



15th Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD -15)

13-14 December 2016

Kunming, Yunnan Province, PRC

DRAFT SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

***Meeting Theme: Enhancing knowledge, skills and innovation in the Greater
Mekong Subregion***

Executive Summary

The 15th Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Human Resource Development (WGHRD-15) was held on 13-14 December 2016 in Kunming, Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China. The event was co-organized by the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The meeting briefed delegates on the outcomes of the 21st GMS Ministerial Conference and updates on the Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan (RIF-IP) 2014–2018 Midterm Review. Development partners and GMS country representatives discussed achievements and innovation in higher education and technical vocational education and training (TVET) cooperation, as well new trends in addressing the issues on health security. After an intensive subgroup and plenary discussions and review of the future directions of the HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP) beyond 2017, the delegates drew a list of workshop recommendations. These were grouped under the following subheadings: streamline the scope of the WGHRD, improve WGHRD meetings, strengthen coordination and communication and continue ADB assistance. Delegates were asked to discuss and consult with appropriate ministries in their home countries the recommendations and outcomes of the meeting. The Lao People's Democratic Republic expressed readiness to host the 16th WGHRD meeting in 2017. PRC thanked all delegates for their active participation and promised continued support to GMS HRD cooperation.

Day 1: 13 December 2016

Introduction:

1. A total of 70 participants from the six GMS countries (Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), representatives of development partners, and the ADB attended. A copy of the list of participants is in [Appendix 1](#), and a copy of the agenda is in [Appendix 2](#).
2. The objectives of the Meeting were to:
 - i. discuss opportunities for exchanging and sharing regional knowledge, experience and lessons learned in HRD cooperation in the GMS and ASEAN;



- ii. monitor and assess on-going regional HRD cooperation initiatives in higher education and TVET;
- iii. highlight achievements of R-PATA 8549 Implementing the Greater Mekong Subregion Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP), Phase 2;
- iv. discuss regional dimensions of national HRD projects; and
- v. review the GMS HRD SFAP 2013–2017 strategic directions for the health education, social development and labor and migration subgroups.

Opening Session:

3. In his welcome remarks, Mr. Li Rui, Deputy Director, ADB Division, Department of International Economic and Financial Cooperation, Ministry of Finance, PRC, noted that over the past two decades, the GMS Program has made important achievements in regional cooperation and implementation of the RIF-IP. He said that in the face of emerging trends in the global environment, HRD cooperation will face external risks. He shared his thoughts on strengthening collaboration in soft areas like culture, and noted that cooperation in human resources is indispensable to GMS cooperation. Given recent directions from the 21st GMS Ministerial Conference, WGHRD has to seriously consider how to move forward in light of its complicated institutional framework as well as the need to narrow down its scope, focus on realistic deliverables, and strengthen cooperation in this area to help bring GMS cooperation to a new level.

4. In her welcome remarks, Ms. Ayako Inagaki, Director, Human and Social Development Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB, noted that the Meeting would reflect on the HRD sector's achievements. It will also review how effectively it has achieved its objectives, learn from its successes and challenges, gain common understanding on the value of the current SFAP and agree on how the working group will move forward. She stated that the Meeting's results will feed into the concept paper for the next framework. She identified some key challenges in implementing the HRD Strategy:

- i) the multi-sector nature of the working group and challenges in coordinating different line ministries;
- ii) limited cooperation with other GMS sector working groups that has precluded benefits from shared knowledge; and
- iii) uneven interest and support in some HRD subsector areas.

5. Ms. Xinning Jia, Deputy Country Director, PRC Resident Mission of ADB, noted that this Meeting was part of ADB's support to the GMS Economic Cooperation Program for which ADB has played four distinctive roles, namely, as financier, as knowledge sharer, as provider of technical advice and support, and as catalyst to bridge development gaps. She outlined the new PRC Country Partnership Strategy 2016-2020 that is very much aligned with PRC's 13th development plan. She mentioned some of ADB's projects in PRC covering policy-based lending program, regional cooperation and integration support in Guangxi Province, projects under the air pollution control program, pilot demonstration program for elderly care through PPP, among others. She stated that the PRC Poverty Reduction Fund administered by ADB has benefited WGHRD and enabled cooperation in higher education and training, health security, safe migration and social development, and sharing of knowledge among GMS countries.

