBT activities. Beyond the evaluation methodology currently being implemented, testimonials and narrative evidence from participants speaking on the specific and tangible impacts that their training has had on their work can provide useful evaluation benchmarks to further improve CBT activities.

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Events Cited

- 5th Asian Women Leaders Program (AWLP)
- Adapting to Aging Asia: Developing Effective Responses and Long-Term Care Systems
- ADB–ADBI Forum on Governance and Institutions
- ADBI E-Learning Course
- ADBI–Graduate School of International and Public Policy, Asian Public Policy Program, Hitotsubashi University Course on Asian Economic Development and Integration
- ADBI–Graduate School of Public Policy (GraSPP)
- ADBI–Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute Workshop on Horticultural Value Chain Development
- ADBI–OECD–ILO Roundtable on Labor Migration in Asia
- Aging Populations and Their Impact on Fiscal Sustainability in the PRC, Japan, and the Republic of Korea
- Developing Clean and Effective Energy Systems in the 21st Century
- Development Partner Roundtable and Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Sanitation in Asia
- Disaster Risk Management in Fukushima
- Engaging CSOs in Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals
- Leadership Capacity Building Program for Public–Private Partnership in Fecal Sludge Management
- Multimedia Webinar: Scaling Up Solutions for Non-Sewered Sanitation and Fecal Sludge Management
- OECD–ADBI Roundtable on Capital Market and Financial Reform in Asia
- Overweight and Obesity in Asia and the Pacific—Smart Health System Actions against Non-Communicable Diseases Obesity and Fiscal Policy Training Workshop: Tax Policy Design and Health Impact in Asia
- Stanford University’s Leadership Academy for Development
- Strategies for Financing Social Protection to Achieve the SDGs
- Strengthening Open Budget Practices in Asia
- The East Asia Top Level Official’s Meeting on Competition Policy

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