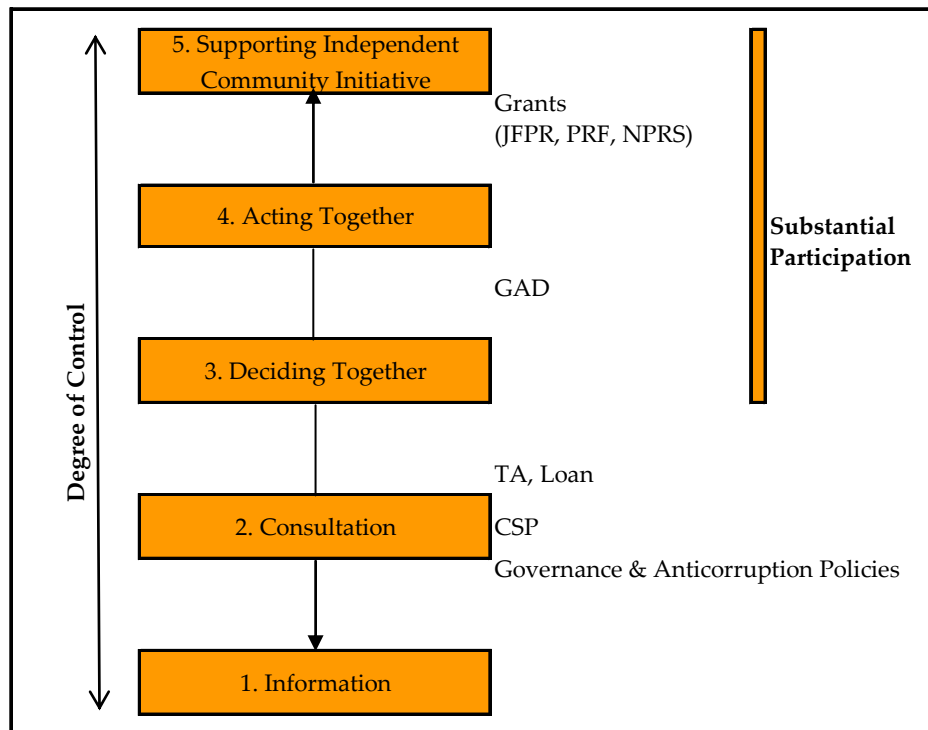


Involvement of Civil Society Organizations in ADB Operations

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- ADB recognizes the growing role of **civil society organizations** in the Asia and Pacific region's development, and interacts with them at international, country, and grassroots levels. ADB policies acknowledge the importance of capacity building and institutional development support to CSOs to strengthen this role in its operations.
- The involvement of country CSOs, which include grassroots CSOs or community-based organizations, in ADB operations has not been analyzed or evaluated sufficiently. This gap needs to be filled because ADB and the international community now place more emphasis on the role of country systems and national organizations in leading the development agenda.

Ladder of Participation



CSP = country strategy and program, GAD = gender & development, JFPR = Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, NPRS = National Poverty Reduction Strategy, PRF = Poverty Reduction Fund, TA = technical assistance.

Background

Civil society organizations (CSOs) demand a greater say and role in decision making, in governance, and in actions of others that affect people directly. In 2003, the

Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a new **accountability mechanism** to ensure that ADB addresses the complaints of project-affected people and establishes a transparent process that will increase its

accountability. In 2006, the Operations Evaluation Department conducted a **Special Evaluation Study on the Involvement of Civil Society Organizations in ADB Operations** that built on the **Special Evaluation Study on the Role of Nongovernment Organizations and Community-Based Organizations in Asian Development Bank Projects** (1999).^{1,2} The study investigated loans, grants from the **Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction**, technical assistance funded by grants from the **Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund** and the **Cooperation Fund in Support of the Formulation and Implementation of National Poverty Reduction Strategies**, and other technical assistance.

Summary of Findings

ADB's capacity to engage CSOs in **country strategy and program** processes has grown. But, despite increased consultations, their concerns might not always be reflected effectively in country strategy and program formulation.

The typology of CSO involvement in ADB operations is increasingly diverse. However, CSO involvement in areas such as policy advocacy and monitoring and evaluation is comparatively rare.

The increase in ADB spending on capacity building of CSOs has centered on grassroots CSOs such as water users associations and farmers' groups. Nevertheless, where CSOs are involved in network development, their role is often narrow, focusing on facilitating information exchange and communication on short-term project implementation issues.

The strategies for involving CSOs as partners in implementing ADB's policies on **governance** and **anticorruption** are weak.

The strategy for involving CSOs in implementing **gender and development** policies has been effective, particularly in its long-term approach and early focus on capacity building to put in place appropriate legislation and regulations.

ADB has improved creation and capture of knowledge on CSO involvement in ADB operations. Much of this, however, is based on qualitative, rather than quantitative, data and information.

Recommendations

The study made suggestions on quality-at-entry, country strategies and programs, thematic and sector policies, and knowledge management.

- Strengthen quality-at-entry processes for CSO involvement in ADB operations based on a systemic analysis of previous good practices, and allocate resources for CSO involvement in the design of projects that envision this involvement.
- Enhance CSO involvement in CSP formulation and reviews whenever appropriate in the country context and the design of the program.
- Enhance CSO partnership capacity in thematic and sector policy formulation and implementation by making greater efforts to harness the skills and capabilities of CSOs in the fight against corruption.
- Strengthen ADB's knowledge management systems covering CSOs by (i) formulating criteria and categories for good practice of CSO involvement, and (ii) improving categorization of ADB resident mission information systems on CSOs as well as better knowledge retrieval in ADB headquarters.

Feedback

ADB Management's Response welcomed the study. It found it well-prepared and constructive. It generally concurred with the recommendations. Management noted that the findings are subject to significant limitations as described in para. 9 of the study and as highlighted in detailed interdepartmental comments on its draft. Nevertheless, Management believed that the recommendations directed at the **safeguard policy update** and the recommendations for **involuntary resettlement** implementation were highly relevant. Management emphasized that both sets of recommendations should be further reviewed and considered in the context of the safeguard policy update, including its consultation process.

¹ ADB. 2006. *Special Evaluation Study on the Involvement of Civil Society Organizations in ADB Operations*. Manila. Available: <http://www.adb.org/Documents/SES/REG/Civil-Society-Organizations/SST-REG-200609.pdf>

² ADB. 1999. *Special Evaluation Study of the Role of Nongovernment Organizations and Community-Based Organizations in Asian Development Bank Projects*. Manila. Available: <http://www.adb.org/Documents/PERs/SS-38.pdf>