Twenty years ago, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) created the NGO and Civil Society Center as its focal point for partnering with civil society organizations (CSOs) to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of its operations. This publication reflects on lessons from these 2 decades of collaboration. It outlines the evolving relationship between ADB and CSOs as they have worked together across Asia and the Pacific on both operations and policy reviews, and notes accomplishments of 2021. It highlights the potential for ADB and CSOs to increase their collaboration to support the region’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and address the threats of climate change.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.
HIGHLIGHTS OF ADB’S COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS 2021

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE NGO AND CIVIL SOCIETY CENTER

SEPTEMBER 2022
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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that we celebrate 20 years since the founding of ADB’s NGO and Civil Society Center.

Asia and the Pacific is the most dynamic region in the world, and such economic vibrance reflects the rich social and communal fabric that weaves itself into the civic space. Looking back upon our shared history, it can be said that ADB’s collaboration with civil society has existed since the organization’s founding in 1966, as it has always been the people and communities within societies whom we ultimately serve.

ADB first codified this relationship through the 1987 policy paper on “The Bank’s Cooperation with Non-Government Organizations,” which established a broad framework of cooperation between ADB and nongovernment organizations (NGOs). The 1987 policy was updated in 1998 to reflect the increasing role of NGOs within ADB operations, and the founding of the NGO and Civil Society Center in 2001 brought forth a new era of cooperation centered around both advocacy and the important role of NGOs within ADB operations.

Today, the NGO and Civil Society Center serves as a source of high-quality technical expertise on civil society engagement within ADB and a first point-of-contact for the civil society organizations (CSOs) with whom we partner. As we celebrate 20 years of collaboration, we also look forward to the center’s future work in continuing to support dynamic and successful partnership with civil society. ADB is proud to lead the way among the multilateral development banks by comprehensively reporting on CSO engagement through our new indicator on “meaningful civil society engagement.” Such reporting is essential for transparency, accountability, learning, and development effectiveness, and to ensure that we are delivering the results we have promised.

Looking back at our history and looking forward into the future, it is striking to note how our definition of civil society has grown from NGOs to a broader understanding of the civic space. Such a shift in perspective mirrors the evolution of our relationship from the seeds of institutional advocacy to the flowering of collaboration and partnership between ADB and the communities that we serve. It also recognizes the importance of CSOs’ roles in local and community-driven development.

As we move forward into a bright and dynamic future, our Strategy 2030 recognizes the need for strengthened collaboration with civil society. At its core, this engagement relies on grassroots approaches to target the poor and vulnerable, mobilize women and young people, and support communities as they invest in their shared future. ADB will remain a steadfast partner in this process, inspired by those whom we serve.

Woochong Um
Managing Director General and Officer in Charge, Office of the Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development
Asian Development Bank
## Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>CAREC</td>
<td>Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>community-based organization</td>
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<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>coronavirus disease</td>
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<td>CRPP</td>
<td>Community Resilience Partnership Program</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organization</td>
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<td>DEAP</td>
<td>Disaster and Emergency Assistance Policy</td>
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<td>DMC</td>
<td>developing member country</td>
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<td>FRA</td>
<td>fragility and resilience assessment</td>
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<td>GAP</td>
<td>gender action plan</td>
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<td>MYE</td>
<td>meaningful youth engagement</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernment organization</td>
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<td>NGOC</td>
<td>NGO and Civil Society Center</td>
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<td>OP</td>
<td>operational priority</td>
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<td>PCP</td>
<td>Public Communications Policy</td>
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<td>PCR</td>
<td>project completion report</td>
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<td>PWDs</td>
<td>persons with disabilities</td>
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<td>SARD</td>
<td>South Asia Department</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>SPS</td>
<td>Safeguard Policy Statement</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>technical assistance</td>
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<td>WWF</td>
<td>World Wide Fund for Nature</td>
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<td>YfA</td>
<td>Youth for Asia</td>
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Introduction

In February 2001, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) founded the NGO and Civil Society Center (NGOC) as its authoritative focal point for communication and interaction with nongovernment organizations (NGOs). The creation of NGOC took place 3 years after the 1998 Policy on Cooperation with nongovernment organizations (NGOs)1 based on the recommendations of a high-level task force appointed by ADB President Tadao Chino. It signaled the institutionalization of NGO cooperation as an ADB-wide concern. Two decades after its creation, ADB’s engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs), including NGOs, continues to evolve. This celebratory NGOC annual report reflects upon ADB’s engagement with civil society in the past 2 decades while highlighting NGOC’s achievements in 2021.

