

**Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program  
Ninth Meeting of the Working Group on Human Resource Development  
(WGHRD-9)  
Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China  
20-21 May 2009**

**FINAL SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Introduction**

1. The Ninth Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD-9) was held in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China (PRC), on 20-21 May 2009, co-organized by the PRC Government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
2. The theme of WGHRD-9 was *"Implementing New Strategic Directions in HRD Cooperation in the GMS"*. The overall objective of the meeting is to review and endorse a proposed GMS Human Resource Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan for strengthening GMS cooperation in education, labor and migration, health, and social development.
3. The meeting was held in plenary and break-out sessions. The Agenda/Program of the meeting is in [Appendix 1](#).
4. The participants included government representatives from the Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Union of Myanmar, Royal Thai Government, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Staff of ADB and representatives of multilateral, bilateral, intergovernmental organizations, and regional academic and research institutions also attended. The list of participants is in [Appendix 2](#).
5. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Li Dongxiang, Director, International Department, Ministry of Finance, PRC, and co-chaired by Ms. Shireen Lateef, Director, Social Sectors Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB.

**Opening Session**

6. Mr. Li Dongxiang, Chair of the Meeting, extended on behalf of the Government of PRC, his warm welcome to all participants. He recalled the decision of WGHRD-8 held in Cambodia in 2007 to develop a GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP). Thereafter, a series of national and regional consultations were held to flesh out the details of the SFAP so that it would truly reflect the priorities for subregional cooperation in this sector. He looked forward to the formal endorsement of the SFAP by the meeting and the active participation of the subsectors in the implementation of its priority activities. He stressed the importance of commitment and ownership by the GMS countries, continuity in membership and participation in achieving steady progress, and technical and financial support from development partners in implementing activities. A copy of his opening remarks is in [Appendix 3](#).

7. Ms. Shireen Lateef, Co-Chair of the Meeting, welcomed everyone on behalf of ADB and expressed her thanks to the PRC Government for hosting the meeting. Ms. Lateef noted the achievements in GMS cooperation in HRD including initiatives in communicable disease control, integrating HIV/AIDS prevention into the GMS infrastructure agenda to mitigate the negative effects of increased physical connectivity, capacity building of GMS senior and mid-career civil servants through the Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management (PPP), health and education needs of ethnic minorities, promotion of safe migration and prevention of trafficking of women and children, and involvement of the GMS youth in fostering a greater sense of community. She noted that WGHRD-9 marks a crucial milestone in subregional cooperation and looked forward to the meeting's endorsement of the final draft of the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP) which is a deliverable for the forthcoming 15<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Meeting in June 2009. The SFAP brings into sharper focus the goal, strategic thrusts, priority programs, and institutional framework for subregional cooperation in HRD. A copy of her opening remarks is in Appendix 4.

8. Heads of Delegations of the GMS countries gave their individual statements as follows:

9. **Cambodia:** Mr. Sovannareth Chan, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), presented Cambodia's policy on Human Resource Development anchored on the Rectangular Strategy as pronounced by Prime Minister Hun Sen and which stresses the urgent need to strengthen governance in support of the country's socio-economic development thrust. Implementation of the governance reform program and HRD policy faces a number of challenges including weak institutional and technical capacity to operationalize the policy and to implement a comprehensive HRD reform program. MoLVT, as the line ministry in-charge of preparing the Cambodian workforce for new and better jobs, ensuring the adequacy of Cambodian workforce, and the administration and enforcement of labor laws and other issuances, needs to build its capacity to support the governance initiative. To respond to its mandate, MoLVT has outlined strategic interventions and actions including promoting equal employment opportunity, on-the-job training, protecting worker's rights, benefits, and working conditions, strengthening free collective bargaining and freedom of association.

10. **People's Republic of China:** Mr. Wu Jinkang, Deputy Director General, International Department, Ministry of Finance, PRC, presented the achievements, challenges, and suggestions for future work plan in HRD cooperation. He noted the remarkable progress achieved in the health sector, including the holding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> GMS Regional Health Forum and promotion of cross-border health cooperation programs. In education, PRC is actively supporting the Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management; the Chinese government continues to offer 200 scholarships for GMS countries; Masters in Public Administration program conducted for developing countries; and an Education Center for Foreign Aid has been established. PRC also organizes and actively participates in various youth friendship programs including the GMS Youth Friendship Exchange Program, ASEAN Young Cadres Training Program, PRC-ASEAN Youth Exchange Program, and various bilateral exchange programs. PRC would like to see a clarification of the scope of GMS cooperation in HRD and its subsectors. In health, PRC looks forward to widening the current cross-border health cooperation. In education, PRC will bring the country's education advantage into play by increasing the scale of Chinese government scholarships for students from GMS countries, and

continuing to actively support the PPP. In youth exchange, PRC will continue to improve the current GMS cooperation programs and looks forward to hosting the GMS Youth Forum at the appropriate time.

