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Development Bank



# Capacity Building by Multilateral Development Banks:

Cases and Key Features  
of Training Initiatives



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# CAPACITY BUILDING BY MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS: CASES AND KEY FEATURES OF TRAINING INITIATIVES

KEY FINDINGS

ANALYTICAL REPORT '26/3

## TRAINING INITIATIVES

are structures (academies, institutes, programs, etc.) established by the MDBs and IFIs to develop the competencies of civil servants, clients, partners, and a wider audience.



### WORLD BANK GROUP

Economic Development Institute (1955) ->  
World Bank Institute (2000) ->  
Academy (2025)



African Development  
Institute (1973)



Asian Development Bank  
Institute (1997)



Eurasian Development Bank  
Academy (2025)



CAREC Institute (2015)



Islamic Research  
and Training Institute (1981)



Institute for Capacity Development (1964) ->  
Regional Capacity Development Centres (1992)



European Investment Bank  
Institute (2012)



Inter-American Institute for Economic  
and Social Development (1994) ->  
BIDAcademy (2021)

## Goals of MDB and IFI training initiatives:

- Knowledge transfer and skills enhancement
- Dissemination of experience and applied expertise
- Ensuring broad access to knowledge
- Reducing project risks
- Strengthening regional relevance

## Governance Models:

- Separate legal entity
- Vice-President Level
- Department level

## Financing Models:

- Core Institutional Funding
- Donors' Contributions
- Own resources

## LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

1. The active development of digital technologies makes training by MDBs initiatives scalable, open, and accessible.
2. Educational online platforms, AI and VR/AR are the key components of the evolution of MDB training initiatives.
3. Collaboration with educational institutions and EdTech platforms (Coursera, edX, etc.) enriches MDB training initiatives.
4. MDBs will improve the effectiveness of their courses through localization and cultural adaptation.
5. Customization will increase the interest of sponsors in specific courses and attract donors in the form of countries, companies, and foundations.
6. Collaboration of different MDBs represents a significant opportunity for development.
7. Profound integration with MDB projects and national programmes makes MDBs' educational courses a mandatory part of the credit and grant projects.
8. MDBs will seek to calculate the ROI of their programmes.
9. It is expected that the number of courses focusing on soft skills will increase.
10. Educational events can be used to disseminate and shape international norms and standards.
11. Training initiatives could become more effective through the accumulation of "academic capital".



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This report is a first-of-its-kind research that consolidates the comprehensive experience of multilateral development banks in creating their own Academies, Institutes, educational programmes. The research provides an overview of 14 IFIs such training initiatives, offering detailed descriptions of each. It features a systematic analysis of these initiatives, including their goals, enabling factors, governance and financing models, target audiences, thematic areas, online platforms and AI integration, partnerships, and measures of effectiveness. The report addresses the following questions: What are the primary driving forces behind these initiatives? What objectives do they aim to achieve? How might these knowledge-based engines evolve in the future?

**Keywords:** education, training, development, multilateral development banks, MDBs, IFIs, capacity building, technical assistance.

**JEL:** F15, F55, I25, J62, O15.

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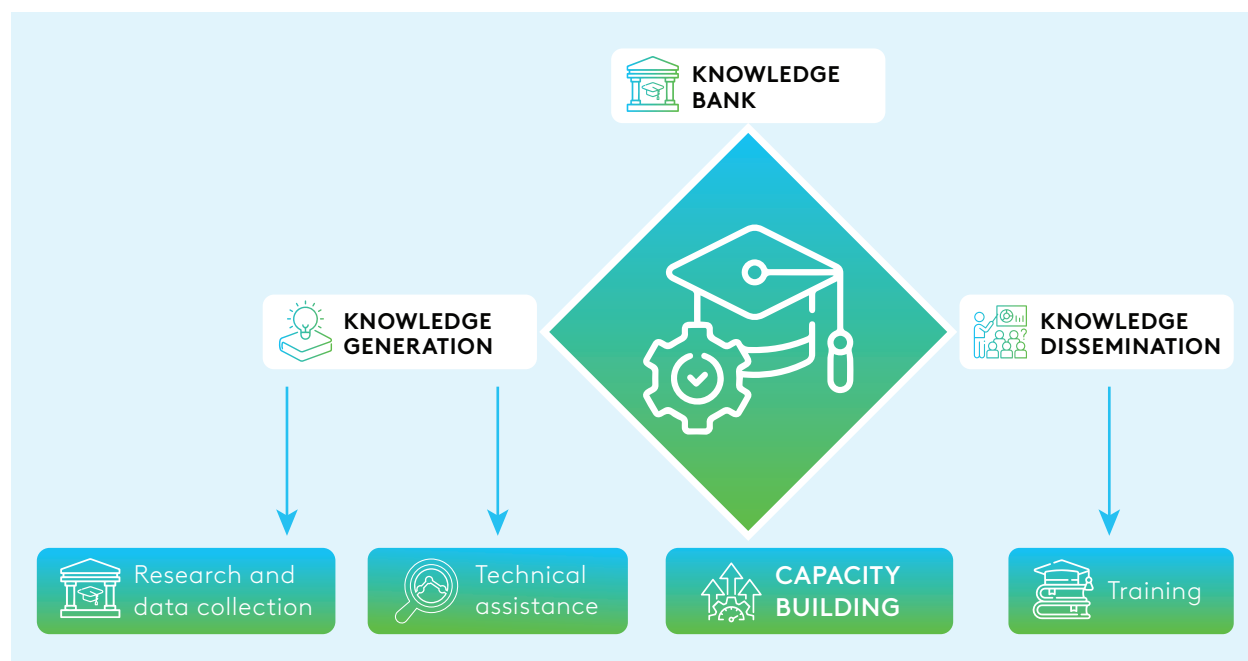
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# Executive Summary