ADB’s Strategy 2030 continues to set the course for ADB to address the region’s changing needs by “sustaining efforts to eliminate extreme poverty and expand its vision to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific.”2 ADB’s long-term strategy emphasizes strengthening collaboration with CSOs by tapping their specialized knowledge, local presence, and unique strengths. Opportunities for increasing CSO involvement in the design and implementation of projects will continue to be explored. ADB’s commitment to intensify partnerships with stakeholders and engagement with civil society is highlighted in Operational Priority 1 (Addressing Remaining Poverty and Reducing Inequalities) and Operational Priority 6 of Strategy 2030 (Strengthening Governance and Institutional Capacity).

ADB remained focused on its key long-term development agenda, even as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic disrupted lives and economies across the region. ADB continued to engage civil society throughout 2021 on the review of key institutional policies, which

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On 20 October 2021, ADB approved the updated Energy Policy, which highlights supporting resilient energy systems for all toward a “low-carbon transition in Asia and the Pacific.”

Civil society organizations are ADB’s valuable partners. They help us craft relevant strategies and policies, design projects that respond to communities’ needs, and deliver on intended project outcomes. With their intimate knowledge of context on the ground, CSOs help ensure that ADB operations are transparent, inclusive, and effective.

Masatsugu Asakawa
ADB President

Valuable partners. With their knowledge of context on the ground, CSOs help ensure that ADB operations are transparent, inclusive, and effective (photo by ADB).

Included the Energy Policy, the Disaster and Emergency Assistance Policy (DEAP), and the Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS). ADB approved the Revised DEAP on 5 October 2021, with the NGOC providing support to ADB’s disaster risk management team in facilitating consultations with CSOs. On 20 October 2021, ADB approved the updated Energy Policy, which highlights supporting resilient energy systems for all toward a “low-carbon transition in Asia and the Pacific.” The NGOC actively supported the Safeguard Policy Review by helping in the design of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and engaging with CSOs throughout the ongoing consultation process.

In recent years, ADB has aimed to increase the use of participatory approaches involving grassroots organizations representing women, young people, and other poor and vulnerable sectors of society. ADB has sought to better engage communities to invest in their futures as aligned with Strategy 2030 (footnote 2). As the world continues to cope with the new normal due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of CSOs in helping address public health, social, and economic crises is more evident than ever. At the onset of the pandemic in 2020, CSOs took action by focusing on underdeveloped areas that were often difficult to reach for government services.

Recognizing the impact of the pandemic in exacerbating the preexisting vulnerabilities of the poor and disadvantaged, ADB implemented the technical assistance (TA) project Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 through Community-Led Interventions through the NGOC. The project initiated an innovative model that included a call for proposals to directly support local, community-based organizations in scaling up or expanding their ongoing health-focused interventions. Over 300 CSOs joined the information session on the call for proposals and 100 submitted their project concepts, demonstrating the considerable engagement of the CSO community in easing the impact of the pandemic for the most vulnerable communities in Asia and the Pacific. Ten outstanding proposals were selected, and implementation for nine of the initiatives was well underway in 2021. While it is too early to measure results, ADB and the international community will continue to monitor the success of the program and look for opportunities to employ this model in the future.

In 2021, ADB launched the reporting on a critical new indicator approved in 2020 to measure the delivery of meaningful civil society engagement as part of ADB’s corporate results framework. The first of its kind across multilateral development banks, the new indicator examines planned civil society engagement when projects are first designed and analyzes whether this engagement is delivered upon completion. Out of 103 sovereign projects completed in 2021, 51 (50%) were found to have planned meaningful civil society engagement in their project documents and 39 (76%) of these delivered on their plans. The indicator will provide critical insights into where CSO engagement is working well across ADB’s operations and the data necessary to develop a plan for enhancing CSO engagement in line with Strategy 2030.

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Aligned with its core civil society engagement mandate, the NGOC continued to recognize the importance of young people throughout the community engagement process and their potential to contribute to inclusive growth in the region. ADB’s Youth for Asia (YfA) initiative undertook qualitative research on the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable youth in Indonesia and Nepal, and expanded its knowledge work in the fields of meaningful youth engagement (MYE). ADB also actively collaborated with key NGOs, youth-led organizations, and community youth in promoting MYE in ADB operations through the YfA initiative.