6. Copies of the opening and welcome remarks are in [Appendix 3](#).



Session 1: Regional Cooperation Overview

7. Ms. Pinsuda Alexander and Ms. Jyotsana Varma, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, Southeast Asia Department, ADB took turns presenting outcomes of the 21st GMS Ministerial Conference held on 30 November-1 December 2016 in Chiang Rai, Thailand that were of particular relevance and interest to the WGHRD (copy of presentation in [Appendix 4](#)). Ms. Alexander reported that achievements in the HRD sector were reported to the GMS Senior Officials and recognized also by the GMS Ministers in their Joint Ministerial Statement (JMS). In terms of forward-looking directives for HRD, the GMS Ministers:

- i) looked forward to the new blueprint for HRD cooperation toward the realization of the SDGs and affirmed that HRD would continue to be a priority for capacity building, health promotion, and enhancement of the well-being of the subregion's human resources;
- ii) recommended the Study on Strengthening the GMS Institutional Framework including agreement on a regular reporting mechanism from the sector working groups to report to the GMS Senior Officials Meeting on new developments and progress, organization of the Economic Corridors Forum back-to-back with the 22nd GMS Ministerial Conference (MC-22);
- iii) considered separate working group on Health;
- iv) endorsed an expanded GMS Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan 2020 (RIF-IP 2020) as well as the new configuration of GMS economic corridors to increase areas of cooperation and complement infrastructure connectivity.

8. Ms. Alexander also briefed the participants on the outcomes of the Development Partners' Meeting held as a component event of the Conference that featured a briefing on the Mid-Term Review of the RIF-IP and new RIF-2020 to guide investment planning, case studies on drivers for promoting inclusive growth in the GMS, and a panel discussion on new partnership opportunities for inclusive and sustainable growth in the GMS.

9. Ms. Jyotsana Varma reported on the Midterm Review (MTR) of the RIF-IP 2014–2018 cum 3rd Progress Report and RIF-IP 2020, as follows:

- i) The MTR showed a great success story with 52 out of 93 investment and technical assistance projects valued at \$26 billion or 85% of estimated total of \$30 billion of projects having found financing, a large part of which is in the transport sector.
- ii) It also showed strong country ownership within the GMS through substantial investments from Thailand and PRC estimated at \$19 billion, with ADB, other development partners and the private sector contributing \$3.8 billion.
- iii) The MTR showed that there has been significant progress in implementation of projects particularly in health, that complicated institutional arrangements for TVET have posed some challenges, and that the approach to labor migration cooperation has been typically bilateral due to sensitive political issues. Resulting from the MTR was the RIF-IP 2020 endorsed by the GMS Ministers consisting of the expanded list of 107 investment and technical assistance projects with an estimated cost of \$32.7 billion.
- iv) Continued support from development partners and the private sector is critical to bridge the financing gap estimated at \$6.4 billion. Included in the RIF-IP 2020 are two investment and four technical assistance projects in HRD with an estimated



cost of \$157 million. Of these the GMS Health Security Project has firm financing and the four TA projects are all ongoing funded by ADB or by funds administered by ADB.

10. Ms. Varma emphasized that HRD remains an important sector of the GMS Economic Cooperation Program and that the sector's achievements and contribution to the GMS vision are well-recognized and appreciated at all levels of the GMS institutional hierarchy and machinery. It was noted that work on the 4th Progress Report of the RIF-IP would kick off in January 2017.

11. Ms. Azusa Sato, ADB, summarized the key points discussed in this session covering good progress in education and health activities, and also recalled the new directions to support the SDGs, aligned with the continued focus on economic corridor development and the new configuration of GMS economic corridors as earlier presented. She underscored the role of development partners in terms of providing new financing modalities, as emphasized in the RIF-IP MTR, the success so far achieved in securing financing for priority projects, and the strong country ownerships and success in building partnerships. The presenting issue is how best to meet the financing gaps for the HRD sector.

