

CSO Contributions to ADB Policy Formulation

Soliciting Stakeholder Views on ADB Policy Formulation

ADB Staff Instructions⁸ state that active guidance of key stakeholders, both internal and external, should be sought during the processing of an ADB policy or strategy paper.

The main objective of the review and consultation process is to identify and consider the views of these stakeholders and to ensure that they have reasonable opportunity to be involved in developing policy and strategy papers. In particular, the external consultation process should be designed to solicit input and advice from a range of stakeholders and experts as appropriate, so that the final version of the paper is based on best international practices and adequate engagement of interested parties.

In the case of some policy and strategy papers, external consultation is particularly important in light of the need to take into account the concerns of relevant stakeholders, to benefit from their knowledge and experience, and to strengthen their ownership of the paper itself. The external consultation and review process should particularly involve the stakeholders who will be affected by the paper, or stakeholders who are experts in fields related to it. In the end, both the need for and the nature of the external review depends on the nature and topic of the paper itself.

For papers relating to safeguards, the relevant staff instructions state that external consultation is essential. In the case of other papers—particularly those relating to sector or thematic areas—

⁸ Staff Instructions on Policy and Strategy Development in ADB, approved 22 July 2004, apply to the procedures for identifying, preparing, and processing policy and strategy papers.

external consultation is encouraged. However, a policy or strategy paper relating to finance or administration that pertains solely to ADB's internal workings requires no external consultation. Proposals relating to the scope and nature of consultations themselves are typically included in concept papers.

While external consultations are thus not required in all cases, it is also true that consulting external stakeholders in the review of policies and strategies generally produces documents that:

- (i) are technically superior to documents that were prepared without the benefit of external consultations,
- (ii) are more relevant to the context of ADB's developing member countries,
- (iii) incorporate internationally accepted best practices,
- (iv) improve understanding of ADB's objectives and operations,
- (v) consider a broad base of information and range of perspectives, and
- (vi) enjoy greater support by a wider range of stakeholders.

Examples of ADB papers that have been prepared with extensive consultations with CSOs include the (i) accountability mechanism, (ii) public communications policy, and (iii) safeguard policy statement.

In general, the guidelines for carrying out effective consultations regarding policy and strategy are similar to those relevant to CPS preparation:

- (i) plan early,
- (ii) develop a thorough stakeholder analysis,
- (iii) design a cost-effective C&P plan based on that analysis,
- (iv) define a communications strategy,
- (v) use skilled facilitators,
- (vi) allow sufficient time for review of the document, and
- (vii) provide stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss the document in draft form.

ADB's experience in consultations includes innovative models, such as participatory "write shops," and engaging internal and external stakeholders in crafting draft action plans.⁹

Good Practice in Engaging CSOs in Policy Development

The following steps are commonly undertaken when developing or reviewing ADB policies and strategies using a consultative approach:

- Undertake a stakeholder analysis to determine which groups or individuals will best contribute to the review process.
- Confer with internal and external groups that possess specialized knowledge or have a particular interest in the policy or strategy being developed or reviewed as a means of obtaining input regarding the consultation process itself or the objectives of the review.
- Create a website dedicated to the review process that widely publicizes details relating to the manner in which the review will be conducted, as well as the manner in which interested persons or organizations can contribute their input.¹⁰
- Make at least two drafts of the proposed policy or strategy available for public comment during the course of the review, and allow stakeholders sufficient time to comment on the drafts.

⁹ ADB-Government-NGO Cooperation: A Framework for Action, 2003–2005 was prepared using the write shop methodology. See www.adb.org/NGOs/Framework/framework_development.asp

¹⁰ The team that managed the review of ADB's Inspection Function created a detailed website for consultation purposes. See www.adb.org/inspection/review.asp

- Use communication channels in addition to the ADB website to invite comments, and to announce the beginning and end dates of the comment period.
- Organize several face-to-face consultations relating to the draft policy or strategy at the country or subregional level in a geographically diverse set of member countries.
- Develop invitation lists in collaboration with the resident mission in the country concerned, government bodies, and, in the case of CSOs, NGOC.
- Make drafts of the proposed policy or strategy available to workshop participants at least 30 days in advance of the date of the consultation, preferably presented in the language of the country concerned.
- Carry out website, electronic, and postal consultations in parallel with face-to-face consultations.¹¹
- Post stakeholder comments on the website dedicated to the review process, together with an explanation of how comments have been considered in the subsequent iteration of the proposed policy or strategy (e.g., by preparing a comments matrix).¹²
- Promptly post any changes to the review process on the dedicated review website (e.g., details relating to workshop arrangements, extensions of the review process).

¹¹ Some intergovernment organizations have used e-mail and web-based discussions to promote the sharing of views on proposed policy changes by stakeholders. For example, in May 2004, the World Bank Institute and the International Finance Corporation designed and organized a 12-day global multistakeholder e-discussion on disclosure of information and consultation relating to private sector projects.

¹² For example, see the treatment of external comments received on ADB's Information Policy and Strategy, and the Policy on Confidentiality and the Disclosure of Information, at www.adb.org/Disclosure/compilation_external_comments.pdf. Another example of responses to stakeholder inputs is the review of implementation of ADB's water policy, which is available at www.adb.org/Water/Policy/comprehensive-review.asp#feedback.

Staff members responsible for implementation of the policy or strategy concerned can provide useful assistance in identifying stakeholders, as can NGO/civil society anchors at ADB resident missions and representative offices. These specialists likewise have comparative advantage in awareness-raising activities at the country level, and can make positive contributions to the policy or strategy review.

