

Recommendations in ‘Phase 1 Assessment’ to Phase 2 Project and TDLC’s Responses

In June 2010 TDLC formally received a report of ‘The Tokyo Development Learning Center Phase 1 Assessment’ (hereinafter called ‘Assessment Report’ or ‘Report’) from the two external experts who were entrusted to independently undertake this work. In line with its Terms of Reference, the Assessment Report included an array of facts found, observations, interpretations, and analysis on strategies, operations, and services of TDLC. While its conclusion adheres to a highly positive view as to the overall achievements of TDLC throughout the Phase 1 period, the Assessment Report also includes a wide range of explicit and implicit suggestions and recommendations for TDLC to consider in its Phase 2 stage in order to further enhance the effectiveness of TDLC Project. TDLC’s Management greatly appreciates the fact that the Assessment Team provided such resourceful and insightful intellectual inputs in line with the goals and targets in Phase 2.

Following are the suggestions and recommendations in the Assessment Report which are summarized and categorized by TDLC and a set of responses to each category by TDLC management at the outset of Phase 2. Those responses are meant to be *directional*, and not to be too detailed or exhaustive among all of the issues to be resolved in Phase 2 stage; they would rather be *guiding principles in Phase 2 management of TDLC Project*. The responses also describe some specific actions that have already embarked in TDLC as a reaction to the Assessment Report, although a more comprehensive elaboration of strategies and subsequent action plans will be developed in the process of work program development in each year in Phase 2.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

1. ***Expansion of Effective Networks with Experts and Organizations.***

The Assessment Report asserts, based on the results from on-line surveys and interviews with stakeholders, the validity of key domains of thematic (or sectoral) subjects where TDLC could develop learning programs or serve as important platform for knowledge exchange, namely: *‘Environment/Climate Change/Disaster Risk Management’; ‘Healthcare and Labor’; ‘Education and Science/Technology’; and ‘Private Sector/Finance/PPP’* (page 19). At the same time, the Report points out potential constraints which TDLC would face in term of human resource capacities for program development, workloads for deliveries, or financial limitations as challenges to achieve a sufficient number of high quality courses or programs that are outlined in the ‘Phase2 proposal’ (page 18, 20, 21). TDLC indeed recognizes a need to deploy effective strategies to develop networks of right expertise (experts and organizations) as advisory function or program partners in the four domains above mentioned, as was stated in the Phase 2 proposal. Thus far, such sectors as disaster risk management or healthcare human resource development are successful examples where appropriate expertise networks in Japan have already developed in such a way as to be resourceful to program development in TDLC. Similar cases in other thematic areas would have to be actively increased.

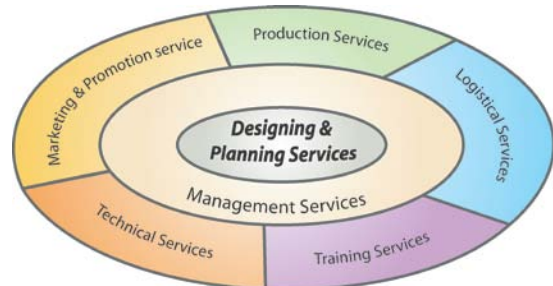
2. ***Adaptation of Products and Services to Fast-changing Technology.***

The Assessment Report describes *‘TDLC faces further challenges given both its roles as a provider of services and as a knowledge exchange institution in a rapidly changing technology landscape*

increasingly facing competition on the provision of such services’ (page 18) by referring to the limited penetration of GDLN Centers within member countries as an example. It is valid to point out the said challenges in the technology landscape because competitive tools are more and more observed in many areas, such as less expensive videoconference tools in the internet and increasing numbers and kinds of audio-visual tools for learning. For TDLC strategy to be effective in this field, the key is to extend continuous efforts throughout Phase 2 in measuring the relevance of technological or pedagogical tools in the markets, choosing the tools that are relevant to the knowledge sharing activities of TDLC, and adapting them to increase the core value of the products and services. For example, functions such as *automated archiving* and *storage/retrieval* of knowledge contents or more *integration of multimedia into program information* would be an effective part of products or services for TDLC to strengthen functions as knowledge exchange institution. A range of such content management services, including any new types of products, should be integral parts of value propositions of TDLC in Phase 2.