Session 2: Working Group Achievements in Education

12. Ms. Phunyanuch Pattanothai, SEAMEO Regional Center for Higher Education and Development, discussed its scope of work to facilitate policy dialogues, develop harmonization mechanisms, and promote multilateral collaboration. In partnership with ADB, SEAMEO is aiming to improve cooperation and networking of higher education institutions so as to foster higher education harmonization within the GMS countries and beyond. Credit transfer serves as one of the core instruments for increasing student mobility, academic mobility, and free flow of human resources. The ACTA project, on the other hand, aims at harmonizing existing credit transfer arrangements in higher education and developing a university network of 24 universities in GMS countries (GMS-UC) as a cooperation mechanism for the GMS community and beyond. Other priorities identified include university governance, quality assurance, information sharing, faculty exchange and visiting experts, and student mobility and talent cultivation.

13. Ms. Nantana Gajaseni, ASEAN University Network, explained the importance of quality assurance. She mentioned ADB's support for CLM workshops covers two phases: Phase 1 aimed at understanding the quality assurance system, and Phase 2 (2014-date) covering capacity development workshops, on-site consultancy visits, and roadshow events in CLM to enhance knowledge on QA system implementation and management particularly based on AUN-QA system. These had resulted in the establishment of QA instruments and systems, and development of handbooks in local languages. Phases 1 and 2 have established QA instruments, systems, and mechanisms, produced QA handbooks in local languages, promoted better understanding of knowledge system in relation to QA, expanded network of QA practitioners, and established quality assurance system and quality culture. Phase 3 (2017–2019) has been proposed to ADB Thai Resident Mission to support national QA training, assist selected universities on setting QA unit/system, mentoring and consulting to university QA team. To expand QA development in universities of CLM countries, continued support is necessary for wider participation of universities in these countries.

14. Mr. Wan Fengfeng, Deputy of Vocational and Adult Education Division, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Education Department, PRC, introduced a demonstration project in Guangxi Province. It covers:



- i) international cooperation in vocational education involving 47,623 foreign students over 5 years in 31 schools in Guangxi;
- ii) regional exchange platform between PRC and ASEAN on vocational education;
- iii) science and technology research cooperation with ASEAN (particularly in agriculture, tourism, and traditional Chinese medicine, business and finance); and
- iv) health with Thailand, Lao, PDR, Indonesia, Russia, and Mongolia.

15. Regional exchange and cooperation during the 13th five-year plan on TVET for foreign students in PRC focus on providing education and training in TVET with ASEAN and developed countries (Germany and Australia), and introduction of highly educated talents to enhance their education in Guangxi. He introduced a proposed pilot demonstration project on Guangxi Modern TVET Development Demonstration program (\$300 million ADB loan and \$200 million co-financing from KfW). The loan will support infrastructure, better facilities and equipment, improved vocational education capacity, and innovation to create fair society and upgrade economic development in PRC.

16. Copies of presentations for Session 2 are in [Appendix 5](#).

Open Discussion:

17. In response to Myanmar's request for clarification on difficulties experienced in implementing GMS higher education projects, Mr. Joel Mangahas, ADB, stated that activities relating to credit transfer, promoting quality assurance, and collaboration in TVET are still ongoing and opportunities for investments are still being identified. The health sector, on the other hand, may be perceived as having implemented more projects because countries tend to be more concerned about addressing issues in this sector.

18. Cambodia inquired whether SEAMEO-RIHED and AUN would focus on the GMS economic corridors besides Phnom Penh. AUN responded that Phase 3 of their project would engage institutions for training and establishing quality higher education that is relevant to the economic corridors. Similarly, SEAMEO-RIHED responded that they would like to expand as well with ADB support. Both institutions plan to submit their reports directly to ADB but would post the executive summaries of their reports in their respective websites.

19. TICA was quite impressed about the progress of work on quality assurance, but expressed concern that for Phase 3, primary and secondary students from other countries could not study in Thailand. AUN replied that the ASEAN Quality Assurance System had conducted more than 230 programs in ASEAN countries, developed QA system and plans to do it at regional level for CLM. AUN network is for universities and Phase 3 would cover university level QA. On the other hand, QA for basic education may be linked to SEAMEO which takes care of basic education.

Session 3: Challenges to Health Security in the GMS: New Trends in Addressing the Issues

20. Mr. Gerard Servais, ADB, gave an overview of issues and challenges for health security in the GMS including mobile populations in the economic corridors, contact between humans and animals, emerging diseases e.g., SARS and bird flu, and increasing disengagement of major donors (global funds) requiring countries to look for alternative ways to finance health security in the region. Remote and mobile populations have limited access to health services,



and the emergence of drug resistant strains of major diseases and microbial infections, fake drugs circulating in the GMS, and food safety issues at national and regional levels are other areas of concern.

