

# Responsibility for CSO Cooperation within ADB

## **Operations Departments**

The core of ADB's work is carried out through its regional departments and the Private Sector Operations Department. The processing, implementation, and monitoring of projects take place in these departments. Thus, communication and consultation with CSOs in ADB-assisted activities occur primarily through the operations departments.

Strengthening relationships with stakeholders in developing member countries is the responsibility of ADB's operations departments which serve as the contact points for CSOs directly involved in, or concerned with, projects, programs, country assistance, or regional integration initiatives.

Specific examples of operations department responsibilities include broad consultations with CSOs in project identification and planning activities, technical and project-related consultations and discussions with CSOs, defining roles for CSOs in specific project activities, consultations concerning the CPS relating to the country concerned, compiling information about CSOs relevant to specific activities, and meeting CSO requests for project-related information.

## **Resident Missions**

As ADB's principal representative in the field, a standard function of every resident mission is managing civil society relations in the country where the resident mission is located. In addition, ADB's resident mission policy recognizes the creation of solid partnerships with civil society and other development stakeholders as a key partnership objective.

Most resident missions have appointed a staff member to serve as NGO/civil society anchor, usually in conjunction with either social development or external relations responsibilities. The role of this staff member typically includes addressing CSO queries, facilitating contact with project staff, organizing briefings and consultations, providing input into ADB's annual report on cooperation with CSOs, maintaining a database of CSO contacts, and keeping ADB headquarters staff informed of developments in the country's CSO sector.

### **Regional and Sustainable Development Department**

Among other roles, the Regional and Sustainable Development Department (RSDD) serves as an anchor for sector-based and thematic strategic directions in key areas of ADB operations, including energy, environment, gender, governance, health, poverty alleviation, and transport. RSDD's divisions and units regularly engage CSOs to inform them of their work in these areas. This includes information relating to assessments, conferences, reports, special initiatives, and regional technical assistance projects.

### **NGOC and the NGO/Civil Society Network**

ADB created the NGOC in 2001 to strengthen cooperation with civil society actors and to respond to their concerns. Located within RSDD, the NGOC holds the primary institutional responsibility for developing, implementing, and assessing general policy and practice relating to cooperation with CSOs. The NGOC provides advice, contacts, and information to ADB departments and offices relating to CSO engagement. The NGOC is also ADB's general focal point for liaison with CSOs, and likewise serves as a knowledge resource center for ADB's interaction with civil society.

The NGOC does not serve as a "gatekeeper" or "screen" for CSO contact with ADB. However, it can facilitate connections between CSOs and relevant staff members in cases in which direct relations

between the two have not yet been established. It also provides background briefings for staff members meeting with CSO representatives. In cases in which CSOs wish to meet staff members from several departments or offices at about the same time, the NGOC typically arranges such meetings.

The NGOC is responsible for (i) developing ADB guidelines and providing advice on consultation involving CSOs and other stakeholders; (ii) elaborating, implementing, and reporting on ADB's overall program of communications and collaboration with CSOs, and managing ADB's policy on cooperation with NGOs; (iii) implementing selected technical assistance projects supporting the role of CSOs in development; (iv) providing training on consultative and participatory practices and on working with CSOs to develop staff and institutional capacity; and (v) maintaining a centralized information database relating to CSOs.

The NGOC also coordinates the network of NGO/civil society anchors in resident missions, representative offices, and ADB headquarters. The network shares experience, insights, information, and knowledge relating to ADB's interaction with civil society.

## **DER**

DER is responsible for preparing news releases relating to CSO-related issues. News releases may report on projects with a major civil society component, and workshops and conferences featuring CSO participation of note. DER also maintains ADB's website, including the web pages relating to NGO/civil society, and publishes briefs, newsletters, handbooks, and other materials on CSO-related topics.

The department likewise provides guidance on the application of the PCP, including its information disclosure provisions that CSOs often use. DER also identifies ways in which CSOs can be used to disseminate information concerning ADB-assisted activities. This includes umbrella and apex NGOs as well as nongovernment research institutions.

### **Representative Offices**

Representative offices in Europe, Japan, and North America play a critical role in building and maintaining ADB's profile, given their proximity to key stakeholders, their operational and economic expertise, and their understanding of the unique cultural and communications aspects of the country or region in which they are based. These three offices are key ADB communicators that work to expand and strengthen ADB's interactions with the media, opinion leaders, and decision makers in the country or region concerned. These include influential CSOs located in the geographic regions for which the representative offices are responsible.

### **Accountability Mechanism**

ADB's accountability mechanism offers people adversely affected by ADB-assisted projects an opportunity to voice concerns and seek solutions to their problems, and likewise to report alleged violations of ADB's operational policies and procedures. The mechanism comprises two separate but related functions: the consultation phase and the compliance review phase.

The consultation phase assists people adversely affected by ADB-assisted projects to find solutions to their problems. It is led by ADB's special project facilitator. The compliance phase establishes ADB's accountability in its operations by providing a forum in which project-affected people (and in special circumstances, any ADB Board member) can file requests for compliance review. The Compliance Review Panel is responsible for this phase.

Most complaints that reach the accountability mechanism have been prepared by, or with the support of, CSOs. In recognition of this fact, staff of the accountability mechanism regularly meet with CSO representatives in Manila, and carry out an active outreach program that engages local, national, and international CSOs in numerous countries.