

## Social innovation and effective knowledge management

**A**sian economies are growing rapidly. However, the more accelerated economic growth becomes, the wider the income disparities and the more issues of poverty remain. While the world is moving toward a more open-solution society, the APO recognizes the importance of tackling such social issues as part of its mission to enable sustainable socioeconomic development, ensuring a fair distribution of the results of productivity enhancement.

Individuals, enterprises, communities, and all members of society are encouraged to apply their creativity and talents to crafting innovative solutions to social problems and increasing their impact. Societies around the world are facing significant human issues for which they often do not have effective, affordable solutions. As they struggle, they also face difficulty in efficiently and effectively utilizing and passing on useful knowledge in tackling such issues. Social innovation in tandem with effective knowledge management (KM) can play an important role in dealing with social issues and at the same time improve productivity to drive inclusive economic growth. KM can assist social innovators and relevant stakeholders to create and translate valuable tacit knowledge on solving social problems into explicit knowledge and scalable solutions via businesses and other productive means.

In cooperation with the National Productivity Secretariat of Sri Lanka, the APO organized a study meeting on KM and Social Innovation, 19–22 February, in Colombo, inviting eight international participants from seven member countries, as well as six local participants and four local observers. Two international resource persons, KM specialists Ronald Young of Knowledge Associates Cambridge Ltd. from the UK and Naoki Ogiwara of the World Bank in the USA led intensive sessions comprising informative lectures, interactive panel discussions, and brainstorming among the participants on how social innovation could be initiated and become sustainable and powerful within an effective KM framework.

After a thorough review of the APO KM framework, participants examined how it could be applied to solving social issues they faced in their own settings. They were enlightened by presentations by actual social entrepreneurs who generously contributed to the APO study meeting as guest speakers: CEO Takuto Motomura of Granma Inc., Japan; and Chairman Uchita de Zoysa of Global Sustainability Solutions-cum-Executive Director for the Centre for Environment & Development, Sri Lanka. They detailed their experiences in driving social innovation and shared lessons learned on how KM should be undertaken to maximize the positive outcomes and make a greater impact when tackling social issues. 