21. ADB has a long history of engagement in the GMS health sector through the Communicable Disease Control Project Phases 1 and 2, technical assistance for malaria, HIV, and health and climate change, health districts investment in Viet Nam, and health sector governance in Lao PDR. He outlined the elements of the GMS Health Security Project– its financing (\$125 million loan and grant for CLMV), scope and various components (regional cooperation through information exchange, harmonization of policies for CDC; surveillance and rapid response, diagnostic improvement and laboratory quality assurance; and hospital infection prevention and control), intervention areas, and partnership arrangements with WHO, Thailand and PRC, World Bank, and Global Fund.

22. Mr. Chin-Kei Lee, WHO China Country Office, talked about the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies (APSED III). He recalled International Health Regulations (IHRD) 2005 – an international legal instrument for global health security that outlines minimum requirements for functional public health system and allows countries to quickly detect and respond to disease outbreaks in their communities. IHR 2005 which entered into force in 2007 represents international commitment for shared responsibility and collective defense against hazards. He outlined the features of APSED III as a bi-regional framework for action for two WHO regions (SEARO and WPRO) to meet IHR core capacity requirements – developed in 2005, updated in 2010 and again in 2016. APSED III will be used to update and guide national action plans and coordinate multi-sector efforts, implement monitoring and evaluation framework of IHR, and strengthen political commitment for investment in human and financial resources to advance implementation of the IHR.

23. Ms. Maria Nnette Motus, International Organization for Migration Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, discussed gaps, trends, and recommendations in addressing mobile and migrant populations' needs for health security in the GMS. She said that mobile and migrant populations (MMPs) in the GMS, who are low-skilled or middle-level skilled migrants, mostly have irregular status and do not have access to health care systems, and have greater exposure to health risks. Underdeveloped health systems in the GMS pose a challenge to MMPs in the event of outbreak of emerging diseases; also MMPs are left behind in national action plans. Specific data on migrants' health often are not readily available, and there is need for better coordination between the public and private sectors.

24. IOM worked with WHO to develop a framework that covers health, border and mobility management. She mentioned WHO recommendations to achieve highest possible level of public health security. IOM is looking at including MMPs within national health systems, strengthening public health infrastructures, and addressing health impacts on MMPs. She briefed the meeting about JUNIMA's mission to bring together multi-sector partners in promoting access to health services for MMPs. Through WGHRD, ADB has helped countries on a common approach to HIV prevention for MMPs. She also mentioned World Health Assembly Resolution 61.17 on promoting equitable access to health promotion and care for migrants, and bilateral and international cooperation on migrants' health among countries involved in the migration process.

25. Mr. Surasak Thanaisawanyangkoon, Thailand Ministry of Health, stated that at-risk migrant population either live in settlements or are highly mobile moving back and forth across the borders. There are about 1,138,066 migrant workers who have applied for health insurance scheme in April-August 2016. He shared Thailand's experience on strengthened health security under the country's 20-year national development plan that targets reduction of health



expenditure, access to health promotion, disease control prevention and treatment, and improved life expectancy and quality of life.

26. Thailand is collaborating with neighboring countries on disease control. Border health cooperation covers health care services, cross-border activities (patient referral system and CDC), and human resources development for health personnel. Thailand's Global Health Strategy 2015-2020 covers cooperation and sharing of responsibilities in global health with the international community. Thailand's Border Health Strategy, on the other hand, is developing a health service system, improving access to basic health services and insurance coverage, and improving management support mechanism. With regard to cross-border migration, Thailand has formalized bilateral MOUs with Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Cambodia covering exchange of information and staff, capacity building for health personnel, and joint research.

27. Copies of presentations for Session 3 are in [Appendix 6](#).

Open Discussion:

28. Lao PDR noted the big challenge with regard to malaria, dengue, TB and TB-resistant cases and expressed doubt they could reach the target to eliminate malaria by 2030. With mining, road construction, and hydropower projects attracting migrants, Lao PDR proposed the identification of model provinces for CDC and emphasized inter-sector collaboration.

29. Mr. Gerard, Servais, ADB, agreed on the suggested emphasis on inter-sector collaboration and closer collaboration between and among countries.

