



## OVERVIEW OF CIVIL SOCIETY

# LAO PDR

## Country context

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is located in Southeast Asia, northeast of Thailand and west of Viet Nam. Covering a total area of 236,800 square kilometers, the Lao PDR also borders the People's Republic of China, Cambodia, and Myanmar. The capital is Vientiane.

The population is about 6 million, 53% of whom are literate. The Lao PDR has a young population, with 44% of the population below 15 years of age. Thirty-nine percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The legal system is based on traditional customs and French legal norms and procedures. It is a republic with a unicameral legislature, controlled by the communist Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP).

## History of NGO involvement

### Domestic nongovernment organizations (NGOs)

Except for the **Lao Red Cross**,<sup>1</sup> the Lao PDR does not have domestic NGOs. From the Government's perspective, civil society is represented by mass organizations, including the Lao Women's Union, the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union, the Lao Patriotic Front for Reconstruction, and the Lao Federation of Trade Unions. In addition to supporting formal government activities, these mass organizations carry out participatory planning activities using their extensive networks throughout the country.

### International nongovernment organizations (INGOs)

While still limited in number, the number and activities of INGOs in the Lao PDR have grown since the Government adopted the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) in 1986. Currently, about 100 INGOs operate in the Lao PDR, all of which work in close cooperation with official government counterparts.

In the past, INGO support focused on infrastructure development in rural areas as well as on agriculture, health, and humanitarian aid and relief. Since 1996, the focus has shifted to integrated rural development and human resource development.

INGOs are increasingly involved in donor-funded projects/ programs, including activities financed by multilateral development institutions. With the Government's objective of enhanced decentralization to subnational levels of government, the role of INGOs as service providers are expected to become more important.

The largest INGOs operating in the Lao PDR include **CARE International, The Consortium, Handicap International, Mines Advisory Group, Norwegian Church Aid, Quaker Service, Save the Children Australia, Save the Children Norway, and World Vision.**

## Legislation concerning NGO activities

The Lao PDR has few laws and is principally governed through the issuance of decrees. Legislation regarding NGOs only considers the operational presence of INGOs. Relations between the Government and INGOs thus would benefit from a clearer and more transparent operating framework.

### INGOs

To operate in the Lao PDR, INGOs must seek the approval of and be registered by the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

INGOs are also required to register and provide financial reports to the appropriate government office under the Decree of the Prime Minister on the Regulation of NGOs.<sup>2</sup>

A mechanism will be established to monitor and evaluate INGO activities. The regulations focus on administrative procedures for NGOs, including

- compliance with the laws and regulations of the NGO's country of origin (location of headquarters);
- a minimum budget of \$100,000 per annum (excluding expenditures for wages, displacements, and insurance of personnel);
- submission of a request to employ local personnel to the Office of Diplomatic Services, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Either the Ministry provides the desired personnel, or an INGO can hire a local employee on its own initiative but must inform the Office of Diplomatic Services in writing within 30 days of the signature of the employment contract; and
- tax exempt status for the import of office and other equipment as well as vehicles for the project implementation and the personal effects of expatriate staff.

Sanctions are applied if the INGO breaches the laws, regulations, or traditions of the Lao PDR.

The supporting guidelines issued on 8 July 1999 formally recognize INGOs as development partners of the Government, with the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs acting as the Government's institutional focal point.

INGOs and their expatriate staff are also accorded some privileges such as income tax exemption under the 1996 Tax Law.

### **National NGOs**

According to the country's Constitution, adopted in 1991 and revised in 2003, forming associations and organizations is permitted. As no laws currently exist to implement the Constitution with respect to the establishment of national NGOs, they are in effect not recognized by the Government.

