



“Strengthening Green Skills Development under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program” (TA-6806)

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE CAREC WORKING GROUP ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

**September 26, 2024 (Thursday)
1.00-3.00 pm Manila time**

A. Background information

Consultations with stakeholders during the first meeting of the CAREC Working Group on Skills Development, held in Tashkent (29 February–1 March 2024) revealed a shared need for strengthening the regional exchange of best practices on skills development policies and programs, and strengthening of the capacity of TVET and HE institutions to address skill gaps, especially with green skills and skills to address the impact of climate change and just transition..

In this context, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a revised Technical Assistance (TA), modifying the project focus and re-grouping its objectives as follows:

- Output 1: Institutional framework for regional cooperation for green skills development established;
- Output 2: Climate-smart agriculture university education in the CAREC region strengthened;
- Output 3: Awareness and capacity of governments, education institutions, and the private sector in the CAREC region on green skills, climate change, and just transition strengthened.

The revised project will equip relevant government counterparts and agricultural universities with the mechanisms to cooperate and enhance capacity to integrate green and just transition aspects into the skills development agenda for addressing environmental challenges.

Considering the above, ADB conducted a virtual meeting with members of the CAREC Working Group on Skills Development with **the following objectives**:

- (i) To discuss the revised scope of the project,
- (ii) To discuss the draft Memorandum of Understanding and draft Action plan for 2024-2026;
- (iii) To discuss a newly launched Agricultural University Green Skills Capacity Building program;
- (iv) To discuss the needs for knowledge products on green skills, climate change, and just transition aspects.

Detailed agenda of the meeting is provided in [Appendix 1](#). List of participants is provided in [Appendix 2](#).

B. Key highlights

Ms. Altynay Arapova, Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB welcomed all the participants to the second meeting of the CAREC Working group on Skills development (WGSD). She went through the meeting agenda and gave the floor to Ms. Sofia Shakil for opening remarks.

Ms. Sofia Shakil, Director, Human and Social Development Sector Group, ADB welcomed the CAREC WGSD members and highlighted key ongoing transitions: climate shift, digital revolution, innovative technologies, with many countries trying to find solutions to keep their skills development systems updated through implementation of education reforms in different areas. There are a common set of challenges that the region is facing and the establishment of the platform for regional cooperation in skills development is very timely. During the first meeting (Tashkent, March 2024) members of the CAREC WGSD shared a need for further strengthening the regional exchange of best practices in skills development policies. Based on the consultations and in order to improve the quality and relevance of project deliverables, address clients' emerging requests, and increase the project's alignment with climate shift agenda, a set of changes to the project scope were made. Now the Project aims at strengthening regional cooperation for improved green skills development.

The importance of green skills development in the CAREC region cannot be underscored. Regional collaboration is important not just for knowledge sharing, but also for pooling resources and solutions to create a robust framework that will ensure the youth is equipped with the skills needed. Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing education and skills delivery, which can help to address current gaps. The Central Asian region feels the impact of climate change the most (droughts, floods, air pollution, heat). Education can be a powerful catalyst for climate action that is required. It can equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed for green transition, while also fostering innovation. ADB advocates inclusive and sustainable development of its member-countries and education/ human capital development is key. Better educated people always build more effective and inclusive societies. ADB is ready to partner with individual countries and the whole region in addressing those changes and improving lives of people.

The establishment of the CAREC WGSD is a great opportunity for skills development professionals to regularly discuss and fine-tune education sector reforms and activities in a rapidly changing region. Ms. Shakil encouraged WGSD members to discuss the revised implementation arrangements under the new scope, agree on the proposed MOU which sets the basis for regional cooperation, together with the Action plan for the next 3 years. She also encouraged skill group members to discuss details of the upcoming Agricultural universities' capacity-building program, as the TA team has been working to bring the best agricultural universities to lead the capacity-building initiative. They are also arranging meaningful study tours to accelerate peer-to-peer learning activities among CAREC member countries and exploring with the ITC ILO the delivery of tailored and well-organized trainings on mainstreaming green skills into education and labour policies. She highlighted multiple benefits of regional cooperation, to create a network that is live and active so that policymakers within these countries are regularly collaborating and sharing best practices. Mutual trust for promoting open dialogue and communication is important to make sure the policies across countries are aligned to support economic integration and people's mobility.