This publication reflects on lessons from the NGOC’s 20 years of experience as ADB’s authoritative focal point in engaging with a wide range of civil society actors in Asia and the Pacific. It narrates the evolving relationship between ADB and CSOs, both in its operations and in policy reviews, while highlighting the accomplishments in 2021. This report also presents the potential for increasing meaningful collaboration with CSOs as the region slowly rebuilds and recovers from the pandemic.
Definitions of civil society have evolved over the years. In general, community-based organizations, workers’ or labor unions, professional associations, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) have elevated their presence in society. Due to the diversity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the uniqueness of experiences across countries, coming up with a common definition of civil society is not an easy task.

ADB’s 1998 Policy on Cooperation with NGOs presented a broad definition of NGOs as organizations (i) not based in government, and (ii) not created to earn profit. The policy defines developmental NGOs as private organizations entirely or largely independent of government, not created for financial or material gain, and addressing concerns such as social and humanitarian issues of development, individual and community welfare and well-being, the disadvantaged, and poverty, as well as environmental and natural resources protection, management, and improvement.

Through the years, ADB has used “CSO” and “NGO” interchangeably. Published in 2012, ADB’s Strengthening Participation for Development Results: An Asian Development Bank Guide to Participation, describes civil society as “distinct from government and the private sector and consists of diverse individuals, groups, and nonprofit organizations. These operate around shared interests, purposes, and values with varying degrees of formality. They range from informal unorganized community groups to large international labor unions.” The guide explained that particularly relevant to ADB are NGOs, community-based organizations and people’s organizations, foundations, professional associations, research institutes and universities, labor unions, mass organizations, social movements, coalitions and networks of CSOs, and umbrella organizations.

Globally, the most common definition of civil society was developed in 2011 by CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organizations and activists. It defined civil society “as the arena outside the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organizations, and institutions to advance shared interests.” While this definition is widely accepted, it is important that the definition of civil society represents its evolution and growing diversity.

In 2013, the World Economic Forum (WEF) recognized civil society as encompassing far more than a mere sector dominated by the NGO community: “Civil society today includes an ever wider and more vibrant range of organized and unorganized groups, as new civil society actors blur the boundaries between sectors and experiment with new organizational forms, both online and offline.” The WEF highlighted how information and communication technologies have opened up spaces for action, with the significant growth in online civil society activity. In light of the evolution of civil society, the WEF argued it should no longer be viewed as the third sector but as the glue that binds public and private activity together in strengthening the common good.

ADB approved in 2021 the operations manual on Promotion of Engagement with Civil Society Organizations, which defined CSOs as organizations (i) not based in government, and (ii) not created to earn profit. ADB now defines CSOs as “as nonprofit organizations independent from the government, which operate around common interests. They vary in size, interests, and function, and include 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 nonmembers.” The operations manual also notes that CSOs represent the interests of their members or others.

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STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATION FOR DEVELOPMENT RESULTS
An Asian Development Bank Guide to Participation

Asian Development Bank

Defining civil society. CSOs may be simply defined as nonprofit organizations independent from the government, which operate around common interests.
Reflections on over 50 Years of CSO Engagement

Since its creation, ADB has constantly evolved by adapting to new challenges and opportunities in the development of Asia and the Pacific. Signed in December 1965, the ADB Charter underscores the importance of cooperating with public international organizations and institutions, as well as national entities, which are concerned with the investment of development funds in the region. These institutions may be public or private.

1980s: Creating a Policy Paper for Cooperation with Nongovernment Organizations

In the 1980s, ADB established itself as a broad-based development institution, which focused its support on agriculture and energy, as well as projects that benefited disadvantaged groups.8 Given the challenges of poverty during this period, ADB decided to address poverty more effectively and began to engage NGOs through mostly informal arrangements to support this pursuit (footnote 1).