### **Government-NGO relations**

The Government of the Lao PDR tends to regard INGOs as foreign private nonprofit organizations that support development activities or provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with the laws and security of the country. Generally, the Government realizes the significance and value of INGO-supported activity, particularly at the grassroots level, and welcomes assistance from INGOs as long as they contribute to the country's development without political involvement. However, the Government has recently questioned the activities of some INGOs, specifically INGO criticism of some large foreign investment and infrastructure development projects.

Out of necessity, INGOs in the Lao PDR work closely with government counterparts, mainly with the local government but also at the national level through the

ministries of agriculture and forestry, health, and education, and mass organizations such as the Lao Women's Union and the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Organization. Since the Government retains tight control of INGO staffing, approval of new projects or decisions on employment of domestic staff may take considerable time.

Matters related to aid management, monitoring, supervising, and managing foreign grants and loan-assisted projects are the responsibility of the Department of Foreign Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Functions related to planning and statistical coordination are assigned to the Committee for Planning and Cooperation (CPC).

Many INGOs, especially those acting as implementing agencies for bilateral- and multilateral-financed projects, maintain good relations with the Government, particularly at the local level.

### **INGOs and development**

Since 1996, INGO support has shifted focus from infrastructure development in rural areas, agriculture, health, and humanitarian aid and relief to integrated rural development and human resource development. INGO support to community development initiatives in partnership with the Government has been particularly important. INGOs have been able to work at the grassroots level in remote areas where the Government and larger multilateral organizations have difficulty providing assistance.

Many INGO-run projects are small, however, due to limited external resources. INGOs that do not employ Laotian staff with experience working with government institutions risk misunderstanding the unique political and social context of the Lao PDR. Some INGOs have reported difficulties working with government counterparts.

More than 100 INGOs from Asia, Europe, and the United States are working in and/or providing assistance to the Lao PDR. The total value of all approved projects is about \$14 million–\$18 million per year. In the first 6 months of 2001, for example, the Government approved 31 INGO projects collectively budgeted at more than \$7 million.

Although national NGOs are not formally recognized, other civil society organizations (CSOs) exist in the Lao PDR, including many community-based organizations and associations set up to address social welfare concerns. Such groups include farmers' associations, parents' associations, water users' groups, women's groups, and local chapters of the Lao Red Cross.

A number of NGOs have been established outside the Lao PDR, primarily by Laotian émigrés, who advocate human rights and democratization in the Lao PDR.

## Mass organizations

Although not strictly NGOs in the usual sense, mass organizations in the Lao PDR participate in development activities and perform some functions of national NGOs in other countries. While closely linked to the LPRP, these mass organizations have extensive organizational networks stretching from the top of the party hierarchy down to the village level. To some extent, the mass organizations in the Lao PDR represent, at least in principle, a move from centrally controlled government policy-enforcing bodies to institutions active in traditional civil society.

Because of the absence of an independent civil society in the Lao PDR, the mass organizations provide the only formal representation for women, workers, youth, and ethnic minority groups. The leading mass organizations include the following.

### **Lao Trade Unions (LFTU)**

The LFTU, established in 1966, is the only national workers' organization. It maintains the status of a ministry with subsidy support (both staff and activities). While mainly responsible for representing workers' rights, the LFTU gives priority to workers' education, including responding to the transition toward a full-fledged market economy. The LFTU also plays an active and important role in disseminating HIV/AIDS preventive education at the workplace as part of a project initiated by the World Health Organization.

### **Lao National Front for Reconstruction (LPFR)**

The LPFR is responsible for building national solidarity and for ensuring that the interests of ethnic minority groups are recognized. The Front is among the most liberal elements in the country's political system, and appears to be the most highly regarded mass organization at the local and rural levels. Although the LPFR has limited capacity to undertake development projects, it operates as an umbrella coalition body for some elements of Lao civil society, including ethnic minorities, women, labor, youth, and religious associations.

