

## Background

This Guide has been developed in response to requests from ADB Management and Board Members to provide updated guidance on what constitutes “adequate consultation,” and how staff should use consultative and participatory techniques in ADB-assisted activities. It also responds to the recommendation of ADB’s Operations Evaluation Department to develop operational guidelines for participatory development.

## Credits

This Guide was drafted by Rolf Sartorius, President, Social Impact, under the direction of an interdepartmental working group led by Bart W. Édés, and including Sri Wening Handayani, Ruwani Jayewardene, Michael Lindfield, Manoshi Mitra, Stephen Pollard, Christopher Spohr, Dewi Utami, Paul Vallely, and Kenichi Yokoyama. In addition, Anne Sweetser provided valuable advice and information. The Guide further benefited from comments contributed by more than 100 ADB staff at headquarters and in resident missions through interviews, informal feedback, group consultations, and interdepartmental review of drafts.

# Foreword

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is giving greater attention than ever before to achieving measurable results. A consensus has grown around the need for ADB to adapt its operational processes and products to better respond to borrower needs, and to strengthen the implementation of the projects that it finances.

This also means that ADB has to more actively engage the intended beneficiaries of its services from the earliest stages of strategy and project formulation. ADB has over time become a much more open institution that regularly involves a range of stakeholders in decision making. Indeed, ADB-financed projects are often helpful in establishing participatory processes in the countries and sectors in which they are situated. Nevertheless, ADB's performance in the area of participation can be further improved.

Well-applied participation has been shown to have a positive impact on poverty reduction. It does this by bringing disadvantaged groups into decision-making, and by promoting their involvement in project formulation. Participation can assist them in developing the attitudes needed to improve their situation and give them hope.

Staff who have not had much experience with participation may be unsure of its worth and wary of its risks. Yet experience shows that using participatory methods makes good sense. It can increase the level of support for a project from a range of stakeholders, which can speed up processing and reduce challenges during implementation. An early investment of time, energy, and resources can provide important payoffs in terms of fewer implementation problems, greater ownership by communities and governments, and better overall results.

This Guide explains what is meant by "adequate consultation," a reasonable standard determined by identifying the groups that have a stake in a particular ADB-assisted activity, and then engaging them through a consultation and participation plan. The Guide is intended to help staff apply participatory methods through straightforward explanations, simple checklists, and practical guidance. References are provided for those who wish to learn more about the many tools available and lessons learned in the field.

The Guide complements other initiatives aimed at improving ADB's engagement of stakeholders and overall performance, including the Design and Monitoring Framework, Innovation and Efficiency Initiative, Managing for Development Results Action Plan, and Public Communications Policy. It is a welcome addition to an increasingly well-stocked toolbox that is helping ADB staff improve the quality of services to our Developing Member Countries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'G' followed by a cursive 'L' and a horizontal line underneath.

Geert van der Linden

Vice President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development

April 2006

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