11. **Lao PDR:** Mr. Chanthachith Amphaychith, Deputy Director General, GMS National Secretariat, WREA, noted the Lao government's emphasis on good governance and capacity building in support of sustainable HRD. Issues relating to labor migration, cross-border services along the transport corridors, health security (health care, HIV/AIDS), and food safety are of particular interest to the government. Lao PDR has enunciated policies relating to health, education, labor and migration, and social development but lacks budget as well as skills. Lao PDR emphasizes the importance of increased subregional integration and cooperation in order that the goals of the GMS Program could be achieved, and is pleased that the HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan will soon be implemented.

12. **Myanmar:** Mr. U Aung Tun Khaing, Deputy Director General, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, stated that Myanmar is working to advance the HRD agenda despite severe resource constraints. He stated that issues relating to labor and migration, public health and HIV/AIDS demand subregional consultation to identify win-win solutions, as national-level actions are inadequate. He noted that the new strategic priorities for subregional cooperation in HRD will help to ensure effective implementation of agreed upon strategies, consolidate the achievements attained, facilitate information-sharing on HRD-related issues, and establish concrete links with development partners. Looking forward, additional impetus needs to be given to capacity building to bridge development gaps across countries and equip people in the GMS - especially the youth to be fully engaged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Web-based learning opportunities should be established, networking among institutions strengthened, and involvement of private sector institutions mobilized.

13. **Thailand:** Ms. Suchada Thaibunthao, Director, Thai Cooperation Branch 1, Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Thailand has implemented various activities on HRD. In labor, the Ministry of Labor has implemented activities on labor protection, labor migration, labor relations, and labor law and regulation improvement. Many training programs have been conducted to increase the productivity of the Thai workforce; courses on skills development have also been offered for participation by other GMS countries. Over the next 5 years, Thailand is interested to participate in health cooperation programs on surveillance for emerging and re-emerging communicable diseases; food safety; drug quality management; development of border health center, primary health care and referral system; and strengthening of health manpower. In education, Thailand has offered several training courses on various topics for other GMS countries. Other potential areas of cooperation could be in hospitality and tourism, agriculture, and industrial technology. In social development, Thailand is a signatory of the MOU on Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT). Thailand now has a pending legislation that would help transform the Mekong Institute into an inter-governmental organization. Thailand looks forward to the implementation of the HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

14. **Viet Nam:** Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Hung, Deputy Director General, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Education and Training, gave an overview of major achievements in HRD in Viet Nam, including plans for training 20,000 Ph D students,

development of 4 world class universities in partnership with Germany, France, U.S.A. and other countries, approval of a 10-year English renovation program, and introduction of new free compulsory education for children from disadvantaged and ethnic communities. In health, 62 out of 63 provinces now have AIDS prevention centers, all districts have Departments of Infectious Diseases and HIV/AIDS Control, and functional staff for HIV/AIDS prevention are available at suburban, district and commune levels; all of these are contributing to bring down the number of HIV/AIDS cases in the country. In labor and social affairs, links between vocational training centers and industries are being developed, new quality vocational curricula introduced, more private sector participation and international cooperation in vocational training encouraged, and plan for training of 20,000 vocational teachers approved.

Copies of the country statements are in Appendix 5.

### **Discussion:**

15. Participants emphasized the need for regional and bilateral cooperation in education through support for scholarships, exchange programs for teachers and students, and institutional networking. Additional support is also needed for border health, for instance, to continue cross-border survey under the ADB-funded Communicable Disease Control Project. A multi-sectoral approach to HIV/AIDS prevention is critical to ensure the success of related initiatives. Training programs offered by PRC and Thailand for the other GMS countries under bilateral agreements have been helpful in supporting overall capacity building efforts. Mutual recognition of skills qualification is an area of work that WGHRD needs to focus on.

16. In response to a query from Myanmar, ADB clarified that the GMS Program is owned by the GMS countries, not by the ADB. It is the GMS countries that drive the GMS agenda and the implementation of the Vientiane Plan of Action that the GMS Leaders endorsed. ADB in its role as secretariat, coordinator, and financier of the GMS Program encourages the active participation and support of other development partners in the implementation of the GMS agenda.

17. Effective and consistent country coordination through the designated focal point for WGHRD is important to ensure the success of the GMS HRD agenda.