### **Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LPRYU)**

Modeled on the Lao Women's Union, the LPRYU is involved in some vocational training and development activities. The LPRYU established a vocational promotion training center that offers programs in sewing and agriculture, computer training, home economics, and small repairs. Other projects at the center aim to preserve the Lao PDR cultural heritage—from traditional culture and arts training to athletic and music programs and competitions. The LPRYU is also active in HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention as well as reproductive health awareness programs.

### **Lao Women's Union (LWU)**

The LWU is a mass organization of more than

800,000 members created in 1955. The LWU is involved in grassroots socioeconomic development work, including projects aimed at reducing poverty and increasing women's knowledge and skills through vocational training, courses in family economics, and establishing and maintaining small businesses. The LWU is very active in rural areas as an implementing agency for donor-funded health programs and income-generating activities.

## Organization of NGOs

Between 1994 and 1996, an NGO forum attempted to improve coordination between the Government and other organizations. The Government, however, withdrew permission to operate this forum with reference to the regulations that it drafted for NGOs (Regulation of NGOs, 11/2000). Coordination between NGOs has since been undertaken through informal meetings and sector-coordination meetings. The following sectoral groups were established.

### **Sustainable Agriculture Forum (SAF)**

The SAF, established in 1991, is a membership organization project providing training, workshops, and study tours to community development workers promoting sustainable agriculture. The members of the SAF are **Canadian University Service Overseas**, a Canadian-based international development organization working in the Lao PDR since 1989; **Community Aid Abroad**, supporting community-based rural development initiatives since 1988; **Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE)**, operating in the Lao PDR since 1978; **Japan International Volunteer Centre**, working in the Lao PDR since 1988; and **Mennonite Central Committee**, active in the Lao PDR since 1975. The SAF is networking with **Terra** in Thailand and the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction in the Philippines.

### **Gender Development Group (GDG)**

To foster good relations and development for women, the GDG (formerly the Women in Development Group) meets regularly to discuss gender issues and to improve coordination and cooperation among NGOs, international organizations, and the LWU. The group is under the umbrella of World Education.

The GDG has no formal structure, no official representatives, no secretariat, and no membership fees. Responsibilities for hosting and recording minutes of meetings are rotated among the organizations involved. Meetings are held monthly, mainly attended by female NGO staff.

### **HIV/AIDS Working Group**

The HIV/AIDS Working Group coordinates and shares HIV/AIDS-related information among NGOs, international

organizations, and government officials. The group meets every 3 months. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) are the joint coordinators of the working group.

### Lao Training Network

The Lao Training Network, established in 1995, meets monthly to share experiences on training with NGOs and international organizations.

### Technical Advisory Group

The Technical Advisory Group networks among NGOs and other agencies involved in irrigation schemes. It is a critical source of lessons learned from minor irrigation projects, especially regarding construction standards and community facilitation.

In addition to these working groups, different forms of regional networking also exist. Several INGOs (such as **CARE, Save the Children, Oxfam, Action Contre la Faim, Food for the Hungry, Norwegian Church Aid [NCA]**, and **CIDSE**) have regional linkages to draw experience from partner organizations or other programs in the region. The NCA, for example, has established a regional office in Vientiane, and is developing an NCA regional AIDS strategy through a network of individuals and institutions in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

As of mid-2005, no NGO resource center exists in the Lao PDR. INGOs are currently trying to establish such a center, along the lines of the Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organization.

### NGO directories

A comprehensive directory of NGOs in the Lao PDR is available at [www.directoryofngos.org](http://www.directoryofngos.org). The directory is the result of a project initiated by the NGO community, partially funded by a small grant from the World Bank. In addition to a listing of NGOs, the directory contains announcements, job vacancies, events, publications, and other resources useful to the development community.

### Donor agencies

As one of the poorest countries in the world, the Lao PDR depends on external assistance as a critical source of government financing. As a least developed and landlocked country, up to 60% of external assistance to the Lao PDR is in the form of grants. A major challenge facing the Lao PDR is enhancing efficiency in the utilization of external assistance through effective donor coordination.