3. Capacity Enhancement of TDLC on Program Development and Program Funding.

In the TDLC’s business model adopted since 2009 to be implemented throughout Phase 2, there are two categories in development and delivery of programs: *‘Program initiatives delivered on a public good model’ (Pillar 1)* and services as *‘Knowledge sharing platform as cutting-edge distance learning’ (Pillar2)*. While the Assessment Report asserts that the combination of these activities is an adequate business model to achieve the objectives in Phase 2, it also recommends very careful management take place for balancing Pillar 1 and 2 activities by considering the limitation of resources and capacities in TDLC, as follows: *‘ It is obvious that such provision of limited services (videoconferencing only, or site coordination only) [in Pillar 2 activities] is only of limited value for TDLC as a provider of knowledge for development as a public good, and that the provision of these services can draw heavily on its limited resources, in such a way that it affects the Pillar 1 activity. It is therefore recommended that careful monitoring takes place to assess the burden that this Pillar 2 activities has on TDLC resources’ (Page 14).*



A conceptual description of DLC service (Page 14, the Assessment Report)

While TDLC primarily focuses on ‘public good model’ activities (Pillar 1), it also tasks itself to achieve a steady increase of cost recovery as organization, though the self-generated financial resources would constitute approximately 13 percent of the total project budget the Phase 2. The Assessment Report raises some questions as follows, as regards the quantitative targets in Phase 2: *‘It remains unclear whether the prospect in the new business plan with regard to the revenue generation targets is realistic and here several questions emerge. Up to now, there has been no evidence that the type of activities planned in the current business plan have contributed in the past to the planned level of*

revenue generation. The assumptions in the draft business plan that 2.2 million USD¹ out of a total budget of 17.7 million USD over the next five years can be generated as revenue therefore seems overambitious unless substantial, new sponsorships for major programs are to be put in place...' (Page 17).

TDLC considers that these comments in the Report rightly hit the core issues relating to its management and its challenges in Phase 2 in terms of increase in cost recovery. While various measures would have to be implemented to achieve the planned quantity of Pillar 1 programs and the revenue generation in Phase 2, one of the top priority measures should be an enhancement of human resource capacities to develop structured programs and obtain sufficient 'program funding' (sponsorships or fund-raising). While the skills and experiences to fulfill those two requirements are not necessarily the same, it should be noted that chances for program funding increase only when TDLC successfully involves wider stakeholders and program supporters in the steps of structured program development and thus a productive program development cycle would be born.

OPERATION and PERFORMANCE

4. Enhancement in Utilization of Technical Resources in the World Bank

It can be summarized that TDLC's effort in Phase 1 period in linking its activities to the knowledge and expertise in the World Bank were of the following three types:

- (i) TDLC extended spontaneous efforts in partnering with thematic groups in the World Bank Institute (WBI) to develop learning programs on such sectors as private sector development, education, urban development, or water resource management. Successful outcomes include 'CSR and Development course' and 'Oil Price Volatility seminar' (see [Case Study 5 in the Report](#));
- (ii) TDLC provided various Sector Management Units (SMUs) in EAP with knowledge sharing platform and associated services to enhance outreach and quality in learning for beneficiaries (see an example in disaster risk management in [Case Study 9 in the Report](#)); and
- (iii) TDLC mobilized professional experts in various operational units in the Bank as speakers or technical resource persons in quite a few knowledge sharing programs which external clients delivered in collaboration with TDLC, including the programs that targeted Japanese audience.

While the utilization of knowledge and expertise in the World Bank was very fruitful in all of the said three types, it should be highlighted that further enhancement in collaboration with WBI and other operational units in Phase 2 is critical in order to increase value in the contents of TDLC's learning programs. As the Assessment Report rightly pointed out, *'Program identification and development in Phase 2 takes into account TDLC's specific strength in addressing specific subjects that can address most appropriately given its resources and capacity (e.g. networking with other DLCs and their partners: capacities to develop multi-media products; WB branding and its knowledge and expertise)*

¹ Please note that the planned 2.2 million USD as self revenues for the next five years include 0.5 million USD as net contribution from the World Bank and 1.7 million USD as net revenues from TDLC operations. It also should be stated that net revenues would come from different sources, namely, charges for services including technology products, beneficiary contributions, program funding (sponsorships), technology hub service charges, etc.

(Page 20). Hence, the Phase 2 Plan calls on the World Bank Institute (WBI) and other operational units to make its learning content and materials available to TDLC and its partners to be integrated with their own programs. The Report continues by pointing out challenges, as follows: *'TDLC and WBI expect to substantially increase collaboration in program identification and development. For such collaboration to be effective, it needs to take into account the challenges that exist in materializing collaboration models between TDLC and WBI. This include how best to match business incentives that may not be the same in WBI and TDLC bearing in mind the new managerial direction of WBI which is to emphasize 'wholesale' functions rather than 'retail' ones (Page 20)*. Based on such an observation, the Report states that *'Although this wholesale function has been announced by WBI as a leading notion, its impact on TDLC's strategy is not yet fully clear (Page 20)*'.