### **Human Resource Development Challenges in the GMS**

18. In his presentation, Mr. Jim Knowles, ADB Consultant, outlined the key challenges in HRD in the GMS. These include the urgent need for human resources for sustained economic growth. Improved connectivity and large differences in income and earnings among GMS countries are contributing to increased cross-border labor migration of mostly unskilled and irregular workers within the GMS. There are unintended negative effects of increased physical connectivity such as the rapid growth of human and drug trafficking, the increased threat of cross-border transmission of some communicable diseases, and growing concern about the social and health impact of GMS integration and related investments in border areas. Stronger subregional economic links are generating new skills requirements and employment opportunities within each country and across the subregion. To satisfy projected employment demands, significant improvement is required in the education and skill levels of the GMS workforce. National education and skills development systems need to be

upgraded and made compatible so that the skills and qualifications of graduates are mutually recognized across the subregion. Higher education institutions need to be linked for better cooperation on standard setting and quality assurance mechanisms put in place. Improved subregional cooperation is required to reach agreement in these areas. Technical and vocational education and training systems need to be better aligned with regional skill demands and requirements. Labor market information is weak in the GMS and potential labor migrants lack reliable information about employment opportunities in destination countries and about the risks associated with illegal migration. Migrants and their families also have difficulties accessing needed education and health services while residing in the destination country. Substantial efforts have been made on a bilateral level to regularize migration flows between some GMS countries, but these have not been very successful to date. While GMS integration and increased connectivity have impacted most of the population positively, these have also exposed some vulnerable groups to increased risk of illegal activities, including human and drug trafficking. Particularly vulnerable groups include ethnic minority communities and women and children residing in border areas.

19. Despite the multitude and complexity of HRD issues being addressed by WGHRD, significant achievements have been made over the years since WGHRD was established. Looking ahead, the GMS presents unique opportunities for HRD cooperation such as (i) facilitating subregional integration by harmonizing national HRD regulations, standards, policies and procedures; (ii) addressing cross-border HRD issues resulting from subregional integration, such as control of communicable diseases and various forms of trafficking; (iii) obtaining additional value by conducting selected activities at the subregional level, such as the PPP; (iv) exchanging relevant information and experience within the subregion, such as on approaches to quality assurance in health; and (v) complementing subregional investments in other sectors, such as HRD needs of the tourism and agriculture sectors. A copy of Mr. Knowles's presentation is in [Appendix 6](#).

## **Discussion**

20. Ms. Lateef affirmed the solid work that WGHRD has achieved and called the attention of participants to the knowledge products on various HRD-related projects available at the publications desk such as the flyers and brochures on CDC, PPP, radio dramas as educational tools for remote ethnic communities, GIS mapping on mitigating negative social impacts of movement of people, and socially responsible tourism. WGHRD has done substantial work in HIV/AIDS prevention, communicable disease control, policy discussions in support of health system reform, and capacity building through the PPP.

21. One of the problems confronted by WGHRD is the lack of continuity of representation of the countries in WGHRD meetings. Another is the diversity and complexity of issues that the working group covers. As HRD covers the soft side of the GMS Program, the results and achievements in this sector are less tangible than those in, say, the infrastructure sectors like transport (roads, railways) and energy (power interconnection).

22. It was suggested that the scope of some activities under bilateral programs could be elevated at the subregional level. This will help to increase ownership of the subsector and expand participation of other GMS countries. It is recognized, however,

that the prevailing economic crisis has resulted in substantive budget cuts for some countries.

23. Access to reproductive health should be made available to women migrants. The needs of vulnerable populations like ethnic minorities present an important health problem, particularly in the context of HIV/AIDS and unsafe migration. Availability of preventive materials in minority languages is an important consideration.

## **Plenary Session 1**

### **(i) GMS Youth Forum: Moving Forward**

24. Dr. Tayphasavanh Fengthong, Director, Division of Environmental Hygiene, Hygiene and Prevention Department, Ministry of Health, Lao PDR, presented the highlights of the GMS Youth Forum held in conjunction with the Third GMS Summit in March 2008 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The main outputs of GMS Youth Forum were (i) a GMS Youth Message that articulates the views, concerns, and aspirations of young people in the GMS - presented to the GMS Leaders at the Third Summit; (ii) Caravan trips along the GMS economic corridors and presentations on the participants' insights and experiences at the Youth Forum; and (iii) launching of My Mekong coffee table book and exhibit at the Summit. The Youth Forum gave the participants a unique opportunity to learn about the GMS Economic Cooperation Program and its 3 Cs strategic pillars of increased **connectivity**, improved **competitiveness**, and enhanced sense of **community**.

25. The GMS Leaders were very pleased with the first time ever involvement of the GMS youth in the Summit. In their Joint Summit Declaration, the Leaders stressed that the youth – as the next generation of leaders, decision makers, professionals, workers and parents - should continue to be given the opportunity to get involved and participate in the GMS Program.

