

# How and Why ADB Collaborates with CSOs

## **ADB Policy Toward CSOs**

ADB's policies, strategies, and guidelines require or promote engagement of CSOs in ADB-assisted activities. For example, ADB's Governance Policy (1995) states that improving governance includes expansion of cooperation with NGOs. Promoting participation by public, private, community, and NGO stakeholders is a key element of ADB's Water Policy (2001). ADB's Environment Policy (2002) requires, in the case of Category A and B projects, that the borrower consult with groups affected by the proposed project as well as local NGOs. Finally, ADB's Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) Guidelines (2006) state that CSOs are to be consulted at various stages of CPS preparation.

ADB's long-term strategic framework, Strategy 2020, specifies that partnerships with other organizations—including NGOs, CBOs, and foundations—is to become central to planning, financing, and implementing ADB operations.

ADB's core policy on working with CSOs is the Policy on Cooperation Between ADB and Nongovernment Organizations (1998). This policy defines the term "NGO" so broadly as to include most major CSO groups. The policy recognizes the many roles NGOs play, and identifies common interests and areas of complementarity between ADB and NGOs. The policy identifies the ultimate objective of ADB cooperation with NGOs as incorporating NGO experience, knowledge, and expertise into ADB operations, such that the development efforts ADB undertakes would more effectively confront the issues and priorities reflected in ADB's development agenda.

The design for Pakistan's Sindh Coastal Community Development Project was firmly based on a participatory process that engaged farmer groups, fisherfolk, the landless, and women

### CSO Expectations of ADB

While it is difficult to generalize, it is fair to say that many CSOs would like ADB to be more transparent in the way it develops projects. This includes clarifying the operational working arrangements between the government, ADB, and CSOs; and broadening the scope of consultation with CSOs at the planning stage. Advocacy groups frequently assert that ADB should give greater attention to determining the needs and respecting the desires of people affected by ADB-financed activities, and should more effectively implement its policies and strategies, particularly those relating to disclosure of information, fighting corruption, social protection, and social and environmental safeguards.

Advocacy CSOs engage ADB on a wide variety of issues, taking highly critical positions toward the financing of dam and coal plant construction, loans to governments with spotty human rights records, and private sector involvement in the delivery of public services.

CSOs expect ADB to recognize the inherent power imbalance between CSOs and ADB, and that ADB take steps to treat CSOs as equal partners. Operational CSOs have urged ADB to: provide more grants to CSO-initiated activities, support CSO capacity development, create alternative and more flexible financing modalities than those offered under ADB's consulting procedures, and simplify documentation requirements relating to CSOs working as consultants.

### Modes and Sectors of ADB-CSO Cooperation

Examples of ADB's operational cooperation with CSOs include basic information sharing, practical assistance in identifying development needs project monitoring, contributing to livelihood programs, and designing and implementing specific components of projects and programs.

Areas in which CSOs and ADB have worked closely together include agriculture and rural development, coastal resource management, education, environmental management and protection, health,

urban development, water supply and sanitation, and small-scale industry and credit. Increasingly, cooperation with CSOs in projects tends to encompass areas such as energy and infrastructure. These are areas in which CSOs can contribute to the mitigation of undesirable environmental and social impacts.

CSOs contribute inputs into the development of CPSs, as well as ADB sector and thematic policies and strategies. Examples of activities in which CSOs can be especially helpful include poverty reduction, livelihood development, empowerment of marginal populations, challenging gender discrimination, and disaster risk management.

#### The Contribution of CSOs as Perceived by ADB Staff

CSOs may be able to

- (i) provide information and perspectives from the field and local communities;
- (ii) function as sources of exemplary practices and specific experience;
- (iii) disseminate ADB information;
- (iv) act as a bridge in ADB's relationship with member governments and civil society;
- (v) help manage the flow of information used in the formulation of ADB strategies;
- (vi) provide technical assistance and related services in the preparation of country strategies, national poverty strategies, as well as project identification, design, monitoring, and evaluation;
- (vii) in the case of pilot projects, implement ADB-assisted development interventions, and in particular, poverty reduction projects and social initiatives; and
- (viii) serve as information links to ADB and member governments.

Source: Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). 2001. *Recommendations for Strengthening ADB-NGO Dialogue and Cooperation*. Manila.

Together with several CSOs, ADB assessed the extent of the water access problem in low-income communities and the slums of Dhaka, the effects of ongoing interventions, and recommendations relating to how challenges in this area might be addressed