Lessons learned from the efforts in TDLC to create linkages with the World Bank operations suggest that an incentive structure in the Bank units to collaborate with TDLC and GDLN community is key for development of fruitful collaboration. To effectively induce such incentives, TDLC and East Asia/Pacific region Vice Presidency are suggested to take proactive actions, including visible demonstration of value propositions of TDLC to the Bank operational units, spontaneous dialogues with thematic groups in WBI to explore win-win relations from the collaboration, and recognition in the Bank senior management about achievements of TDLC and GDLN community.

5. Establishment of Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Indicators

While the Assessment Report positively recognizes a clear description of set of actions and outputs highlighting the vision and planned development of TDLC to achieve a set of objectives that are stated in Phase 2 proposals (Page 19-20), the Report recommends *'the elaboration of indicators on the program level and the implementation of an internal monitoring and evaluation system'* (Page 20). As such an internal system, it suggests *'deployment of a useful Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that allows for detailed recording of all elements and analysis of outcomes and results. The Xytech Systems workflow and media asset management software that is being deployed at present in TDLC is not only a system that will support the scheduling and operation of the technical facilities but that also allows for comprehensive workflow management, inclusive the capturing of inputs (identification, objectives, resources etc.) as well as outputs (invoicing, results, impact etc.) for each event or program (Page 20)*. The said set of specific recommendations is perfectly in line with the ongoing efforts in TDLC. TDLC has made considerable efforts in preparing a management information tool that would work in such a way the Report describes and also has revisited objectives and targets in major programs under the new project stage. Coupled with technical inputs provided by the Assessment Team on the monitoring and evaluation methods (see [Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix in the Report](#)), TDLC has taken an action to develop a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and KIPs for Phase2. The process is now under the stage of brushing up and operationalization, so that formal adoption and disclosure of a monitoring and evaluation framework as well as KPIs will take place within the first year of Phase 2. These would be continuously reviewed and improved in the operations of Phase 2.

6. Enhancement of Management Systems to Evaluate Cost Effectiveness.

When the analysis comes to cost effectiveness of knowledge sharing activities in TDLC, the Assessment Report points out that *'the limited analytical system within TDLC to record and analyze all costs related*

to knowledge exchange activities including human resources make it impossible to accurately measure the entire cost-effectiveness and has led to a recommendation that just such a comprehensive system be put in place' (Page 24), while it clearly recognizes TDLC's considerable effort into increasing cost effectiveness, based on the feedbacks from external partners in surveys and interviews. It is accurate to state that the operational and financial track recording systems in the TDLC Phase 1 stage captured all specific costs such as paid-out expenses and external human resource costs (for example, consultant costs) that are specific to each program development and delivery; at the same time, the human resource costs in regular staff members of TDLC were not precisely recorded in a way to be 'distributed' to the level of 'activity' or 'program' because it had a risk to over complicate track recording systems in Phase 1. However, TDLC regards this recommendation of the Report to be quite adequate at the outset of Phase 2 because much more effort is to be extended to producing and demonstrating development impact as 'public good' in Phase 2. Therefore, the measurement of cost effectiveness is increasingly important to make managerial decisions in TDLC operations and, accordingly, TDLC is more and more responsible and accountable to share the results to the Project stakeholders. To cope with this necessity, TDLC has immediately taken the first action in July 2010 to change the tracking system of human resource costs to be more precisely capture monthly 'staff time' in conducting each 'activity' by all staff members, such as 'program development/delivery', or 'communication/marketing', which are so defined in Phase 2 business plan. Subsequent actions are being prepared: track recording of all costs for 'program' level, or at least in all of major ones will be implemented. Further development of analytical systems to measure the costs in each major program or activity should be developed in line with the development of a new MIS in TDLC. As the Report points out, a newly adopted management information tool in the TDLC is supposed to integrate these track recording systems and data.