A copy of the presentation is in [Appendix 7](#).

## **Discussion**

26. The GMS Youth Forum participants learned much about what the governments were doing under the GMS Program and from their interaction with each other about common areas of concern. The participants have maintained the bonds of friendship that they established at the Forum

27. The meeting agreed to continue the GMS Youth Forum and to explore mechanisms for linking and thematically integrating youth issues in the HRD work plan, and actively involving the youth in the subsector activities. The meeting welcomed PRC's offer to host the GMS Youth Forum at an appropriate time.

### **(ii) Highlights of GMS Development Dialogue: Labor Migration**

28. Ms. Maliwan Wanna-Apa, Director of Division of Planning and Information Technology, Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labor, Thailand, presented the highlights of the Fourth GMS Development Dialogue (GDD) held by videoconference

on 5 May 2009 in Beijing, PRC. The GDD, an initiative under the PPP, provides a platform for cross-sectoral dialogue and debate on development issues among government, academe, private sector, civil society organizations, and media. It helps decision makers broaden their perspectives and appreciate the wider implications of critical policy choices.

29. The 4<sup>th</sup> GDD focused on labor migration in the GMS and provided interesting insights concerning the importance of a holistic and comprehensive labor migration policy to realize the benefits of labor migration for development. The economic downturn may result in a decline in migration flows in sectors affected by the recession and increase the ratio of undocumented migrants. Emphasis on productivity, social awareness about exploitative conditions, and gender aspects of migration policy are important considerations. Labor migration can positively contribute to development and poverty reduction. Well-functioning and facilitative national coordination mechanisms for migration management, supported by strong and gender-sensitive databases on labor migration, are essential for policies to be effective. Labor migration needs to be linked with policies on education and technical and vocational skills training. A regional framework for sustainable migration management could be established as part of the WGHRD work plan, to supplement existing bilateral arrangements/MOUs on labor movement. Discussions on the role of a regional framework and road map should be initiated. A copy of the presentation is in [Appendix 8](#).

## **Discussion**

30. The security aspect of labor migration management is an important consideration, and this requires the involvement of the Ministry of Interior in discussions on migration measures, whether at the bilateral or subregional levels.

31. Thailand has established a high-level inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister that works to ensure that migrant workers are registered and provided social and occupational health protection.

32. Future work under the GMS framework could build on the experience of bilateral MOUs and work done under the ASEAN framework.

33. Mekong Institute which has done studies and has been conducting regional training programs related to labor migration looks forward to collaborating with the working group on future work.

### **(iii) 2<sup>nd</sup> GMS Regional Public Health Forum**

34. Ms. Lu Guoping, Deputy Director, Division of Asian and African Affairs, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Health, PRC, presented the highlights of the 2<sup>nd</sup> GMS Regional Public Health Forum held on 23-24 February 2009 in Guilin, Guangxi, PRC. The Forum was attended by about 100 participants from the 6 GMS countries and 11 partners.

35. The objectives of the Forum were to (i) share and discuss experiences relating to regional communicable diseases control (CDC) and related health system challenges, and (ii) identify regional opportunities and constraints for cooperation in CDC and health

systems. Four topics were discussed: (i) regional CDC challenges and preparedness, (ii) food and drug safety, (iii) improving access to health services in border areas, and (iv) cross-border cooperation.

36. A concluding statement summarized the recommendations of the Forum, and these relate to proposed approaches to strengthen regional response capacity in CDC, in addressing the proliferation of illegal counterfeit and substandard drugs, and cross-border collaboration to address the increased risk of cross-border transmission diseases like HIV and dengue associated with improved physical connectivity and exchanges of goods and services among GMS countries,

37. The Forum reconfirmed that effective CDC necessitates the strengthening of provincial health systems in border areas, and the mainstreaming of cross-border issues and health care for people living in border areas in provincial plans and budgets which central levels should encourage and support.

38. To improve coordination of regional activities in the health sector, the Forum recommended the development of a GMS Health Strategy and program and to ensure that these are complementary to other regional efforts such as those under ASEAN and APEC. More partners should be encouraged to be involved and provide financial and other support.

A copy of her presentation is in [Appendix 9](#).

## **Discussion**

39. Governments take responsibility not only for national health problems but also regional health problems. There is marginal funding for regional activities and countries depend on donor funding. Plans of border provinces should reflect how to deal with cross-border issues. Health systems at the provincial level, particularly along the borders, should be strengthened.

40. Most migrant workers are irregular and they do not show up in statistics; nevertheless, local hospitals, which lack resources, try to help them.