Smallholder Development Project in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. Phan Khouthan, whose wife Leum Sengsavang and seven children live in a house overlooking several hectares of cabbage fields. As for others in the region, irrigation and a second hand tractor have increased yields dramatically. Pak Xong village once produced only about 200 tons of cabbages per year. The average is now roughly 2500 tons, according to the village headperson. Since 2006, farmers have increasingly grown niche products that fetch desirable prices, such as organic cabbages shipped to Thailand (photo by ADB).
While there were no modalities or frameworks for ADB and NGOs to work together at the time, NGOs provided information and background to ADB during project preparation. As NGO cooperation began to expand in the late 1980s, the necessity of a policy framework for ADB–NGO cooperation became apparent. The policy paper, the Bank’s Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations, was approved in 1987 to promote cooperation with NGOs and enhance the effectiveness of ADB operations. The paper recognized the special capabilities and expertise of NGOs as partners in addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups in developing member countries (DMCs) and supporting improved natural resource management and conservation. ADB tapped into NGOs’ knowledge of local conditions in identifying, preparing, monitoring, and evaluating projects. Opportunities for NGO cooperation were in the areas of environmental protection, agriculture development, fisheries, urban development and housing, and water and sanitation, among others. During this period, the role of NGOs centered on providing information on local conditions and implementing specific components of projects. With their grassroots presence and expertise in participatory approaches, which directly address the needs of the poor and marginalized, NGOs were viewed as possessing comparative advantages in the delivery of development services.

**Early 1990s: Cooperation in Rural Development and Poverty Reduction**

Beginning in the early 1990s, ADB projects on poverty reduction, rural development, social infrastructure, and environmental protection sought to “put people first” (footnote 6). The approach necessitated in-depth assessment of people’s needs, demands, and active participation in the project cycle. To this end, ADB found it beneficial to involve NGOs in all stages of the project cycle, a form of cooperation that grew over the decade.

In 1988, ADB’s first direct support for NGOs was through the NGO Microcredit Project and the Sorsogon Integrated Area Development Project in the Philippines. These projects helped address rural poverty by providing extremely small credits channeled through NGOs. The project contributed to poverty alleviation focused on job creation, with women targeted as major beneficiaries.

As NGOs became involved in the identification, design, implementation, and evaluation of projects, a range of modalities for cooperation between ADB and NGOs started to evolve.

At the country level, ADB increasingly consulted with NGOs to gain a broader view

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of local circumstances in the development of
country-specific programs and approaches.
Consultations with NGOs became an important
factor in the development of operational and
sectoral policies.

Late 1990s: Adopting a New
Policy on Cooperation with
Nongovernment Organizations
to Strengthen Operations

The latter part of the decade was a dark period
for the region due to the Asian Financial Crisis
of 1997 that gripped much of East Asia and
Southeast Asia. ADB’s response shifted toward
providing more aid for the poor and creating
social safety nets for those hit hardest by the
crisis. During this period, advocacy NGOs
and activist networks, which are critical of
mainstream international development agenda,
became active.11

A review of the 1987 policy paper was
done in 1997 in response to the changing
circumstances of ADB, the NGO sector, and
the region’s developmental environment.
The review was undertaken in consultation
with the international NGO community. The
draft working paper for the revised policy was
circulated to more than 300 NGOs for review
and comments.12 During the year, NGOs were
also consulted in the development of new
policies for gender and development, indigenous
peoples, fisheries, and water.

In April 1998, ADB adopted a new policy,
Cooperation between Asian Development Bank
and Nongovernment Organizations, which
emphasized the need for an expanded program
for cooperation with developmental NGOs.13 The
new policy identified the following areas for NGO
cooperaion, which were not explicitly envisaged
in the 1987 policy: loan and TA activities, activities
involving programming and country-level work,
and policy development work.

The policy recognized the diversity of NGOs
and referred to developmental NGOs as those
relevant to ADB’s operations. The policy
describes developmental NGOs as private
organizations entirely or largely independent
of government, not created for financial
or material gain, and addressing concerns
related to social and humanitarian issues,
individual and community welfare and
well-being, the disadvantaged, and poverty, as
well as environmental and natural resources
protection, management, and improvement.
The definition of developmental NGOs covered
various types and levels of organization from the
local, national, regional, and international levels
(footnote 13).

Through the 1998 policy, ADB expanded its
cooperation program with NGOs to strengthen
the effectiveness, sustainability, and quality
of its development services (footnote 13).
ADB’s recognition of the diversity of NGOs
necessitated different kinds of engagement.
The 1998 policy further emphasized the need
for ADB to explore and develop mechanisms
that support various approaches for relating
with NGOs.

ADB renewed its dedication to poverty
reduction as its overarching goal through the
Poverty Reduction Policy approved in 1999.14
The three pillars of this long-term poverty
reduction strategy were (i) pro-poor, sustainable
economic growth; (ii) social development; and
(iii) good governance. These three pillars were
relevant to the programs and projects of many
NGOs. It was widely recognized that apart from
the government, civil society groups have played
important roles in addressing poverty, in view of
their experience and proximity to the poor and
vulnerable (footnote 14).