Many Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) aim to be a “**knowledge bank**”. For this purpose, they engage in knowledge-generating and knowledge-sharing activities, including data collection, research, technical assistance, and training. These activities are interconnected and synergetic, enhancing the development impact of MDBs.

↓ Figure A. MDB as a knowledge bank.



Source: EDB.

Education and training are key ways to increase human capital and MDBs have been actively involved in this area for many years. Good health and education, knowledge and skills, usually termed “human capital” in economics, are crucial for development because they make economies more productive.

Most importantly, MDBs provide **financing for the education sector**. This includes financing education infrastructure, supporting educational reforms and promoting access to education, typically in the form of **sovereign loans and grants**.

MDBs are also **direct providers of training**. MDBs see weak institutional capacity as one of the main barriers to development, and training as a key tool to address the problem. During their research and investment operations, MDBs accumulate unique knowledge that they want to share with their clients as well as with broader audiences. Training programmes of the MDBs also serve as mechanisms for **promoting standards and best practices at the regional and global level**.

The [first chapter](#) provides an overview of MDBs' training initiatives. It describes training initiatives of 14 development institutions ([Table A](#)).

↓ **Table A. Training Initiatives at MDBs and IFIs**

Nº	MDBs / IFIs	Training Initiatives	Start of activity	Region of operations
<b>Multilateral Development Banks</b>				
1	WBG	Economic Development Institute (1955) World Bank Institute (2000) Academy (2025)	1955	Global
2	AfDB	African Development Institute	1973	Africa
3	ADB	Asian Development Bank Institute	1997	Asia and the Pacific region
4	CAF	CAF Courses Platform	N/A	Latin America and the Caribbean region
5	CDB	e-Learning Platform	N/A	The Caribbean region
6	TDB	TDB Academy	N/A	Eastern and Southern Africa
7	EDB	Eurasian Development Bank Academy	2025	Eurasia with focus on Central Asia and South Caucasus
8	EBRD	E-Learning Platform, EBRD Impact Academy, EBRD Green Finance Academy	N/A	Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
9	EIB	European Investment Bank Institute	2012	Primarily EU and Global
10	IDB	Inter-American Institute for Economic and Social Development (1994) BIDAcademy (2021)	1994	Latin America and the Caribbean region
11	IsDB	Islamic Research and Training Institute (1981)	1981	Member countries across Asia, Africa, Middle East, and Latin America
12	NADB	Utility Management Institute	1999	North America
<b>Other International Financial Institutions*</b>				
13	IMF	Institute for Capacity Development (1964) Regional Capacity Development Centres (1992)	1964	Global
14	CAREC Programme	CAREC Institute	2015	Asia

**Note:** \* The IMF and CAREC Institute are included in the analysis because they have extensive expertise in training initiatives.

**Source:** EDB.

The [second chapter](#) provides a **systematic analysis** of the MDBs' training initiatives across several dimensions: their goals, enabling factors, governance and financing models, target audience, thematic areas, online platforms and AI, partnerships, and effectiveness ([Figure B](#)). The [third chapter](#) of the report presents the long-term outlook for developing MDB training initiatives.

↓ **Figure B. Key issues**



Source: EDB.

**Goals.** Strategy documents shows that the goals for MDBs' training initiatives can be categorized into the following five groups.