41. In developing the GMS Health Strategy, all 6 countries need to work and plan together, clearly identify the priorities to be pursued under the GMS Program, and avoid duplication of activities under other existing regional frameworks.

### **(iv) Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management: Impact Assessment**

42. Ms. Shireen Lateef, ADB, presented the key findings of the Impact Assessment of the PPP. The overall impact of the PPP is improved efficiency and effectiveness of development management in the GMS. Its outcomes are (i) strengthen technical, managerial and leadership capacity of GMS officials; (ii) strengthen institutional networks for capacity building; and (iii) provide access to GMS-related knowledge and information. PPP's outputs and activities consist of learning programs, Top Development Management Program, Distinguished Speakers Series, GMS Development Dialogue, Journal, PPP Alumni Network, PPP Fellowship Program, PPP Learning Resource



Centers, newsletter, website, and capacity development partners. PPP is supported by development partners' funding from ADB, PRC, New Zealand, France, and South Korea.

43. The PPP impact assessment reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the PPP and came up with recommendations for improvement and proposed actions. The review recommended that the PPP should (i) prioritize, refocus, reduce and streamline its learning programs, discontinue the Distinguished Speakers Series, produce only 1 journal a year instead of 2 due to the difficulty of finding materials, focus on quality rather than quantity of activities, and focus on middle to senior level programs; (ii) expand, diversify and enhance activities: research program launched, alumni program to be launched, expand partnerships with more development partners, organize more training of trainers involving PPP alumni; (iii) better linkages and integration of PPP activities: GDD outputs to be converted to learning materials and used in PPP learning programs, capacity building partners to participate in research programs, research projects to be published in PPP Journal, engage PPP alumni and Fellows as facilitators/resource persons and develop case studies, maximize the website and portal as educational tools for alumni and link with PPP learning resource centers.

44. The PPP Research Program will promote more effective link between knowledge generation and policy formulation, provide resources to GMS academic and research institutions to undertake studies and encourage scholarships on important development issues, and build the capacity of GMS institutions to undertake research. Research grants ranging from US\$15,000 to \$100,000 will be given to eligible GMS think tanks, academic and research institutions. A copy of her presentation is in [Appendix 10](#).

#### **Discussion:**

45. Country suggestions on how to expand, diversify and enhance the PPP are better channeled through the PPP Steering Committee which is composed of the GMS National Coordinators.

#### **(v) HIV and AIDS and the Infrastructure Sector**

46. Ms. Charmaine Cu-Unjieng, Program Coordinator of ADB-assisted Regional Technical Assistance 6321 HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Infrastructure Sector and 6467 HIV Prevention and Infrastructure: Mitigating Risk in the GMS, presented highlights of these two initiatives to address the spread of HIV associated with infrastructure development and increased physical connectivity in the GMS. Infrastructure projects present increased risks for the spread of HIV among mobile men with money (i.e., construction workforce, managers, laborers, and truck drivers), local communities, commercial and entertainment establishments, and other migrant and mobile populations. She stressed that the risk of HIV transmission associated with large infrastructure development projects has a gender dimension and that ethnic minorities are especially vulnerable both to HIV and human trafficking. In recognition of the links between infrastructure development and the spread of HIV and the need to mitigate HIV risks and vulnerabilities, ADB is supporting initiatives aimed at integrating HIV prevention and safe migration packages in infrastructure project design. There are several ongoing initiatives aimed at integrating HIV prevention in GMS transport projects, which is done in close collaboration with line ministries for health and infrastructure, including the transport sector working group. Under RETA 6467, ten subprojects will be implemented covering pre-construction, during construction and post-construction stages, with

emphasis on the vulnerabilities of migrant workers and ethnic minorities. One pre-construction subproject is the Northwest Provincial Roads Improvement project in Cambodia. One post-construction project is the segment of the East-West Economic Corridor covering Viet Nam and Lao PDR. A number of resource materials have been produced including research publications (*HIV and Infrastructure in the GMS: A Literature Review; Build It and They Will Come – The Construction of Lao Route 3 – Lessons for Mitigating Exploitation, HIV and other Diseases*); case studies: *HIV and Infrastructure – ADB Experience*; and tools including resource databases, IEC materials, practice guidelines for a harmonized approach, and design and implementation manuals. These materials may be accessed in the GMS website. Her presentation is in [Appendix 11](#).

### **Discussion:**

47. There are many players in HIV/AIDS prevention and other health issues but ADB is focusing only on a few, targeted projects, e.g. HIV/AIDS prevention associated with infrastructure projects, and cross-border CDC.

