

Open Forum on ADB-Government-NGO
2 May 2005, 2:00 pm
Topkapi B
Lutfi Kırdar Istanbul Convention and Exhibition Center
Istanbul, Turkey

Bart Édés, Head NGO Center (NGOC) explained that ADB has been working with NGOs in various ways for the past decades, citing the fact that the first NGO Coordinator was appointed in mid-1980s. The current, Board approved ADB policy for cooperation with NGOs came into effect in 1998. Today, two-thirds of ADB's approved loans involve NGOs in some way.

The Framework for ADB-Government-NGO Cooperation (Framework) was approved in 2003 through a participatory process involving hundreds of representatives of governments, the private sector, ADB staff, and civil society organization. Mr. Édés pointed out that the Framework is a road map for ADB's cooperation with NGOs, and complements ADB's medium-term strategy (2001-2005) which states that ADB will work "[to develop] methods that allow NGOs to implement a wider range of ADB projects and programs, particularly targeted poverty interventions". Cooperation with NGO's is also part of the Long-Term Strategic Framework (2001-2015), which indicates that ADB will "expand its partnership agenda by developing ways of working closely with NGOs, civil society, and the private sector".

Mr. Édés described the five recommendations proposed by the Framework:

- Strengthen NGO participation in ADB-supported activities,
- Enhance transparency and access to information,
- Develop ADB capacity to engage NGOs,
- Build NGO capacity and provide support,
- Strengthen government-NGO cooperation.

The following summarizes the learning points gained from implementing the Framework:

- The Framework proposes an ambitious agenda
- ADB cannot fully apply all the Framework recommendations in all countries
- Awareness of Framework is limited
- There are some distinct accomplishments, but little progress in other areas
- The Framework is being implemented in a resource-constrained environment.

Mr. Édés noted the usefulness of the Framework as it gives sense of direction and provides leverage in promoting ADB cooperation with NGOs. It also serves as reference tool for civil society organizations, and offers an example to other inter-governmental agencies. However, Mr. Édés pointed out that the Framework has not really influenced minds, is heavy and bureaucratic, and tends to state what is already being done.

The NGOC is planning to develop a new medium term Action Plan for ADB-NGO cooperation in 2006. ADB is currently examining the Framework's implementation and soliciting feedback to assess performance. Mr. Édés sought suggestions from NGO representatives to help shape the plan. A survey form was circulated to solicit views and input to the new Action Plan.

During the open forum, NGO representatives raised the following questions:

- On **how NGOs get involve in ADB projects**, Mr. Édes pointed out that NGOs commonly participate in technical assistance, as well as preparatory technical assistance projects, particularly in the preparation of social and environmental impacts studies, survey of public opinion, and other community-based approaches. In Bangladesh, NGOs are directly involved in providing health care under a major loan project. Under this project, NGOs are key implementers in several cities involving poor women groups. Mr. Édes made mention of ADB's collaborative efforts with the World Wide Fund and the IUCN that are reinforced by memorandums of understanding signed with the respective organizations.
- Regarding the concern on why **indigenous people groups in the Philippines** are not included in certain consultation activities, Head NGOC explained that with the policy on indigenous people, ADB tries to be sensitive to the welfare of indigenous people groups. He noted that consultation activities are organized on a case to case basis, depending on the local conditions. The Philippine Country Office directly deals with NGOs working with indigenous people in the Philippines.
- On **priority to be given to NGOs from developing member countries (DMCs)** an issue raised during the dialogue with the ADB President, Mr. Édes cited the fact that the NGOC has been working closely with the NGO Forum on ADB in organizing the NGO program for the Annual Meeting and pointed out that most NGOs participating in the Annual Meeting were from developing countries. The NGOC has been consulting with NGOs on topics and issues of importance that should be part of the NGO program in the Annual Meeting. He further gave assurance that NGOs from the DMCs will be provided ample opportunity to interact meaningfully with the ADB President.
- On the **tripartite relationship**, a suggestion was made to include the business community in the linkage. For the new Action Plan, it was proposed that relationships between government, business community, and civil society be improved, with the ADB acting as a facilitator or catalyst for change. Mr. Édes explained that ADB supports initiatives that strengthen NGO-private sector partnership for poverty reduction. He cited ADB's support to the recent creation of the new Network for NGO-Private Sector Partnerships for Sustainable Development, supported by a Bangkok-based Secretariat.
- Regarding the **large number of NGOs and how ADB determines who to work with**, Mr. Édes noted that this is a perennial challenge in the field of development. The situation is varies from country to country but ADB looks at the nature of operations as well as the linkages that exist in a particular area when considering what NGOs to engage. Mr. Edes mentioned that ADB has a database of main NGO contacts.
- Regarding **ADB initiatives with NGOs in China**, Mr. Edes said that the NGO community in China has evolved considerably in recent years, even though NGOs still must be formally linked with to government ministries. There is also an increasing presence of international NGOs in China, but there has not been that many ADB partnership with Chinese NGOs. Cooperation with NGOs in China is usually through policy consultation and regular dialogue. However, ADB looks forward to many possibilities for ADB to work with Chinese NGOs in the years to come.