The presentation: "Revised scope of the project based on key takeaways from Tashkent meeting and Action plan for 2024-2026" was delivered in two parts (attached in RUS and ENG):

Ms. Altynay Arapova, Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB mentioned that the project has been extended for another 2 years. Based on Tashkent workshop takeaways, the TA was proposed to be re-focused in view of the following needs: (i) promotion of education and skills for climate-smart agriculture and water management; (ii) boosting climate change awareness and sustainable practices through targeted educational programs and public campaigns; (iii) development of soft and hard green skills. It was a priority to align the new TA scope to help the CAREC countries to tackle emerging challenges. Climate change issues have been mainstreamed into all the ADB's operations across all the projects. The new objective of the TA is aimed at strengthening regional cooperation for improved green skills development in the CAREC region and equipping relevant government counterparts and agricultural

universities with the mechanisms to cooperate and enhance capacity to integrate green and just transition aspects into the skills development for addressing the environmental challenges. New project outputs were outlined. Brief information about Output 3: Capacity of governments, education institutions, and the private sector on green skills, climate change, just transition strengthened was shared and topics for 4 demand-driven knowledge products were presented for discussion/ selection.

Mr. Mamatkali Razaev, Social Sector Specialist, Human and Social Development Department, ADB highlighted that ADB is working with many countries and two common things have been identified in the TVET/ HE systems: (i) the nature of challenges that the current world and this region is facing is identical and countries are trying to address them through different instruments; (ii) the CAREC region possesses enough expertise, scholarship, experience, stories of success and lessons learnt which can be promoted through peer-to-peer exchange and learning. In many cases ADB tries to build projects based on the available best case-scenarios and bring international expertise. Setting up the WGSD as a regular communication platform will help countries to find feasible policies and practices and share concerns and solutions. The MOU serves as a framework, non-binding document which sets general directions for regional cooperation. It is considered a live document, subject to revisions as the cooperation evolves. This framework can enable some twinning partnership between regional institutions and agencies to showcase reform initiatives. Brief information about the Study tour to China (9-13 December 2024) was shared (official letters for nominations will be shared with the CAREC countries shortly). Climate change is a serious problem for the CAREC region and impacts the agriculture sector, in particular, where the majority of poor people are engaged. Future success of economies depends on how fast Governments and development partners can adapt to climate change. The TA will serve as a small initiative to showcase how small interventions can foster economic development. The idea of establishing the CAREC WGSD was guided by the experiences of many other CAREC cluster initiatives (transport, energy, health, etc.).

Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi, international consultant, ADB presented Output 2 on Agricultural University Green Skills Capacity Building Program. An International Agricultural University will be contracted to lead the initiative to facilitate the combining of local knowledge, expertise and aspirations with international best practices. Phased approach will be implemented starting from a kick-off assessment of the local capacity and needs of regional agriculture universities, identification of regional relevant focused projects for support and development of proposals. International Agriculture Research University will deliver capacity development workshops and support proposal development by regional universities. Proposals of regional universities shall be focused on academic and non-degree programs, research, demonstration projects, private sector engagement, student and faculty exchange, micro-credentials development. Output 2 success indicators were shared as well.

Countries' feedback to draft Memorandum of Cooperation, proposed Action plan, program for agriculture universities:

Mr. Mamatkali Razaev, Social Sector Specialist, Human and Social Development Department, ADB opened the floor for discussions/ comments:

- **Azerbaijan:** Mr. [Nijat Mammadli](#), Advisor to Minister, Ministry of Science and Education mentioned that the Ministry needs more time for reviewing the latest versions of the MOU and Action plan involving VET Agency and other Ministry departments. Comments and suggestions, if any, will be provided shortly.
- **China:** Ms. [Liu Jiaming](#), Deputy Director, Division of International Organizations, Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, Ministry of education asked for a more detailed information about the Study tour (9-13 December). ADB mentioned that formal letter containing detailed information will be shared as soon as all the details are confirmed.