- 1. Knowledge transfer and capacity building.** Weak capacity remains one of the main barriers to development impact. MDBs provide financing and seek to enhance the institutional and professional capacity of borrowing countries so they can use these resources effectively.
- 2. Reducing project risks.** Training project participants in modern methods of planning, procurement, monitoring and evaluation reduces the likelihood of errors and the inefficient use of funds.
- 3. Spreading in-house international knowledge.** Training programmes facilitate the sharing of accumulated case studies and knowledge regarding successful projects and innovative approaches in various countries.
- 4. Accessibility of knowledge to a wide audience.** Over the last decade, MDBs started to offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that do not target specifically its clients and partners but are designed for broader audiences. An online course is a cost-effective way to disseminate this knowledge.
- 5. Promoting impact.** Training initiatives can also serve as a tool for MDBs to enhance their influence and build their brand in target regions. MDBs can build goodwill and strengthen relationships with partner countries. This should be also helpful for MDBs to generate new projects and clients.

**Enabling factors.** Setting up a training initiative requires a decision of the MDB's shareholders and management. These factors, in our view, have a strong influence on the possibility of creating training initiatives:

1. **Identification of training and capacity gaps in target regions.** The scale of training gaps differs significantly depending on an MDB's region of operation. In Africa training needs are substantial and the main MDB located in Africa, the AfDB, has a separate Capacity Development Strategy and a special unit, the African Development Institute, devoted to capacity building and training.
2. **Synergy with other knowledge activities.** If an MDB has strong research and technical assistance programmes, then addition of training to its knowledge activities is often a natural step.
3. **Availability of funding.** Training initiatives of MDBs are cost centres: they do not generate revenue anywhere close to covering their costs. Therefore, they need funding either from the MDB's administrative budget or from external donors. This is why we do not see much training provision from smaller MDBs.

**Governance Models.** Shareholders and management place varying degrees of importance on training activities within an MDB: greater importance means a more prominent position. If the training unit is going to rely predominantly on external donors, it is reasonable to expect that they would like to have a say in determining its priorities and governance. Existing examples can be classified into three broad groups:

1. **Separate Legal Entity.** The training unit can be created as an independent member of the group along with the MDB itself. For example, the ADBI is an independent member of the ADB Group. The budget of the Institute is independent from that of the ADB and the Bank is not responsible for the obligations of the ADBI.
2. **Vice-President Level.** A more typical governance model is when a training unit is one of the departments of an MDB and reports directly to one of vice-presidents of an MDB. For example, the African Development Institute reports to the Chief Economist — Vice President for Economic Governance and Knowledge Management of the African Development Bank.

3. **Department Level.** The training unit is part of a larger department and reports to the head of the department. At some MDBs, for example, the EBRD, training initiatives do not form a separate unit in the organizational structure, but rather a programme within it.

**Financing Models.** MDBs' training units are funded through a mix of resources that come from different sources. The WBG and the IMF use both the administrative budget and donors' contributions. The WBG estimated that in FY2010 the share of its training financed by trust funds—i.e., external donors—was approximately 60%, while the remaining 40% was financed by the bank.

1. **Core Institutional Funding.** Often training initiatives are financed primarily from the administrative budget of an MDB. This funding structure ensures stability but limits available resources.
2. **Donors' Contributions.** This source of funding can include grants from external donors and contributions from the MDB's member states. The ADBI seems rather unique in the MDB system, because it relies predominantly on donor contributions. Its roughly \$16 million 2024 budget was financed largely by the Government of Japan, with smaller contributions from South Korea and Malaysia.
3. **Own resources.** MDBs' training initiatives can also charge their users for services they provide. However, this rarely happens in practice and normally only when training is conducted for a high-income country. Most of an MDB's training is free for the users.

**Target Audience** of MDBs' training is generally determined by their mandates and the goals of their training activities. As a result, the main audience for training is their existing and potential clients, and development partners. Development of online and virtual training makes it possible to significantly reduce training cost per participant and opens access to training to a much wider audience. Many MDBs place their online training products as MOOCs on their dedicated websites or on educational platforms.

**Training Content Customization.** One particular aspect of training where sub-regional MDBs might have a comparative advantage over larger institutions is customization of their training content to country-specific circumstances. Large MDBs, including the ADBI at the ADB, and the Open Learning Campus at the World Bank, which mostly provide general training on core topics, might adjust the content to region-specific circumstances, but only rarely customize it to specific country needs.

Sub-regional MDBs operating in a limited number of countries might be better equipped to provide country-tailored training due to their in-depth knowledge of a country's training needs, closer connections to decision-makers and potential partners, and proficiency in local languages.

**Thematic Areas.** MDBs' training programmes can be categorized into seven areas: 1. Project Management; 2. Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience; 3. Economic and Financial Management; 4. Digital Transformation and Innovation; 5. Social Inclusion and Gender Equality; 6. Public-Private Partnerships; 7. Leadership. The most popular areas turn out to be Economic and Financial Management, followed by Project Management and Leadership.