48. Strong multi-sectoral coordination mechanism is very important in HIV prevention initiatives.

## **Plenary Session 2: Final Draft GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2009-2012**

### **(i) Final Draft GMS HRD Strategic Framework**

49. Mr. Jim Knowles, ADB Consultant, presented the Final Draft of the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP) for 2009-2012. The SFAP took into consideration the recommendations from the Mid-term Review of the GMS Strategic Framework (2007) and directives from the Third GMS Summit (2008), and was developed through a series of national and regional consultations with representatives of GMS subsectors and development partners.

50. The strategic priorities for GMS cooperation in HRD focus on issues that are **regional in nature, have scope for regional cooperation, and require regional solutions**. The **goal** of SFAP is to foster sustainable regional human resource development that will support and contribute to increased subregional competitiveness, connectivity and community. This will result in sustained economic growth and social development in GMS countries, and will support GMS poverty reduction goals by delivering the benefits of regional cooperation and integration more equitably. The **objectives** are: (i) Support HRD initiatives that directly facilitate subregional cooperation and integration (for example, labor migration management, mutual recognition of educational skills and training qualifications); and (ii) Address cross-border HRD issues directly linked to GMS integration (for example, the cross-border transmission of communicable diseases, human trafficking). There are 5 **strategic thrusts**: (i) Promoting regional cooperation in education and skills development; (ii) Facilitating safe labor migration within the subregion; (iii) Supporting communicable disease control in the subregion; (iv) Enhancing regional cooperation for social development; and (v) Strengthening regional institutional links and mechanisms for regional cooperation. Under each thrust, several priority programs and activities are outlined.

51. To ensure successful implementation of the SFAP, the regional institutional links and mechanisms for regional cooperation in HRD will be strengthened. The structure and the operations of the WGHRD have been revised and restructured to support and facilitate continuity, country ownership and more regular interactions between the working groups. The WGHRD structure and institutional arrangements will be strengthened at subregional, subsector, and national levels. The WGHRD will operate as an umbrella group, complemented by subsector working groups, and national HRD working groups.

52. The WGHRD will coordinate GMS HRD initiatives closely with those of its strategic partners and with those of other regional and international organizations in order to avoid duplication of effort and to identify the level(s) at which cooperation would be most effective. The WGHRD and ADB will make a sustained effort to increase the level of co-financing of GMS HRD initiatives by an increasingly diversified group of strategic partners. The SFAP includes a Results Framework that lists the expected impact, outcomes and outputs during the period 2009-2012.

#### **Discussion:**

53. The Meeting agreed to endorse the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP) 2009-2012 to the GMS Senior Officials Meeting and 15<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Meeting to be held in Thailand on 17-19 June 2009. The GMS countries expressed their thanks to ADB for its technical and financial support that facilitated the preparation of the SFAP.

54. Countries recognized that the SFAP broadly outlines the strategy and directions to guide subregional cooperation in HRD, and that the Action Plan is a living document and new things could be added or removed based on developments and emerging considerations.

55. There are issues that would need closer study and further discussion as the working group and its subgroups proceed to implement the SFAP. These include:

- clarifying the responsibilities of the working group and subgroup focal points who have their regular duties to attend to, and how the subgroups will function (consultations can be done by videoconferencing to reduce expenses)
- strengthening national institutions that will participate in implementing the SFAP
- strengthening and streamlining the national coordination machinery to bring together all stakeholders, policy makers, and implementing agencies (so far only Thailand has a clear organizational focal point designated by the Cabinet and given the mandate to marshal the cooperation of other line ministries)
- clearly defining the national reporting mechanism (given the complicated internal government structures in some countries) to ensure getting the support of the government and line ministries involved in the implementation of the strategy, including getting budget provisions for relevant activities (role of the GMS National Secretariat is critical)

- facilitating dialogues and consultations, including cross sub-sector meetings, leading to better coordination of policies and activities
- some reallocation of activities in the Action Plan to better reflect the main strategic thrust while recognizing the many cross-linkages between the subsector working groups. (Example is the HIV/AIDS Prevention and the Infrastructure Project which is a multi-sectoral and cross-cutting project that requires close coordination and linkages with different line agencies, hence listed under Strategic Thrust 4 on Social Development instead of Strategic Thrust 3 on CDC. At the same time, Social Development is not meant to be a catch-all for other topics not covered by the other subgroups as it focuses on issues relating to vulnerable populations, including women and ethnic minorities. Other CDC projects that are more mainstream technical health topics will be reflected under Strategic Thrust 3.)
- food safety and fake drugs could be taken as a subset of health; food safety needs to be linked with the GMS Working Group on Agriculture; fake drugs would fall under health.