Session 4: Next Steps for the HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan (SFAP)

30. Ms. Jyotsana Varma, ADB, mentioned that it was not only the HRD SFAP that was being reviewed but also the GMS Strategic Framework, with the past 25 years having seen many changes and even a generational shift in the subregion. She introduced Mr. Sam Plummer, recently engaged as ADB consultant to help WGHRD in the process of reviewing the implementation of the HRD SFAP and developing the next framework.

31. Mr. Sam Plummer, ADB Consultant, explained that the session would seek to get feedback and ideas from the countries on the review of the current HRD SFAP, how effective WGHRD had been, how to retain value that was in it, and how to improve areas that needed improvement to guide directions moving forward and to inform future arrangements. He recalled that the first HRD SFAP covered 2009–2012, followed by SFAP 2013–2017 with one year left in the current framework which would be the subject of the current review, and noted that future working arrangements would be guided by directives from the 21st GMS Ministerial Conference. He explained the mechanics of the subgroup sessions to be divided into two groups: Health and Labor and Migration, and Education and Social Development. Expected output from the subgroups would be two slide presentations on the highlights of their discussions to be presented to the plenary the following day. After review of what had been achieved, the meeting would move to sub-session 3 to discuss future working arrangements by addressing three questions:

- i) What is the WGHRD and what does it do?
- ii) What are the working arrangements?
- iii) What works well and what can be improved?



32. The output would be the subgroups' inputs into future arrangements to be reported to the plenary the following day. Mr. Plummer stated that there would be follow-up consultations with the countries early next year leading to the preparation of the final report and the next Strategic Framework and Action Plan. A copy of his presentation is in [Appendix 7](#).

33. After the briefing, the meeting broke into two separate subgroup sessions, namely (i) Health and Labor and Migration Subgroups facilitated by Mr. Gerard Servais, ADB; and (ii) Education and Social Development Subgroups facilitated by Mr. Joel Mangahas, ADB.

Day 2: 14 December 2016

Summary of Day 1 by Ms. Azusa Sato, ADB

33. Ms. Sato gave a short recap of Day 1 activities:

- i) highlights of the outcomes and directives arising from the 21st GMS Ministerial Conference;
- ii) notable achievements in HRD on capacity building, health promotion, and enhancement of the well-being of the subregion's human resources;
- iii) in education, achievements in academic credit transfer program, training standards recognition initiative, roadmap for student mobility, and quality assurance standards for GMS universities;
- iv) in health, updates on current regional collaboration in APSED III, gaps, trends, and recommendations addressing mobile and migrant populations' needs for health security, as well as country initiatives on multilateral and bilateral cooperation frameworks; and
- v) sub-group discussions on the review and next steps for the HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

34. A copy of the recap is in [Appendix 8](#).

Session 5: Synthesis of Subgroup Discussions

35. The 4 subgroups (health, labor and migration, education, and social development) reported to the plenary on the previous day's discussions under Session 4, covering the progress and results achieved by their subsector, as well as activities and targets for 2017. The Mekong Institute and the SEAMEO Secretariat were requested to respond at the end of the subgroup presentations.

Health

36. Ms. Sayan Kongkey, Thailand, presented the health subgroup achievements in eight priority health projects:

- i) Communicable Diseases Control (CDC) Phase 2;
- ii) CDC3 to commence implementation in 2017;
- iii) GMS food and drug safety;
- iv) health impact assessment in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia;
- v) climate change in the health sector in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia;
- vi) GMS capacity building for HIV prevention in Viet Nam, Lao and Myanmar;



- vii) monitoring implementation of the MOU for Joint Action to Reduce HIV Vulnerability; and
- viii) R-CDTA Malaria project in Lao and Cambodia.

37. Ms. Sayan requested ADB to look into the implementation status in all GMS countries of the MOU with JUNIMA on Joint Action to Reduce HIV Vulnerability Related to Population Movement before considering its renewal beyond 2016 to cover other health security issues. She also requested for technical assistance to support strengthening the mechanism for monitoring regional cooperation projects in health security, and in monitoring, surveillance and control of non-communicable diseases; and comments on donor cooperation initiatives, like the ones being undertaken by Thailand through TICA, with Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Myanmar, that should be discussed at the WGHRD to prevent duplication of initiatives at the regional level.