- **Georgia:** Ms. [Nino Chkhartishvili](#), Professor, Agricultural sciences and Biosystems Engineering, Georgian Technical University kindly asked for more time to get back with suggestions to the MOU and Action plan. In overall, she underlined that the project scope is in line with the world's priorities on green skills development.
- **Kazakhstan:** Ms. [Rysgul Kudretullayeva](#), Head, Division for the Content of Higher and Postgraduate Education of the Committee for Higher and Postgraduate Education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education recommended to share MOU and Action plan with the Ministry of education in charge of the TVET system. She had no comments to the MOU and action plan as they are well elaborated and list down those activities which are in high priority for the country. In 2024 Kazakhstan opened new National Water resources and Irrigation university.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** Ms. [Mamyrova Gulnur Zhekshebaeva](#), Head of Primary Vocational Education Department, Ministry of education and science highlighted that climate change and green skills development are high in the agenda of many countries. She mentioned that new curriculum/ learning materials are being developed for the vocational occupation "Installation and exploitation of solar panels" and online courses on preventing the impact of the climate change has been launched for adults. The Ministry expressed its interest in gaining international experience and knowledge in these areas. She mentioned that the proposed action plan is in line with national and sectorial programs of the Ministry.
- **Mongolia:** [Mr. Enkhbayar Gonchigdorj](#), Vice President, Mongolian University of Life sciences expressed interest and commitment in implementation of the outlined Action plan aimed at mainstreaming of green skills into TVET/HE policies.
- **Pakistan:** [Mr. Sohail Akhtar](#), Sr. Joint Secretary (PT), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training provided three comments to the MOU: (i) Preamble of the MOU contains the following sentence *"To establish and enhance the basic framework of regional cooperation in skill development in vocational and higher education..."* that sets a broader scope of the MOU while the body text is just about the WGSD operational functioning. The role of the CAREC WGSD in charge for the MOU implementation shall be well-elaborated; (ii) Article IV. Composition of the WG states that one of its members shall be Deputy Minister. It was proposed not to impose this restriction and just mention Government officials and technical members; (iii) Rotating chairmanship: Introduction paragraph has the following sentence *"...Human development is a priority sector within the CAREC 2030 strategy"* that gives the impression that not all the countries will be able to chair it as there are 10 member-countries. He informed about the very cumbersome and time-consuming process of getting any international documents agreed with the Cabinet. [Mr. Shafiq Khokhar](#), National university of technology (NUTECH) highlighted that the MOU sets a very solid foundation for regional cooperation in skills development. MOU objectives are recommended to be aligned with Pakistan national skills development strategies to ensure regional initiatives support local parties emphasizing the inclusion of marginalized groups. The NUTECH advocates for structured peer learning programs to share best practices, fosters collaboration and regular assessment of labour market trends. Two questions were asked on why agriculture was selected as a focus area and whether it is possible to expand faculty development component. ADB staff and consultants' comments provided: (i) all the comments will be reflected in the MOU; (ii) as MOU envisions annual meetings, such shall be attended by at least Deputy Ministers for strategic guidance and decision-making; (iii) annual rotating meetings are proposed to showcase progress in TVET/HE areas; (iv) the WGSD shall not be linked only to the TA, it is expected to continue its work beyond with a possible change of focus depending on the priorities and needs of the CAREC countries (transport sector experience was shared under the CAREC interventions); (v) faculty development initiatives are embedded into all the TA outputs as a key pillar of proposed interventions; (iv) countries on a bi-lateral and multi-lateral basis may propose any topic of demonstration pilot projects (glacier, fruit cultivation, etc.).
- **Tajikistan:** Ms. [Lutfiya Abdulkholiqzoda](#), Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Science underlined that the project is very important and proposed Action plan resonates national country

priorities. Article III. Scope of the Working Group on Skills Development, paragraph 3 “*Support peer learning, the exchange of experience and lessons learned among participating countries...*” is proposed to be expanded and include formulation “*...in the area of labour preparation for agriculture and green economy-related disciplines*”. Glaciers preservation is a priority for Tajikistan, and it needs skilled labour force for this. It was proposed to create a regional working group comprising of scholars engaged into the agriculture, green economy-related areas. The regional working group can be tasked with glaciers preservation issues which is a priority for the whole region. More student and faculty exchange/ capacity building activities were highly welcomed.