Since the mid-1980s, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies have been

important providers of external assistance to the Lao PDR. Among bilateral sources of assistance, Japan is the largest grant aid donor country, with transport and rural development as principal target areas, followed by Germany, Australia, and Sweden. In addition, INGOs have an important role as implementing agencies for their own or donor-financed rural development and drug demand reduction programs.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been a leading donor in the Lao PDR and has closely coordinated its program with that of other major donors, particularly the World Bank, to avoid duplication and maximize development impact. Ongoing and planned joint tasks between ADB and the World Bank include poverty assessments, portfolio reviews, and public and financial expenditure reviews. ADB also works closely with the International Monetary Fund in carrying out policy dialogue on macroeconomic management issues.

### ADB assistance

#### Cumulative ADB lending to the Lao PDR (as of 31 December 2004)

	Number of Loans	\$ Million <sup>a</sup>	%
Transport and Communications	13	351.7	31.6
Energy	14	253.3	22.8
Agriculture and Natural Resources	11	150.3	13.5
Multisector	8	121.6	10.9
Education	4	73.3	6.6
Finance	4	69.0	6.2
Water Supply, Sanitation, and Waste Management	5	58.1	5.2
Health, Nutrition, and Social Protection	2	25.0	2.2
Industry and Trade	1	10.9	1.0
<b>TOTAL<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1,113.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup>Total may not add due to rounding

<sup>b</sup>Includes loan components of regional projects in the Lao PDR

### ADB-NGO/CSO cooperation

ADB opened the Lao Resident Mission (LRM) in July 2001. LRM coordinates high-level policy dialogue and aid; and assists with country programming, technical assistance administration, project processing, portfolio management, and project administration. In addition, LRM maintains regular dialogue with NGOs/CSOs on ADB assistance in the country.

NGOs/CSOs are involved in several ADB loan and technical assistance projects in the Lao PDR. Examples appear below. In addition, ADB is consulting extensively with NGOs/CSOs in preparing the country strategy and

program and in soliciting their input on the review of ADB policies and strategies, such as the Environment Policy. In March 2005, ADB organized a tripartite national

workshop in Vientiane for NGO/CSO input into the GMS Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program Update (2006–2008).