**(ii) Implementing the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan**

56. Ms. Susan Kerr, Principal Human Resource Development Specialist, Social Sectors Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, presented the key features of the Action Plan and the priority programs/activities under the strategic thrusts. The Action Plan is based on the HRD section of the Vientiane Plan of Action for GMS Development 2008-2012. It includes the ongoing and high priority pipeline projects. Countries are encouraged to take the lead in initiating the implementation of the projects and in mobilizing funding resources.

57. Ms. Kerr also briefed the meeting about a new ADB-funded regional policy and advisory technical assistance R-PATA 7275 on Implementing the GMS HRD SFAP amounting to \$1.25 million. The R-PATA will support small activities under the Action Plan, including meetings of the working group and its subsector working groups, analytical and policy studies, and subregional workshops for specific topics under the SFAP, notably mutual recognition of technical/vocational skills and qualifications, labor market information system and labor migration management, and social impact assessments along the GMS economic corridors. As funds are limited, the R-PATA could not cover comprehensively the priority activities in the Action Plan, hence the need to mobilize support from other donors/development partners.

**Discussion:**

58. The Meeting acknowledged with gratitude ADB's funding support and co-financing provided by PRC under its Poverty Reduction Fund to R-PATA 7275.

59. Retuning of the Action Plan will be done to include food safety, put health impact assessment under the health subsector working group, HIV/AIDS can be in health or social development subsector working group depending on nature, reconsider the indicators in the design and monitoring framework to make them more realistic, and include a mid-term review after 2 years in the Monitoring section. Action Plan will be

adjusted and circulated to WGHRD. Copies of the presentations and the HRD SFAP are in [Appendix 12](#).

### **Breakout Group Sessions**

60. Mr. U Than Hla, Assistant Director, Foreign Economic Relations Department, Myanmar, briefed the meeting on the guidelines and expected outputs from the simultaneous breakout group sessions that would review and scope the current pipeline in the HRD Action Plan. A copy of the guidelines is in [Appendix 13](#).

61. The breakout groups discussed in detail contemplated approaches, institutional and financing modalities for implementing the Action Plan, lead countries, prospective partners/donors to provide financing and technical support to projects, and other future high priority projects.

### **Plenary Session 3: Breakout Groups Report Presentations and Discussion**

62. Rapporteurs presented the respective breakout group reports. Copies of detailed reports are in [Appendix 14](#).

#### ***(i) Education***

63. Lack of recognition of skills across borders is a major problem that needs attention. Certain courses of action have been identified in the subgroup report. The subgroup requests the WGHRD Secretariat to formally inform the countries' Ministries of Education about the education subsector output of the SFAP and get political support for its implementation.

64. The subgroup will take into consideration the tourism training requirements of the GMS Tourism Working Group (TWG), and will work closely with TWG. ADB is preparing 3 vocational training loans for Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam, and will try to integrate training needs of the tourism sector. An education subgroup meeting is proposed to be held in Lao PDR.

#### ***(ii) Communicable Disease Control***

65. The subgroup plans to organize a 2-day workshop to review CDC 1 and plan for CDC2 in October 2009. One purpose is to examine opportunities for greater CDC collaboration among GMS countries within the context of CDC2. CDC2 will continue to give emphasis to strengthening regional collaboration arrangements, implementation of International Health Regulations (IHR) and Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED) for regional health security, and CDC in border areas and along economic corridors. Animal health issues will be linked/coordinated with the Working Group on Agriculture. Countries agreed that Dengue is also a regional CDC priority and that the current pilot on integrated vector management should be followed by a GMS dengue control project. Other priority areas are capacity building on food and drug safety and health impact assessment of investments in other sectors. For migrant health issues, the labor and migration subgroup was asked to take the lead.

***(iii) Labor and Migration***

66. The subgroup discussed planned activities to move forward the work plan in labor and migration, including review studies on improving labor migration management in the GMS and identify gaps for future action, prepare information package for potential migrants on the cross border labor migration process, develop regional standard employment contract for technically skilled migrant workers in the GMS, review existing guidelines on code of conduct for employment agencies facilitating cross-border labor migration, review current situation on improving access of migrant workers to basic social services in the receiving countries in the GMS, and review current/existing regional and national labor market systems.

***(iv) Social Development including HIV/AIDS and Infrastructure***

67. The subgroup recommends to move forward to strengthen research on social impacts, strengthen subregional cooperation for anti-trafficking, continue HIV and infrastructure project (including sourcing of additional funding for development of proposed MOU on cross-border HIV prevention, dissemination of existing research findings, and providing access to HIV and STI services for non-nationals), strengthen capacity of vulnerable groups (ethnic minority groups, disadvantaged people such as orphans, people with disabilities, street people), strengthen capacity development of women, and enhance sense of community in GMS youth. Specific activities have been identified over the short and medium term, including key players, lead entities, and indicative budget requirements, as detailed in the subgroup report.