The 1999 ADB Annual Meeting saw a significant increase in NGO participation. Held at the ADB headquarters, an open forum on the cooperation between ADB and NGOs was organized. Lasting half a day, the open forum adopted a format and structure that would support the widest range of discussion of topics of mutual interest and was an important opportunity for dialogue and exchange between ADB and NGOs. ADB staff, NGO representatives, and other interested Annual Meeting attendees participated in the open forum.

Early 2000s: Creation of the NGO and Civil Society Center

In 2000, ADB partnered with the Government of Japan to establish the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction. This was created to provide project grants supporting innovations on poverty reduction and social development in poor communities, which add substantive value to ADB-financed projects. One of the key components of this grant facility was support for CSO participation in the implementation of ADB projects on poverty reduction and social development.

Around this time, ADB President Tadao Chino convened a high-level committee that recommended several actions to promote a more effective ADB–NGO cooperation. As a result, ADB approved the Task Force Report on Institutional Arrangements for Cooperation with NGOs in 2001 (footnote 1). The report benefited from feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including NGOs, on elements of cooperation arrangements that needed improvement. Among the task force’s recommendations were the following:

- Make NGO cooperation an ADB-wide concern.
- Develop an ADB-wide Cooperation Action Plan.
- Enhance internal ADB capacity for NGO cooperation.
- Allocate adequate staff, training, and resources.
- Institutionalize the NGO consultation and dialogue process.

Through the task force, the NGOC was formed as the authoritative focal point for institutional ADB interaction and communication with NGOs. It began operations in February 2001 by providing knowledge and expertise to ADB operations departments on matters related to NGO engagement. The NGOC was also tasked to organize training programs to enhance staff capacity to work with NGOs.

To complement the NGOC, an ADB-wide network of NGO Anchors was established with staff members from operations departments and resident mission offices. The network was expected to be involved in NGO-related concerns as focal persons in operations divisions, ensure consistency and synergy in

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16 On 1 September 2021, the ADB Board approved the enhanced and renamed Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific to be operationalized on 1 January 2022.
NGO cooperation initiatives across ADB, and promote knowledge exchange on best practices throughout ADB on effective NGO engagement.

During the 34th ADB Annual Meeting held in Honolulu, Hawaii on 9–11 May 2001, ADB President Tadao Chino met with the NGOs at a time and place that was decided by civil society. During and after the annual meeting, there were several structured dialogues between ADB and NGOs, which was a step forward in collaboration.

Through the NGOC, ADB formalized a partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) through a memorandum of understanding signed on 26 September 2001. The partnership intended to build on each organization’s strengths and their shared vision of poverty reduction and environmentally sustainable development. The partnership continues to this day, with WWF providing substantive input to major policy discussions and the implementation of ADB projects focusing on environmental protection and climate change.

The ensuing years saw the growth of cooperative activities between ADB and NGOs. At this time, NGOs who collaborated with ADB were mostly local and community-based groups that helped identify specific needs of poor communities. NGOs also facilitated greater participation of intended project beneficiaries. At the policy level, NGOs took part in consultations as ADB formulated its environment and water policies, as well as in the review of the Inspection Function, which provides a forum in which project-affected people could appeal to an independent body for matters relating to ADB’s compliance with its operational policies and procedures.

In May 2003, NGOC organized a series of participatory consultations involving representatives of the public sector, private sector, and NGOs, which culminated in the adoption of the ADB–Government–NGO Cooperation. The document served as a medium-term road map for increasing tripartite

*Environmental allies.* The ADB–WWF partnership builds on a shared vision of poverty reduction and environmentally sustainable development (photos by James Morgan, WWF; Antonio Busiello, WWF–US; and Green Renaissance, WWF–UK).

*Growing together.* Cooperation between ADB and CSOs continued to expand in the ensuing years. Active participation of local and community-based groups was significant during the period (photo by ADB).

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collaboration among ADB, governments, and NGOs in poverty reduction efforts. It recommended specific actions to intensify NGO participation in ADB activities, increase transparency and interaction, improve ADB capacity for NGO cooperation, and build NGO capacity for engagement, among others.

The framework for action was prepared using highly participatory approaches involving key stakeholders over 6 months. The formulation of the road map involved 14 participatory workshops held across the region. More than 500 representatives from the NGO community, governments, private sector, and ADB collaborated to identify issues and recommend specific actions for improved ADB–Government–NGO cooperation. At the end of this process, a select subgroup among the stakeholders convened in Manila to prepare the first draft of the framework during an intensive one-week workshop.