## Loan and technical assistance projects

Project title	Project objective and NGO involvement
<b>Social infrastructure</b>	
<p>Water Supply and Sanitation Sector (\$20 million) Approval: 16 Nov 1999 Estimated completion: Dec 2005</p>	<p>The project is designed to support the decentralization of the water supply sector by establishing a regulatory framework and capacity building of locally managed water supplies. In addition, the project will enable the Government to implement the provisions of its newly issued water supply and sanitation sector policy and investment plan through investments in water supply and sanitation systems in small towns and the peri-urban areas of Vientiane. It will improve the environment and enhance human development in the target communities. It includes a total of 168 person-months of consulting services of a domestic NGO to manage the project's community awareness and participation program component.</p>
<b>Multisector</b>	
<p>Greater Mekong Subregion: Mekong Tourism Development (\$10.9 million) Approval: 12 Dec 2002 Estimated completion: 31 Dec 2007</p>	<p>The project will promote the development of the tourism sector in the lower Mekong River Basin and will help improve tourism-related infrastructure in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. It will support pro-poor, community-based tourism projects in the rural areas of the three countries, facilitate private sector participation in tourism marketing and promotion, establish mechanisms to increase subregional cooperation, and facilitate the movement of tourists across borders. The project design reflects the strategies for building partnerships with poor rural communities (particularly ethnic minorities), NGOs, and civil society as well as government agencies involved in tourism development, agriculture, and forestry.</p>
<b>Agriculture and Natural Resources</b>	
<p>Northern Community-Managed Irrigation Sector (\$10 million) Approval: 5 Jul 2004 Estimated completion: 30 Apr 2011</p>	<p>The project aims to reduce rural poverty in 11 districts of the northern region through sustained growth of agricultural production by developing community-managed irrigation schemes with strong community ownership. The project has four project components where activities and services will be integrated: (i) community mobilization, (ii) institutional capacity building for better participatory planning, facilitation, and technical management, (iii) rehabilitation and upgrading of community-managed irrigation schemes, and (iv) agricultural extension and resource use planning.</p>
<b>Transport and Communications</b>	
<p>Roads for Rural Development (\$17.7 million) Approval: 28 Jun 2004 Estimated completion: 31 Dec 2011</p>	<p>The project will provide the rural poor better access to markets, employment, and social facilities, thereby contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. INGOs such as Handicap International support efforts to create a network to increase awareness of road safety issues and to address the trauma of road accidents. NGOs will also be involved in designing and implementing a community road safety program.</p>
<b>Multisector</b>	
<p>Greater Mekong Subregion: Nam Theun 2 Hydroelectric (\$20 million Government, \$50 million private sector) Approval: 4 April 2005 Estimated completion: Nov 2009</p>	<p>The project will promote economic growth in the region by developing hydroelectric power resources. It will export 5,354 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity to Thailand and will provide revenue to the Lao PDR through taxes, royalties, and dividends. About 200–300 GWh will be supplied to electricity consumers in the Lao PDR.</p> <p>The project sponsors have created numerous opportunities for INGOs and Lao mass organizations such as the Lao Women's Union and the Lao Front for National Construction to participate actively in the review process. This has been accomplished by organizing activities to share information and seek input from NGOs; and by establishing channels of communication such as maintaining websites, responding to written inquiries, directly involving NGOs in field research, and by organizing occasional site visits.</p> <p>The Government, project sponsors, and international financial institutions organized workshops to brief international interest groups including conservation NGOs, human rights groups, government representatives, other financial institutions, parliamentarians, and the media not only in the Lao PDR but also in France, Japan, Thailand, and United States. These meetings took place in August and September 2004, attracting nearly 800 participants.</p>

## Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction

The Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) is an untied grant facility established by the Government of Japan and ADB in May 2000. The \$90 million fund assists ADB clients to effectively tackle poverty as well as the social consequences that resulted from the 1997–1999 global economic and financial crises.

Specifically, the JFPR

- initiates and supports innovative programs with a high potential for improving the affected countries' situations;

- provides relatively rapid, demonstrable benefits through initiatives with positive prospects of developing into sustainable activities over the long term; and
- assists programs designed and implemented by local populations and civil society

The JFPR provides an opportunity for local communities and CSOs, including NGOs, to actively participate in the development process. The partnerships may involve NGOs in designing and conceptualizing the proposed grant, or in executing the grant.

The following JFPR projects with NGO involvement were approved for the Lao PDR.

Project Title	Project Objective and NGO Involvement
Supporting the Community- Managed Livelihood Improvement (\$1 million) Approval: 18 Dec 2001	The project was designed to create sustainable, area-based, and community-owned alternative sources of income for and with the targeted poor through stakeholders' increased involvement in farm-based production and related activities. The project included community mobilization, skills development, and capacity building; livelihood improvement activities; overall project management and administrative support; and benefit monitoring and evaluation and poverty impact assessment. The executing agency was the Department of Irrigation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. NGOs were included in the project steering committee.
Reducing Poverty Among Ethnic Minority Women in the Nam Ngum River Basin (\$530,000) Approval: 12 Nov 2003	The project objective was to reduce poverty and improve the socioeconomic status of ethnic minority women, who are among the poorest and most disadvantaged in the Lao PDR. The immediate objectives were to (i) build awareness and capacity among local ethnic minority women's groups to participate in community decision making on livelihood and management of productive assets; (ii) reduce the domestic tasks and improve the health and social status of ethnic minority women by improving their access to water supply, sanitation, health, and literacy; and (iii) enable ethnic minority women to access opportunities to improve their livelihoods through skills development, gender mainstreaming of extension services, training, and improvement of access to productive resources, including credit.
Solid Waste Management and Income Generation for Vientiane's Poor (\$1 million) Approval: 16 Dec 2003	The Lao Women's Union (LWU) and NGOs were deployed to work with village communities to identify and mobilize women's groups. NGOs and LWU staff trained women's groups to operate and manage revolving and commodity banks and maintain accounts.  The project was expected to improve the living conditions of poor households and waste pickers in Vientiane through an improved sanitary environment, better access to waste collection services, and improved standards of living by developing entrepreneurial skills. It aimed to (i) improve and sustain solid waste collection practices, transportation, and disposal services in poor communities; (ii) build the capacity to plan and implement sustainable community-based solid waste management; and (iii) generate income and promote employment opportunities for waste pickers and poor households.