**Discussion**

68. The subgroups need to start work on areas/items that are already in the SFAP, new project ideas will be considered later in a supplementary list. The focus will be to proceed with what are realistically doable within the agreed timeframe.

**Plenary Session 4: Statements by Development Partners**

69. IOM reiterated their interest to support the countries in the areas that they have agreed on, keeping in mind that the scope of work is much broader in migration and much research is needed in the migration area.

70. ILO reiterated their interest and commitment to partner with WGHRD on labor migration issues and share the body of work that they have done on such issues.

71. UNESCO was pleased to get together again with people they have worked successfully with previously and looked forward to working with additional partners in the future. UNESCO noted that minorities are disproportionately represented among both trafficking victims and HIV infected people. UNESCO also noted that the particular vulnerabilities of minorities are not generally addressed in national plans of action, and that effective prevention programs must be both linguistically and culturally appropriate. A “one size fits all” approach is doomed to failure, and wastes scarce resources. UNESCO highlighted the fruitful partnership UNESCO has had with ADB in trafficking/unsafe migration and HIV prevention in ethnic minority languages. At present,

UNESCO, in partnership with ADB, is the only international organization in the GMS producing prevention materials authored in minority languages.

72. UNFPA noted the country programs they have with the 6 GMS countries and looked forward to broadening regional partnerships from which they and the GMS countries could both benefit. Of particular interest to UNFPA are such topics as improving access to basic health services of migrant workers, strengthening capacity of women, and working together on HIV-STI.

73. Mekong Institute looked forward to working closely with the WGHRD and with other development partners as the Institute moves soon to becoming an inter-governmental organization.

### **Other Matters**

74. The meeting agreed to hold the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the GMS WGHRD (WGHRD-10) in 2011 in Lao PDR. Details regarding the date and venue will be determined and communicated later.

### **Closing Session: Wrap-up and Concluding Remarks by Chair and Co-Chair**

75. Ms. Lateef summarized the highlights of the meeting, as follows:

- Overall, WGHRD-9 succeeded in achieving its objective of getting the working group's support and formal endorsement of the GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2009-2012; SFAP is one of the major items in the agenda of the 15<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference on 17-19 June 2009. Fine-tuning will be done in the Action Plan as discussed. Active participation, fruitful exchange of insights and ideas among participants were highly appreciated.
- Next step: Implement new R-PATA to support some initial priority activities under the Action Plan, including meetings of the working group and its subgroups. Active support and participation of GMS countries and Development Partners are critical.
- Specific points:

#### General

- ✓ Scope of some bilateral activities could be elevated and expanded to the subregional level to increase ownership of the subsector and expand participation of other GMS countries

#### Institutional Framework

- ✓ Further consultations are required to clarify roles of focal points, streamline reporting mechanisms and inter-sectoral coordination at country and subregional levels
- ✓ ADB is requested to facilitate dialogues and consultations, including cross sub-sector meetings, leading to better coordination of policies, approaches, and activities

#### Health:

- ✓ Proceed to develop GMS Health Strategy; clearly identify priorities and avoid duplication of activities under other existing regional frameworks.
- ✓ Work to strengthen health systems at the provincial level, particularly along the borders

#### Education

- ✓ Initially focus work on subregional standards on technical and vocational education, and work later on higher education
- ✓ Continue PPP

#### Labor and Migration

- ✓ Link labor migration with policies on education and technical and vocational skills training.
- ✓ Regional framework for sustainable migration management could be established as part of the WGHRD work plan, to supplement existing bilateral arrangements/MOUs on labor movement. Initiate discussions on the role of a regional framework and road map
- ✓ Future work under the GMS framework could build on the experience of existing bilateral MOUs and work done under the ASEAN framework; consider security aspect.

#### Social Development including HIV/AIDS and Infrastructure

- ✓ Continue GMS Youth Forum; explore mechanisms for linking and integrating youth issues in HRD work program; actively involve the youth in subsector activities; welcomed PRC's offer to host the GMS Youth Forum
- ✓ Strong multi-sectoral coordination mechanism is very important in HIV prevention initiatives.

76. Mr. Li expressed his thanks to the GMS delegates and representatives of development partners for their active participation and contribution to the meeting. He also expressed his thanks to ADB for its technical and funding support in organizing the meeting, and to the Guilin provincial government for their hospitality and administrative support. The participants in turn expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government of PRC for the warm hospitality and kind arrangements for the meeting.

77. Ms. Lateef expressed her thanks to all the participants for their active contribution to the discussions and to the ADB Team and secretariat staff for their support.