

## OPERATIONS MANUAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

---

These policies were prepared for use by ADB staff and are not necessarily a complete treatment of the subject. This *Operations Manual* is issued by the Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Department with the approval of the President and is subject to compliance review. Questions may be directed to the chief technical officer, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department.

### PROMOTION OF ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

#### A. Introduction

1. This *Operations Manual* (OM) section describes Asian Development Bank (ADB) policies associated with its engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs).<sup>1</sup> ADB's engagement with CSOs is consistent with the bank's role and functions as set out in Article 2(i) and (v) of the Agreement Establishing the Asian Development Bank (the Charter) (endnote i).

#### B. Definitions and Typologies

2. The term "civil society organization" refers generically to organizations (i) not based in government, and (ii) not created to earn profit (endnote ii). ADB defines CSOs as non-profit organizations independent from the government, which operate around common interests. They vary in size, interests, and function, and include nongovernment organizations (NGOs), youth groups, community-based organizations, independent academic and research institutes, professional associations, foundations, faith-based organizations, people's organizations, and labor unions. CSOs represent interests of their members or others.

3. ADB categorizes four main approaches to CSO participation: (i) information generation and sharing, (ii) consultation, (iii) collaboration, and (iv) partnership. These approaches cover a continuum of relationships between decision makers and stakeholders. The level of each party's initiative and activity differs considerably, and each approach can be explored at varying depths.<sup>2</sup>

#### C. The Policy

4. ADB's long-term corporate strategy, Strategy 2030, outlines ADB's vision for a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific. Under Strategy 2030, ADB has committed to strengthening its engagement with CSOs (endnote iii).

5. ADB pursues an expanded program of engagement with CSOs, where appropriate, in its member countries, in consultation with the government, with a view to strengthen the

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1998, ADB approved its policy on cooperation with NGOs, which remains in effect. Since the policy was adopted, the use of the term "nongovernment organization" has evolved considerably. Like ADB, most development partners now use the term "civil society organization," because it is considered more inclusive. In 2005, ADB renamed the NGO Center the NGO and Civil Society Center. As such, the 2021 version of this OM Section E4 replaces NGO with CSO throughout.

<sup>2</sup> ADB. 2012. *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: An Asian Development Bank Guide to Participation*. Manila. p.3.

## OPERATIONS MANUAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

---

effectiveness, sustainability, and quality of the development services ADB provides. The objective of ADB's engagement with CSOs, where appropriate, is to tap the unique strengths of CSOs, such as their local presence and specialized knowledge, in order to explore opportunities for increasing their involvement in ADB operations and to seek their inputs and advice on major ADB policies.<sup>3</sup> ADB explores this engagement such that the development efforts ADB supports will more effectively address the issues and priorities reflected in ADB's development agenda (endnotes ii and iii).

### D. Scope of the Policy

6. ADB seeks proactive, meaningful, and productive engagement with CSOs to explore opportunities for increasing their involvement in the design and implementation of ADB operations, where appropriate. Engagement with CSOs is a dynamic process that encourages constructive relationships involving ADB, governments, private sector clients and CSOs. The fundamental relationship between ADB and a government, as well as the sovereignty of governments, continues to be recognized. The ability of ADB to work with governments and execute its development mandate remains a priority (endnote ii).

7. Within the broad objective of expanding engagement with CSOs, ADB recognizes the diversity among such organizations. CSOs display significant differences from country to country, reflecting country-specific factors that affect the structure and composition of CSOs and their roles in national development. Because of the diversity of CSOs, it would not be appropriate for ADB to use a single approach to cooperate with civil society. Therefore, ADB approaches engagement with CSOs flexibly, through a range of relationships appropriate to different contexts, rather than through a single relationship, mechanism, or model (endnote ii).

---

### Basis:

- <sup>i</sup> ADB. 1966. *Agreement Establishing the Asian Development Bank* (Articles 2[i] and 2[v]). Manila.
- <sup>ii</sup> ADB. 1998. *Cooperation between the Asian Development Bank and Nongovernment Organizations*. Manila. (R54-98). 27 March; ADB. 1998. Corrigendum 1, *Cooperation between the Asian Development Bank and Nongovernment Organizations*. Manila. (R54-98). 6 April.
- <sup>iii</sup> ADB. 2018. *Strategy 2030: Achieving a Prosperous, Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Asia and the Pacific*. Manila. (R69-18). (para. 108).

---

<sup>3</sup> ADB seeks the participation of its shareholders and other interested stakeholders during the development and review of safeguard, sector, and thematic policies and strategies; and other policies or strategies that will undergo public consultation.