IMPACT and INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

7. Effective Information Dissemination to Reach out Targeted Beneficiary and Stakeholders as regards 'Public Good' Programs

To appropriately reach out to the targeted population as a beneficiary to receive 'public good' programs in order to produce envisaged *development impact* from TDLC's operations, TDLC must develop and adopt substantially enhanced measures in communications and marketing. The Assessment Report seriously raises questions, as follows: *'...However, TDLC should also continue looking into what marketing and communications activities have been most successful in the past: is it realistic to assume that partners, clients, and users will be addressed effectively by the website only? The website visits should be analyzed in depth in order to get a better picture of who the visitors are, what they do, when they visit, and what they expect from the website (Page 22)'*. It is indeed valid to point out that, while management tools such as clients database and web statistics are available, an in-depth analysis is awaited to come up with the best measures to reach out the target beneficiaries through and *beyond* the website, both in developing countries and Japan. The Report rightly and clearly points out: *'Other instruments besides the website that should also be deployed to push information towards the constituency, include, for example, a re-launch of the e-newsletter to address*

more effectively private companies in order to encourage them to support TDLC activities as a funding partners, a program partner, or provider of content? (Page 22).'

8. Reinforcement of Regional Leadership through Technologies, Partnerships, and Programs.

Phase 2 Project defines another important role of TDLC, as its Pillar 3 strategy, to be a continuous contributor to the (institutional) sustainability of GDLN community in the Asia and Pacific region. While the roles of TDLC in the region in its Phase 1 Project involved a broad range of capacity building supports to other DLCs, such as business plan creation in each DLC, training on instructional design to program coordinators, and program development capacity supports to DLCs through 'learning-by-doing' facility (financial supports), the main focus in Phase 2 will be technology leadership and assistance to further expand the network in the region (Pillar 3), as well as continuous generation of regional businesses through development of partnerships and delivery of programs (as outcomes of Pillar 1 and 2 activities). The Assessment Report validates this strategy by referring to the results from surveys and interviews with other DLCs, as follows: *'Technology Leadership and Network Development includes the further development of, and ongoing support to, a stable, high-quality and highly appreciated technology infrastructure in the region including the hub services, which are considered to be of an extremely high quality not only in our surveys but by all respondents during interviews (Page 24).'*

Therefore, the following would constitute key areas for TDLC to focus on to maintain and even enhance its contribution to the region:

- (i) Maintenance of high quality in ICT facility for VC-based distance learning and substantial enhancement in VC bridging hub services. As one of the first steps, TDLC should develop its strategic facility plan to maintain and develop current ICT equipment and explore options for further investment. Also, as the Assessment Report suggests, TDLC should substantially increase the utilization of Multi-Point Control Unit (MCU) for VC bridging service in GDLN AP from the current 30 percent to the target ratio, i.e. approximately 80 percent of the total VC connections in GDLN business (Page 23).
- (ii) Development, promotion, and delivery of innovative ICT tools and further exploration to expand the networks. As the Report analyses, *'Web-based, post-production and multi-media services (of TDLC) for program support are less known (than MCU bridging services) within the GDLN network and require further promotion and development on the part of TDLC (Page 24).'*
- (iii) Integration of such ICT services as part of value proposition of TDLC in partnership development and enrichment of programs in the region. No matter how technically innovative ICT services are, they would not lead to producing targeted impact unless they are offered in a way to enhance the comprehensive value as knowledge sharing programs on (or platform for) development. ICT services of TDLC should take a form to attract program partners to more easily share their valuable knowledge and experiences on development and more adequately deliver them to beneficiaries.

9. Demonstration and Communications on Impact of TDLC's Knowledge Sharing Activities.

Finally, TDLC highly appreciates the Assessment Team's suggestions to strengthen actions to communicate the activities to the Project stakeholders and their societies. In its concluding remarks, the Assessment Report states: *'It can be concluded that TDLC has achieved the objectives set at the beginning of Phase 1 and has successfully adapted its products, services, and operations according to an evolving set of objectives. There remains however room for improvement with regard to the reporting, documentation, monitoring, and assessment of its activities. Improving these elements of the operation will not only contribute to an even higher quality of service provision but also (and more importantly) to greater awareness, acceptance, and acclaim for the services delivered and the impact generated (Page 28).'* The said set of recommendations is of significant importance to Phase 2 management for multiple reasons concerning the *raison d'être* of the Project. First, TDLC management and the World Bank should keep fulfilling the accountability to the Government of Japan which provides project funds as single donor and acts as an equal partner to the World Bank by sharing the value of the Project. Second, maintaining and enhancing transparency in the management and its results with stakeholders ensure the project governance sound and healthy. Third, measurement, analysis, and assessment of impact in many dimensions –reporting, documentation, monitoring, or evaluation as the Report points out— are the best measures to increase constituency to the Project, which would contribute to the institutional sustainability of TDLC.