38. Mr. Surasak Thanaisawanyangkoon said that attention should also be given to emerging diseases such as dengue, and clarified that HIV/AIDS is not only a health issue but a social development issue as well. He proposed that for every issue there should be individual focal points.

Labor and Migration

39. Ms. Pinsridurong Khatum, Thailand, reported on the labor and migration subgroup discussions, which underscored the need to improve information and knowledge sharing among the members. The members admitted having no knowledge of the HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan on facilitating safe cross border and labor migration prior to the meeting. She enumerated significant achievements under the subgroup:

- i) establishment of migrant resource centers in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Thailand with support from IOM and ILO, which prepare workers for overseas deployment.
- ii) provision of capacity building programs for government officials on labor policy and migration management by development partners;
- iii) skills development and enhancing social protection for migrant workers;
- iv) highlights of national initiatives, such as Thailand's one-stop service centers located at border areas for migrant workers entering Thailand, as well as labor cooperation through MOUs that aim to facilitate legal migration.

40. Activities and targets for the sector for 2017 include further improvements in information sharing at national levels and close collaboration with the private sector. Training programs on language, culture, and workers' rights for government officials and skills development for workers were also deemed important.

Education

41. Mr. Huo Nan, Yunnan Province, PRC, discussed the achievements in the sub-sector under the current SFAP, proposed projects which have not yet been implemented, as well as future plans for strengthening cooperation in education and skills development. He noted substantial progress achieved in:

- i) credit transfer framework for Asia, now on its phase 3 (experience) and phase 4 (expand);
- ii) GMS program for capacity building for skills development under the GMS university consortium and in quality assurance training;
- iii) production of AUN Quality Assurance handbook in local languages;



- iv) skills development, teacher training and development of standard learning materials for TVET;
- v) harmonization in education with significant contribution from PRC through scholarship grants to ASEAN students and long-term cooperation programs in higher education and skills development in the GMS; and
- vi) progress achieved in infrastructure investments and gender issues in higher education access.

42. He mentioned that there was not much progress achieved in mutual recognition agreements on skills and teacher training standards. The subgroup felt the need for sustainable funding to improve skills development, quality standards and cooperation in higher education.

Social Development

43. Mr. Long Chhun, Cambodia, presented progress achieved under the social development subsector:

- i) in anti-human trafficking, MOUs have been signed between Thailand and neighboring countries under the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking process.
- ii) transit reception centers have been established for trafficking victims along the borders.
- iii) programs on youth development were cited such as the GMS Youth Caravan in conjunction with the GMS Youth Forum, and student exchange programs.
- iv) Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management and the establishment of training centers for social workers.

44. The subgroup identified the need for social impact assessments for vulnerable groups arising from increased connectivity, as well as projects for social inclusion for the elderly, women and children.

45. Copies of subgroup presentations are in [Appendix 9](#).

Responses:

46. In response to the health and labor and migration subgroup discussions, Ms. Maria Theresa Medialdia, MI, mentioned challenges faced by countries in mitigating the health and social impact of increased mobility of people in the GMS. Common concerns include safe migration and health security. She recommended the review of labor, migration and health policies at the national level, intensified bilateral and regional dialogue and cooperation, establishment of information-sharing mechanisms, and involvement of migrant views during policy formulation and program implementation. She underscored the importance of a holistic approach in addressing health-migration issues.

47. MI's future contribution to GMS HRD could be in the form of provision of training for labor migration management, joint research and studies on health and migration issues, and mapping of projects/investments related to health and migration to minimize duplication of efforts. MI's initiative for creating a safe food regulatory environment in the GMS was also discussed, which could complement the planned initiatives for food safety mentioned in the ADB GMS Health Directions Paper. A copy of MI presentation is in [Appendix 10](#).



48. Ms. Tinsiri Sribodhi, SEAMEO Secretariat, said that priorities of the education subgroup are aligned with the seven regional priority thrusts of the Ministers of Education in Southeast Asia such as early education care, addressing the barrier of inclusion in education, resilience and disaster response, TVET, revitalizing teacher education, higher education research and harmonization and adoption of the 21st century curriculum. Her three key messages were:

- i) regional cooperation is an issue of mobility and connectivity so standards need to be in place to facilitate recognition of skills and qualifications and emphasis be placed on basic education curriculum;
- ii) address mobility issues for both skilled and unskilled workers through strengthening cooperation in TVET and intensified collaboration among different organizations, including ADB to develop the mutual recognition framework at the national and regional levels;
- iii) link with SEAMEO centers established around Southeast Asia like SEAMEO TROPMED, SEAMEO VOCTECH, and SEAMEO Center for Life-long Learning to further strengthen cooperation in education. A copy of SEAMEO Secretariat presentation is in [Appendix 11](#).