ADB has disbursed seed funds for several upcoming JFPR projects with significant NGO involvement. They are

Catalyzing Microfinance for the Poor (\$1.98 million) and Improving Livestock Farming Practices for Women of Ethnic Minorities (\$1 million).

### Technical Assistance projects

Project Title	Project Objective and NGO Involvement
<b>Consortium</b> /Life Skills Curriculum Development in Xieng Khouang (\$20,000) Approval: 27 May 2003	The project aimed to help the Education Department of Xieng Khouang Province raise the quality of teaching and learning by introducing a life skills curriculum for primary grade 5 students. It also expanded a recently developed Mulberry Silk curriculum for primary grades 4 and 5 to new schools. An INGO implemented the project.
Marketing Support for Organic Produce of Ethnic Minorities (\$600,000) Approval: 17 Sep 2004	The project aimed to generate alternative income-generating opportunities for ethnic minority farmers in rural villages by addressing their primary marketing constraints. The outputs included (i) establishment of production groups among ethnic minority villagers and development of the groups' trade linkages with fair trade markets; (ii) increased production of crops that have identified markets under contract-farming arrangements for ethnic minority farmers, and identification of alternative markets for agroforestry products through market studies, sample product development, organic farming promotion, and product certification; and (iii) evaluation of development impacts of the project activities.

<sup>a</sup> RETA 6109 is financed by NGO Partnerships for Poverty Reduction.

## ADB country strategy and program

A country strategy and program (CSP) was approved in September 2001 to guide ADB operations in the Lao PDR for the next 5 years. The core strategies for reducing poverty have been sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development, and good governance. The strategy focuses on five operational priorities: (i) rural development and market linkages, (ii) human resource development, (iii) sustainable environmental management, (iv) private sector development, and (v) regional integration. The Lao PDR participates actively in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) program, and the CSP explores various options for maximizing the benefits of subregional cooperation. ADB's interventions focus primarily on the poor northern provinces and along the East-West Corridor.

The July 2004 country strategy and program update reported no significant changes in the country's socioeconomic development and concluded that the CSP's strategic thrust and priority areas remained valid. The update noted the increased importance of the private sector in hydropower, mining, forestry, agriculture, and tourism. Border development and subregional integration have been increasingly emphasized in the country's development plans and processes. A new CSP for the Lao PDR will be prepared in 2005–2006. NGOs and mass organizations will be consulted on its development.

## NGO concerns about ADB initiatives

Recognizing NGOs as development partners, ADB documents and responds to the concerns of NGOs that materialized during the design and implementation of ADB-assisted projects and other initiatives. ADB's operations departments and the NGO Center collaborate to keep senior ADB staff, members of the Board of Directors, and representatives of Management informed of challenges faced by the institution's operations and to obtain feedback on how NGO concerns are being addressed.