One immediate success of the framework was the creation of a pilot NGO small grants window through the NGO Partnerships for Poverty Reduction, a TA administered by the NGOC that supported NGOs to design and implement innovative projects in several DMCs.20 It was a landmark development in ADB cooperation with civil society, as it allowed for greater flexibility and additional resources to fund innovative NGO activities that complemented ADB’s poverty reduction efforts.

ADB adopted a new Accountability Mechanism in May 2003 that replaced the 1995 Inspection Function. Through this mechanism, people who were adversely affected by ADB-financed projects are provided a venue to express their grievances, seek solutions, and report alleged violations of ADB’s operational policies and procedures.21 NGOs began to actively engage ADB on behalf of people adversely affected by ADB-assisted projects. NGOs began to seek solutions and report alleged violations. The NGOC helped raise awareness about the

Accountability Mechanism among key CSOs across Asia and the Pacific.

Until this point, ADB used “NGOs” and “CSOs” interchangeably. In 2004, ADB adopted “civil society organizations” as the more appropriate and encompassing term. CSOs were described as organized civil society members that shared and acted upon collective goals, which were not for profit and were independent from the government. NGOs were defined as a subset of CSOs, and the NGO Center was renamed the NGO and Civil Society Center (NGOC).

From 2003 to 2005, hundreds of NGOs’ representatives took part in consultations on ADB policies and strategies, including anticorruption, governance, public communications, and water. The new Public Communications Policy (PCP) signaled an important and ambitious shift toward supporting the right of people to seek, receive, Right to information. ADB’s public communications policy, established in 2005 and later updated, supports the right of people to seek information on ADB’s activities.

and impart information and ideas about ADB’s activities. Making ADB documents publicly available opened significant opportunities for CSOs to engage with ADB on project and policy concerns. The NGOC led the way in the disclosure of ADB documents to CSOs. In 2005, the NGOC also launched a publications series that continues today, the Civil Society Country Briefs, which provide an overview of the civil society landscape in a country. To date, there are more than 30 civil society country briefs, some of which have been translated to different languages.

In the same year, the NGOC conducted a series of training programs about effective cooperation with NGOs, which were designed as an opportunity for key ADB operational staff to learn about the benefits and challenges of working with CSOs; acquire knowledge and skills in engaging CSOs in consultative and participatory processes; and apply appropriate criteria for successful collaboration with CSOs in project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Late 2000s: Participation of Civil Society Organizations in ADB’s Long-Term Strategic Framework

The year 2008 marked a significant year for ADB as an institution and the NGOC as a unit. ADB approved Strategy 2020, its new long-term strategic framework for 2008–2020, which recognized that partnerships with NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and foundations were becoming more central to planning, financing, and implementing ADB operations.22 In the same year, the NGOC published the CSO Sourcebook: A Staff Guide to Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations, which provides practical tips and guidance on how to maximize the benefits of cooperation with CSOs in various operational contexts.23

CSO representatives all over Asia and the Pacific made a particularly active contribution to ADB’s Safeguard Policy Update.24 The 2009 Safeguard Policy Statement (SPS)—structured around three pillars of Involuntary Resettlement (1995), Indigenous Peoples (1998), and Environment (2002)—emphasized meaningful consultation and stakeholder engagement with affected people and concerned NGOs early in the project preparation process. Since the approval of the policy, the NGOC has helped to facilitate dialogue with CSOs on important safeguard issues in ADB operations.

Early 2010s: Institutional Strengthening for Effective Participation of Civil Society Organizations

ADB revised the PCP in 2011, then conducted in 2013 a midterm review of its Strategy 2020.25 The policy reviews involved extensive consultations with key stakeholders, which include governments, the private sector, international development partners, and CSOs.

In 2012, the NGOC updated one of its flagship publications, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results*. The PCP aimed to enhance stakeholders’ trust in and ability to engage with ADB while continuing to uphold the principle of presumption in favor of disclosure. On the other hand, the midterm review of Strategy 2020, which was completed in 2014, revalidated and reinforced the need to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, such as CSOs, to leverage additional resources and share knowledge and expertise. Some areas where CSOs can play important roles were in mobilizing local support, advocating for community concerns, and supporting local communities. Strategy 2020 further recognized that it was important for ADB to effectively combine finance with innovative approaches to development, which entails strategic engagement with development partners, including CSOs.