- **Turkmenistan:** Mr. [Shamuhmet Shahyev](#), Vice-Rector for Research, Turkmen Agricultural University named after S.A. Niyazov informed that the country has no comments to the MOU and Action plan.
- **Uzbekistan:** Mr. [Shokhrukh Nazarov](#), Chief Specialist of the International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation recommended to send draft MOU and Action plan to other relevant Ministries (Ministry of investment, Ministry of Foreign affairs). The following comments were provided to the Action plan: (i) to expand TVET coverage as the focus now is on the HE sector; (ii) to implement pilot projects in specific countries and showcase progress and lessons learnt (and not only focus on publications). It was asked whether MOU signing is scheduled for November 2024. ADB staff and consultants' comments provided: (i) joint research projects to be proposed by the regional agricultural universities and policymakers will be the aim of the TA partnership; (ii) TVET-related interventions are equally embedded into all the TA Outputs. The TA will analyse available TVET/ HE policies and strategies and make recommendations for mainstreaming green skills and just transition aspects; (iii) the MOU can be signed on the upcoming CAREC Ministerial Meeting (MC) in Astana (7-8 November), where ADB Governors represented by Ministry of finance/ economy from each CAREC country take part. Representatives from the Ministries of finance/ economy can be authorized to sign the MOU provided if all the CAREC WGSD members agree with its content; (iv) 2+ principle is applied in the CAREC and if two or more countries come up with any specific idea/project, the TA is ready to provide technical assistance in its implementation.

Closing remarks and further steps:

- **Mr. [Mamatkalil Razaev](#), Social Sector Specialist, Human and Social Development Department, ADB**, highlighted that the meeting evidenced of a clear understanding and shared objectives for skills development among the WGSD members. The TA will start implementation of agreed outputs and activities, the CAREC countries are encouraged to share lessons, knowledge and know-how, lessons learnt, etc.
- **Ms. [Altynay Arapova](#), Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB** thanked all the meeting participants for active participation and contributions and highlighted that the TA will be aimed at achieving tangible results.

Follow-up actions agreed:

- To share draft MOU and Action plan with relevant Ministries and meeting participants for their comments/ suggestions due by 10 October 2024;
- To update the CAREC WGSD membership based on renewed nominations;
- To start preparations for having the MOU signed at the CAREC Ministerial Conference in Astana (7-8 November 2024);
- To share PPTs with all the participants.



Virtual meeting of the CAREC Working Group on Skills Development



**September 26, 2024 (Thursday)
1.00-3.00 pm Manila time**

AGENDA

Time	Activity
12:50-13:00	ZOOM registration of participants, connection check-up
13:00-13:10	Opening remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Sofia Shakil, Director, Human and Social Development Sector Group, ADB Moderator: Ms. Altynay Arapova , Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB
13:10-13:30	Presentation: “Revised scope of the project based on key takeaways from Tashkent meeting and Action plan for 2024-2026” , Ms. Altynay Arapova , Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB <p>Q&A session</p> Moderator: Mr. Mamatkalil Razaev , Social Sector Specialist, Human and Social Development Department, ADB
13:30-14:00	Presentation: “Agricultural University Green Skills Capacity Building Program” , Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi , international consultant, ADB <p>Q&A session</p> Moderator: Ms. Altynay Arapova , Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB
14:00 - 14:55	Countries’ feedback on the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft Memorandum of Cooperation 2. Proposed Action plan 3. Program for Agriculture Universities Moderator: Mr. Mamatkalil Razaev , Social Sector Specialist, Human and Social Development Department, ADB
14:55 – 15:00	Closing remarks and further steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ms. Altynay Arapova, Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration, ADB – Mr. Mamatkalil Razaev, Social Sector Specialist, Human and Social Development Department, ADB

**List of Participants of Virtual meeting of the CAREC Working Group on Skills Development
September 26, 2024 (Thursday)
1.00-3.00 pm Manila time**