For example, a Frankfurt-based environmental researcher supported by **Oxfam Mekong Initiative**, an NGO, alleged problems with respect to the Industrial Tree Plantation Project (Loan No. 1295, \$11.2 million). It was alleged that villagers were not meaningfully involved in the project's decisions, which caused them to lose their land and forest to eucalyptus plantations. In another case, certain aspects of the ongoing Nam Theun 2 Hydroelectricity Project, (\$20 million) also alarmed anti-dam NGOs, including **International Rivers Network**.

They expressed concerns about technical risks, including the possibility of cost and time overruns during construction, shortfalls in energy output, failure to achieve targets in the livelihood program for resettled persons, ineffective conservation management of the national protected area, inadequate compensation for lost fisheries, and sustainability issues.

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## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Lao Red Cross is funded through the operating budget of the Prime Minister's office
- <sup>2</sup> Recommendations for implementing the decree of the Prime Minister in connection with the administration of NGOs in the Lao PDR (Decree of the Prime Minister, n°71/PM of the 20/4/1998) are found in the Regulation of the NGOs 11/2000, Ministry of Foreign Affairs N°1865/AE.OI.3
- <sup>3</sup> www.adb.org/jfpr

## About the Asian Development Bank

The Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s work is aimed at improving the welfare of the people of the Asia and Pacific region, particularly for the 1.2 billion who live on less than \$2 a day. Despite the success stories, Asia and the Pacific remains home to two thirds of the world's poor.

ADB is a multilateral development finance institution owned by 63 members, 45 from the region and 18 from other parts of the globe. ADB's vision is a region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve their quality of life.

ADB's main instruments in providing help to its developing member countries are policy dialogues, loans, technical assistance, grants, guarantees, and equity investments. ADB's annual lending volume is typically about \$6 billion, with technical assistance provided usually totaling about \$180 million a year.

ADB's headquarters is in Manila. It has 26 offices around the world. The organization has more than 2,000 employees from over 50 countries.

## About the NGO and Civil Society Center

ADB's NGO and Civil Society Center (NGOC) serves as the focal point for ADB's interaction with civil society organizations (CSOs), including the broad range of nongovernment organizations, foundations, social movements, and trade unions. The NGOC is a part of the Gender, Social Development and Civil Society Division in ADB's Regional and Sustainable Development Department. Its key functions include empowering operations departments to work with NGOs/CSOs, serving as ADB's knowledge center and advisor on consultation and participation with NGOs/CSOs, managing implementation of ADB's Policy on Cooperation with NGOs, contributing to the capacity of ADB staff and NGOs/CSOs to work together, communicating on ADB's work with NGOs/CSOs, and supporting the exchange of knowledge and expertise between ADB and civil society. The NGOC also coordinates ADB's NGO and Civil Society Cooperation Network, which comprises designated staff from departments and offices across the institution.

This profile provides an overview of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) and of ADB-NGO/CSO cooperation in Nepal. It was originally prepared by staff at CARE International (Nepal) and was updated in July 2005 by Aziz Sunderji, ADB intern. Although primarily intended for use by ADB staff, the information contained in the profile will be of use to other development partners. For comments on this profile, e-mail [ngocoordinator@adb.org](mailto:ngocoordinator@adb.org).

ADB's use of the term "nongovernment organization" refers generically to organizations (i) not based in government and (ii) not created to earn profit. ADB is concerned primarily with developmental NGOs, which can be regarded as private organizations entirely or largely independent of government, not created for financial or material gain, and which address concerns, such as social and humanitarian issues of development; individual and community welfare and well-being, disadvantage, and poverty; as well as environmental and natural resource protection, management, and improvement. While ADB's interest is directed primarily toward organizations that do not exist to serve their members' self-interests, ADB also works with organizations, such as self-help, and people's and community-based organizations formed by or around disadvantaged persons, groups, and communities. Terms parallel to developmental NGO include voluntary organization, private voluntary organization, or private voluntary development organization; people's organization; community organization or community-based organization, community group or community association; grassroots organization; intermediary organization; and public interest group.