49. The meeting facilitators summarized the recommendations arising from the two-day discussions including those from the sub-groups. Country feedback on list of workshop recommendations is in [Appendix 12](#). It would be subject to further processing and consultations with concerned ministries when delegates return to their home countries. All inputs were consolidated, as follows:

50. **Recommendation 1: Streamline the scope of the WGHRD.** It was widely acknowledged by participants that there is an opportunity to enhance the WGHRD working arrangements to improve its performance and achieve its objectives in the future. This was evidenced by the limited outcomes achieved by two of the sub-groups during the term of the SFAP 2013–17, the lack of clarity regarding the scope of the WGHRD and the diverse delegate profiles. The following were proposed:

- i) number of sub-groups to be reduced to two: (i) Health and (ii) Education and Skills Development, to ensure that the sub-groups are focused on areas in which there is demand for regional cooperation, There was evidence of regional cooperation and demand for regional initiatives in the health and education/TVET sectors and a general consensus that these sub-groups should continue. There is however little evidence of a regional consensus on labour and migration issues and thus there were questions raised as to the ongoing benefit of the sub-group as part of the WGHRD forum. The Social Development sub-group was established as a cross-cutting sub-group but again there is little evidence of consensus on social development issues or effective contribution of social development considerations to the other three sub-groups;
- ii) mandate of the newly refined Health subgroup to address health and health security issues related to MMPs as part of all health interventions;
- iii) newly refined Health sub-group to focus on access to social security for MMPs, either through their home country social security systems or in their countries of residence;
- iv) newly established Education and Skills Development sub-group to incorporate a regional dimension into the upcoming national TVET projects in CAM, LAO, MYA, and VIE in order to leverage the opportunities presented by the regional working group and align with GMS objectives;



- v) newly refined Education and Skills Development sub-group to coordinate more effectively with ASEAN and the PRC;
- vi) WGHRD be renamed to reflect the refined scope of the working group and that the mandates of the working group and of its sub-groups are clarified and documented. The scope should address areas of cross-country consensus on the need for regional approaches and initiatives in order to enjoy the benefits of the GMS working group. The clearer mandates will be reflected in the delegate TOR's (see paragraph 39.a below) and will enable more effective delegate selection by national secretariats. It will also enable the establishment of more effective working relationships with in-country line ministries.

51. **Recommendation 2: Improve future WGHRD meetings.** While the WGHRD is seen as an effective forum for information sharing, exchange of ideas, networking and collaboration, its annual nature means that maximum advantage should be taken of these meetings. The following were proposed:

- i) clearer terms of reference are established for WGHRD delegates that address: the role of the delegate as a country representative; the role of the delegate as a sub-sector representative; the ministry and position requirements; and the availability of the delegate, amongst other things. Delegates will be selected by their national secretariat based upon the specifications of the TOR and nominated to the GMS Secretariat. This will encourage the appointment of delegates with an appropriate profile and lead to more continuity, which in turn will strengthen regional networks and enable improved cooperation and collaboration;
- ii) each country sends more delegates to support continuity when there is turnover amongst delegates; to enable representation by more ministries or departments within ministries; and to enable better representation of sub-sector issues by country delegations;
- iii) in-country preparation for the WGHRD is improved through more pre-meetings that include preparation of SFAP country progress reports and consultations with line ministries to prepare inputs for the workshop;
- iv) SFAP country progress reports are shared amongst country focal points prior to meeting for distribution to line ministries as a basis for in-country preparations in order to enable enhanced inter-country discussion during the WGHRD;
- v) wider range of development partners are invited to the WGHRD meetings to provide wider knowledge about country and regional sector initiatives and the opportunity for enhanced cooperation; and
- vi) separate but consecutive (or concurrent) meetings held for the sub-groups, allowing for more focus on sub-sector issues while still enabling a WGHRD plenary meeting at the beginning/end of the meetings and enhancing cost-effectiveness.