No	Name	Position/ organization
CAREC participating countries		
1	Ms. Maltam Nabiyevea	Senior Adviser, Labor Force Skills Development Division, Employment Policy and Demographic Development Issues Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, Azerbaijan
2	Ms. Gunash Ovsatova	Senior Specialist, Work with Educational Institutions Division, Vocational Training Department, State Employment Agency, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, Azerbaijan
3	Mr. Nijat Mammadli	Advisor to Minister, Ministry of Science and Education, Azerbaijan
4	Mr. Rustam Abdullayev	Head of Vocational Education Policy Division, Ministry of Science and Education, Azerbaijan
5	Mr. Jeyhun Karamov	Head of State Agency on Vocational Education, Azerbaijan
6	Mr. Yusif Akhundov	Head of Working with Partners and Communication Department, State Agency on Vocational Education, Azerbaijan
7	Mr. Nurali Yusifbayli	Vice-rector, Azerbaijan Technical University, Azerbaijan
8	Mr. Kakha Khandolishvili	Head of International Relations and Strategic Development Department, Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia (MoESY)- kkhandolishvili@mes.gov.ge ;
9	Ms. Ana Baramia	Head of Division of EU Integration and Relations with International Organizations, Department of International Relations and Strategic Development, Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia (MoESY) - abaramia@mes.gov.ge ;
10	Ms. Anna Bezhanishvili	Head of Analysis Division, Vocational Education Development Department, Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia (MoESY) - abezhanishvili@mes.gov.ge ;
11	Ms. Nino Chkhartishvili	Professor (Agricultural sciences and Biosystems Engineering), Georgian Technical University (GTU) - n_chkhartishvili@gtu.ge
12	Ms. Rysgul Kudretullayeva	Head, Division for the Content of Higher and Postgraduate Education of the Committee for Higher and Postgraduate Education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Kazakhstan
13	Ms. Dani Sarsekova	Dean, Faculty of Water, Land and Forest Resources, Kazakh National Agrarian Research University
14	Ms. Mamyrova Gulnur Zhekshebaeva	Head of Primary Vocational Education Department, Ministry of education and science, Kyrgyzstan
15	Ms. Anarbekova Gulaiym Temgilovna	Chief Specialist, International Relations Department, Ministry of education and science, Kyrgyzstan
16	Mr. Almazbek Ibrashev	First deputy rector, Kyrgyz National Agrarian University named after K.I.Skryabin
17	Mr. Enkhbayar Gonchigdorj	Vice President, Mongolian University of Life sciences
18	Ariunbold, J	Director of Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education and Science, Mongolia
19	Otgonmyagmar B	Senior Specialist of TVET Department, Ministry of Education and Science, Mongolia

20	Oyunaa, P	Director for policy planning, Ministry of Education and Science, Mongolia
21	Mr. Sohail Akhtar	Sr. Joint Secretary (PT), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Pakistan
22	Mr. Abdul Sattar Khokhar	Sr. Joint Secretary (HEC), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Pakistan
23	Representative (lady)	Faisalabad university of Agriculture, Pakistan
24	Ms. Liu Jiaming	Deputy Director, Division of International Organizations, Dept. of International Cooperation and Exchanges, MoE, P. R. China
25	Mr. Lianyu Yu	Associate Professor, College of Water Resources and Architectural Engineering, Northwest A&F University
26	Mr. Liu Wenfeng	Professor, College of Water Resources and Civil Engineering, China Agricultural University.
27	Ms. Lutfiya Abdulkholiqzoda	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Science, Tajikistan
28	Mr. Dustmurod Sherzod	Acting Head of the Department of Economy and Planning, Ministry of Education and Science
29	Mr. Tohir Mirzoalizoda	Deputy Rector, Tajik Agrarian University
30	Mr. Azat Ataev	Deputy Minister of Education for Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, Turkmenistan
31	Mr. Shamuhammet Shahyev	Vice-Rector for Research, Turkmen Agricultural University named after S.A. Niyazov, Turkmenistan
32	Mr. Farrukh Azimov	Head of Division Department for the Development of the Vocational Education System, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (farruxa@mail.ru)
33	Mr. Shokhrukhbek Nazarov	Chief Specialist of the International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (sh.nazarov@edu.uz)
ADB and Resource persons		
34	Ms. Sofia Shakil	Director, Human and Social Development Sector Group, ADB
35	Ms. Altynay Arapova	Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department, ADB
36	Mr. Mamatkalil Razaev	Social Sector Specialist, Human and Social Development Sector Office, Sectors Group, ADB
37	Mr. Arystan T. Galiyev	Project Officer (Natural Resources and Agriculture), Kazakhstan Resident Mission (KARM), ADB
38	Ms. Baktygul Omurzakova	Project Officer, Human and Social Development Sector Office, Sectors Group, ADB
39	Ms. Itgel Lonjid	Senior Social Sector Officer, Human and Social Development Sector Office, Sectors Group, ADB
40	Nino Edilashvili	Associate Education Officer, Human and Social Development Sector Office, Sectors Group, ADB
41	Ms. Honey May M. Guerzon	Knowledge Management Officer, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department, ADB
42	Prof. Dr. S. Sohail H. Naqvi	Consultant—Project and Knowledge Product Specialist (Higher Education Expert), TA 6806-REG, ADB
43	Ms. Liliia Kachkinbaeva	Consultant—Project Officer and Research Assistant, TA 6806-REG, ADB
44	Mr. Charles Danvel Aldelmita	CAREC Secretariat Logistics Coordinator, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department, ADB