Climate change and sustainability are now a major focus of development. As technology reshapes development, MDBs also offer training in digital governance, smart cities, cybersecurity, and data-driven decision-making. Courses also address leveraging artificial intelligence and blockchain for public service delivery and efficient resource allocation.

**Online Platforms and AI.** These tools are used to expand access to knowledge, personalize learning experiences, and support capacity building. AI-enabled platforms can analyze a student's performance in real time and adjust their content by offering more support where needed or advancing more quickly through topics that the student masters easily. For example, the Islamic Development Bank Institute used advances in AI, especially the emergence of large language models such as ChatGPT, to develop the Islamic Finance Artificial Intelligence Assistant intended to democratize access to Islamic finance knowledge.

**Partnerships.** Partners might include national governments, educational institutions, think tanks, private sector actors, and other development agencies. The partnerships help to foster resource sharing and leverage specific strengths and knowledge, enhance the effectiveness of training programmes by aligning them with local needs while leveraging global best practices.

The most prominent example is the IMF global network of 17 regional capacity-development centres. Each centre was established in cooperation with various partners, which include regional member states, donor countries, and several MDBs, including the World Bank, ADB, CDB, CABI, and EIB. Most RCDCs are funded by a combination of member countries and external donors.

**Effectiveness.** Regular evaluation provides evidence of the value and effectiveness of training programmes to the bank's leadership, donor countries, and recipient countries. This helps MDBs to: (1) optimize programmes and resources; (2) ensure tangible development impact; (3) demonstrate accountability and justify investments.

Systematic evaluation of training programmes' effectiveness is conducted only by the IMF and some major MDBs. Normally they base their evaluations on the Kirkpatrick model (published in 1959).

**Level 1: Reaction** (participant satisfaction). This is measured with a questionnaire conducted at the end of the course, which also asks participants to provide suggestions on how to improve the course.

**Level 2: Learning** is measured using pre- and post-training exams.

**Level 3: Behaviour.** This assesses the training outcomes for individuals and institutions. Training outcomes normally refer to changes in participants' effectiveness at their workplace as a result of training. They are assessed by follow-up surveys several months after the conclusion of training events. Every three years, the IMF conducts a broader survey and provides information about future training needs.

**Level 4: Results.** This assesses impact in terms of improved performance of the participant's organization. The IMF does not conduct Level 4 evaluations, because they are too costly and difficult to implement. Other MDBs that provide training also do not conduct Level 4 evaluations.

## Long-term outlook

MDBs are evolving in response to global and regional challenges. Under the influence of technological, social, and economic factors, MDBs' educational activities are likely **to intensify and be transformed**.

Within 10 years, MDB training initiatives are likely to be perceived not as a supporting tool, but as a **key non-investment activity**. MDBs can become a kind of "educational hub" for development issues.

We believe that the following **development vectors** will affect both former and newer training initiatives of all MDBs:

1. **The active development of digital technologies makes training initiatives by MDBs scalable, open, and accessible.** It is expected that MDBs will increasingly create open educational resources that are accessible from all over the world. New technologies will reduce production costs.
2. **Educational online platforms, AI technologies including AI-assistance and VR/AR are the key components of the evolution of MDB training initiatives.** MDBs will continue to use online educational platforms as central tools for scaling their training. The use of AI will enable the development of adaptive formats for personalizing the learning process.
3. **Collaboration with educational institutions and EdTech platforms (Coursera, edX, etc.) enriches MDB training initiatives.** Universities and EdTech platforms are channels for accessing regional and global audiences. This will likely lead to greater cooperation between MDBs and such organizations.
4. **MDBs will improve the effectiveness of their courses through localization and cultural adaptation.** This means that MDBs will be more active in two areas: content translation to national languages and adaptation of materials to the institutional characteristics of different regions.
5. **Customization will increase the interest of sponsors in specific courses and attract donors in the form of countries, companies, and foundations.**
6. **Collaboration of different MDBs represents a significant opportunity for development.** Joint capacity-building initiatives of MDBs could create more impact, reduce duplication, and strengthen the development ecosystem across countries.

7. **Profound integration with MDB projects and national programmes makes MDBs' educational courses a mandatory part of the credit and grant projects.** They can also be embedded in national programmes for the professional development of civil servants.
8. **MDBs will seek to calculate the ROI of their programmes.** New technologies will help MDBs to develop performance evaluation systems. It will make it possible to relocate resources using the combination of offline and online formats.
9. **It is expected that the number of courses focusing on soft skills will increase.** Soft skills are a necessary factor for the successful implementation of MDB projects.
10. **Educational events can be used to disseminate and shape international norms and standards.** Development projects require less MDB resources when clients adhere to uniform rules.
11. **Training initiatives could become more effective through the accumulation of "academic capital"** by supporting the communities of their graduates (alumni clubs and others).