52. **Recommendation 3: Strengthen communication and coordination.** It was acknowledged that there needed to be more structured activities outside of the annual WGHRD meetings to realize the benefits of the working group. The following were proposed:

- i) more structured interaction between country teams between the annual WGHRD meetings, including: country focal point meetings; extraordinary sub-group meetings where there is a specific need to progress initiatives; use of video-conferencing meetings for sub-group meetings; the establishment of an online portal for information sharing; and the establishment of a WGHRD network;



- ii) improved monitoring of progress against National Action Plans by national secretariats, with regular reports being submitted to the GMS Secretariat and to other country teams;
- iii) increased interaction within country teams during the year, including regular meetings coordinated by the country focal point and supported by the national secretariat;
- iv) country teams meet regularly with ADB Resident Mission staff to promote discussion and coordination of activities and to support capacity development of country teams;
- v) country teams build stronger links with line ministries, including the provision of orientation on GMS and the WGHRD to increase awareness of the GMS and the opportunities that it presents and to enable increased engagement; and
- vi) stronger links are established between country teams and development partners such as ASEAN and JUNIMA through MOUs, to encourage a more holistic and coordinated approach to HRD in the GMS region.

53. **Recommendation 4: Continue ADB technical assistance.** Participants concurred that there was strong ongoing need and demand for ongoing HRD support to the GMS region and proposed the following:

- i) ADB to continue to strengthen its HRD support to the GMS region to enable the working group to continue to meet annually and to execute successful interventions;
- ii) ADB to focus specifically on the provision of regional technical assistance in the areas of higher education quality assurance and the skills recognition framework, health and health security, and TVET; and
- iii) interventions should have a regional focus to strengthen the development of the GMS region as a whole.

Session 6: Discussions on the Way Forward

54. Ms. Ayako Inagaki, Director, SEHS, ADB, said that after the exercise of drawing a long list of recommendations, the working group must first decide on recommendations that are absolutely necessary and feasible before tackling next steps. She recommended the institution of clearer follow-up mechanisms for workshop recommendations. She emphasized that the proposals to streamline the scope of the working group and to specify a clearer TOR for WGHRD participants would need to be discussed further with appropriate government agencies or ministries in home countries. It is crucial, she said, to reach an agreement and consensus on the proposed restructuring of the working group and provision of clearer mandates for workshop participants prior to tackling other workshop recommendations.

55. Ms. Inagaki also urged the national working groups to incorporate bilateral cooperation initiatives in the action plan for better coordination and harmonization of HRD initiatives in the subregion. She mentioned that countries could tap into the regional pool of funds to strengthen the regional cooperation dimension of national projects. Finally, she said that ADB would continue to support HRD initiatives in the GMS through technical assistance and investment projects.

56. The timeline of activities and next steps for the working group is in [Appendix 13](#).



Session 7: Date and Venue of the 16th Meeting of the WGHRD

57. Mr. Khamphao Champengxay of Lao PDR congratulated ADB for the successful meeting and thanked the Ministry of Finance, Department of International Cooperation, PRC for hosting this year's event in Kunming. Speaking on behalf of the Lao government, he announced that Lao PDR would be pleased to host the 16th Meeting of the WGHRD in Lao PDR in 2017.

Session 8: Feedback and Reflection

58. Participants were requested to fill out feedback forms and submit these to the Secretariat for consolidation.

Session 9: Closing Remarks

59. Mr. Yang Xunbing, PRC, congratulated ADB for the successful meeting. He stressed the importance of the GMS Economic Cooperation Program in improving connectivity and shared prosperity in the subregion. He reported notable progress achieved in agriculture, communication, trade, infrastructure development, and especially in transportation services through various bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiatives. Under the GMS cooperation framework, he said, HRD regional cooperation and capability building are being continuously improved and strengthened. He mentioned PRC's continuous provision of scholarship grants to students from the GMS to study in PRC. PRC has likewise actively participated in various GMS programs like the Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management and MI's initiatives to promote and encourage information and knowledge exchange. With the Belt and Silk Road initiative, he said Yunnan Province opens deeper cooperation with GMS countries. He looked forward to further deepening regional cooperation and bringing in mutual benefits, trust and prosperity to all with the support from PRC central government and through common efforts of all GMS countries. He wished everyone prosperity and good health.