In 2012, the NGOC updated one of its flagship publications, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results*. It introduced a framework that defined the spectrum of participation and identified four approaches: information sharing and generation, consultation, collaboration, and partnership. It also presented three levels of the depth of participation: low, medium, and high. That framework remains in place in 2022 and is the basis for defining meaningful CSO participation, which in turn is the anchor of ADB’s new indicator for measuring CSO engagement in ADB-financed operations.

Late 2010s: Civil Society Cooperation for Sustainable Development

In early 2016, the NGOC reviewed the state of ADB’s cooperation with CSOs in view of regional and global trends, and the emerging roles of civil society in poverty reduction and sustainable development. The new development paradigm—anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Addis Ababa Agenda for Action on Finance for Development, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change during the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties—underscores the evolving role of civil society in development. It was recognized that development challenges can be addressed only through collaboration by government, private sector, and civil society, together with official development assistance providers. In 2017, ADB approved a cluster TA for Deepening Civil Society Engagement for Development Effectiveness. Administered by the NGOC, the project focused on ensuring more inclusive delivery of development services, which can be achieved through improved CSO engagement in select DMCs.

In 2018, ADB approved its new long-term strategy, Strategy 2030, which aims to sustain ADB’s efforts to eradicate extreme poverty while expanding its vision to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific. Strategy 2030 sets priorities for supporting ADB DMCs, which are aligned with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (footnote 2). During the formulation of Strategy 2030, ADB conducted extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders.

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In May 2018, more than 130 CSO representatives gathered to discuss the draft strategy during the annual meeting held in the ADB headquarters in Manila. Participants expressed optimism about Strategy 2030’s focus on addressing climate change and adopting flexible country-specific strategies. Strategy 2030 emphasizes the importance of increasing CSO involvement in the design and implementation of projects and in the review of major policies. Under Strategy 2030, Operational Priority 1 (Addressing Remaining Poverty and Reducing Inequalities) addresses the need to focus on vulnerable populations, and Operational Priority 6 (Strengthening Governance and Institutional Capacity) incorporates a commitment to enhancing citizen engagement in ADB operations to improve the quality and relevance of public services in DMCs.

2020s: Partnering with Civil Society Organizations in Pandemic Response

In 2020, the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of social distancing measures required a locally led response. ADB recognized that through their huge network of community groups and understanding of local needs and conditions, CSOs were well placed to respond promptly to the needs of communities. During this period, the services of many existing community social welfare programs such as food and nonfood relief interventions, care services for vulnerable individuals and households, and helpline and information services have been especially important to assist those in need.

In response to the challenges of the pandemic, ADB leveraged over $4 million in cofinancing from the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific, the People’s Republic of China’s Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund, and the Republic of Korea’s e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund through a TA program to help CSOs respond to needs arising from COVID-19 (footnote 4).

The project supports the implementation of CSO services for community-based activities to mitigate and prevent COVID-19; provide social protection for the vulnerable, including the elderly; as well as economic support for those whose livelihoods are affected by the pandemic.

The NGOC has built upon the important lessons from its history by expanding its engagement to a diverse array of CSOs across Asia and the Pacific. Recognizing the strength and contribution of civil society as a major stakeholder, the NGOC has facilitated the involvement of CSOs in ADB-supported policies and projects, and will continue to build upon these relationships. More efficient disclosure of information to CSOs has strengthened transparency and opened more opportunities for dialogue and consultations. Improved processes have facilitated CSOs’ participation in operations. The NGOC has also built the capacity of ADB staff, as well as DMC officials, to work effectively with CSOs. In the NGOC’s 20th year, significant strides were made to set a strong future foundation for the continuation of this work.

30 Footnote 4, p. 2.
**Policy Paper on ADB’s Cooperation with NGOs**
Policy created that drew on NGO expertise and knowledge to address the needs of disadvantaged groups and enhance the effectiveness of ADB operations.

**Policy on Cooperation between ADB and NGOs**
Expanded policy on cooperation between ADB and NGOs strengthened the sustainability and quality of ADB development effectiveness.

**Task Force on NGO Cooperation**
High-level task force formed by ADB President Tadao Chino, which recommended improvements in cooperation with NGOs and resulted in the creation of the NGO Center.

**ADB–Government–NGO Cooperation Framework**
The framework provided a medium-term (2003–2005) road map for increasing collaboration in poverty reduction efforts and recommended specific actions to increase NGO participation in ADB activities.

**Public Communications Policy**
Policy released that favored disclosure of information, which significantly expanded opportunities for consultations with CSOs.

**Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation**
Guide published to assist staff in applying consultative and participatory approaches in ADB-assisted activities. A series of training programs ensued to build staff capacity in cooperating with NGOs.

**Onward!**
Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 through Community-Led Interventions launched, employing an innovative model to support local, community-based CSOs in COVID-19 response.

**CSOs in COVID-19 Response**
Strategy 2030 approved, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change. ADB also renewed its commitment to engage with CSOs and explore opportunities for increasing their involvement in the design and implementation of projects.

**Midterm Review of Strategy 2020**
Midterm review conducted, which revalidated and reinforced the need to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, such as CSOs, to leverage additional resources and share knowledge and expertise.

**Safeguard Policy Statement**
SPS approved, which emphasized that consultation and participation are central to the achievement of safeguard policy objectives. CSOs actively took part in the policy formulation.

**Strategy 2020**
New corporate strategy recognized partnerships with NGOs, community-based organizations, and foundations as central to planning, financing, and implementing ADB operations.
Integrated Irrigation Sector Project in Indonesia. Farmers from the water users group have a meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. ADB believes in community consultation and ownership of projects (photo by ADB).
Celebrating the Accomplishments of the NGO and Civil Society Center

The year 2021 was extraordinarily busy for the NGOC as it continued to deliver Strategy 2030’s vision for CSO engagement. Guided by the principles laid down in Strategy 2030, the NGOC facilitated civil society engagement on key institutional policy reviews, delivered reforms to important institutional guidance, expanded and improved its measurement of results, and operationalized civil society engagement through innovative technical assistance programs.

Engaging Civil Society in Key Institutional Policy Reviews

Civil society is critical to the success of ADB’s policy reviews, as CSOs can offer first-hand, on-the-ground experience and a diversity of views. Consultations with CSOs help ADB to improve its policies and projects. In 2021, ADB carried out key policy reviews in energy, disaster and emergency assistance, and safeguards, with the NGOC playing a critical role in facilitating CSO engagement.

Throughout the review of the 2009 Energy Policy, ADB’s Energy Sector Thematic Group organized 14 consultations with CSOs with a focus on members of the NGO Forum on ADB and global energy and climate change alliances. During the consultations, ADB and CSOs discussed the technical, social, and environmental aspects of the Energy Policy with deep dives into areas of interest identified by the CSOs.
These include divestment from coal and other fossil fuels, increased investments on renewables, and just transitions and community dialogues on ADB-supported energy projects, among others. The review process and feedback from CSOs and other stakeholders were publicly tracked on ADB’s website. The updated Energy Policy considered stakeholders’ feedback to support low-carbon transition in Asia and the Pacific.

For the review and update of ADB’s 2004 Disaster and Emergency Assistance Policy (DEAP), CSOs working on disaster risk management, post-conflict activities, and health emergencies across the region participated in online consultations. CSOs endorsed the principles-based policy—including the crossovers between disaster risk management and climate change adaptation—with a greater emphasis on risk-informed development. CSOs also highlighted localization, placement of vulnerable people at the center of efforts to enhance resilience, and stronger cooperation across all stakeholders. The Revised Disaster and Emergency Assistance Policy was approved in October 2021 and included provisions on coordination with civil society and participatory processes, especially for vulnerable groups.

ADB is also reviewing and updating its 2009 SPS. As part of this review, ADB is undertaking one of the most comprehensive stakeholder consultation processes to be conducted by a multilateral development bank. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) adopts an inclusive and transparent consultation process to solicit feedback from governments, the private sector, CSOs, and affected communities. All consultations are conducted virtually in an open, participatory, and accessible manner, employing online forms of outreach and communication to maximize stakeholder participation. It is the intention of the SEP to ensure all voices are heard. The NGOC plays a key supporting role by helping to structure the stakeholder engagement process and liaising with CSOs.

**CSO Participation at the 54th Annual Meeting of the ADB Board of Governors**

The Annual Meeting of the ADB Board of Governors aims to provide guidance on ADB administrative, financial, and operational directions. As a key forum for economic and social development issues in Asia and the Pacific, the meeting provides opportunities for member governments to interact with ADB staff, CSOs, media, international organizations, academia, and the private sector. At a time of crisis marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, ADB, together with governors and other important stakeholders, assembled virtually to discuss the future of Asia and the Pacific in a post-COVID-19 world.

CSO representatives throughout Asia and the Pacific participated in the virtual 54th ADB Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 3–5 May 2021, with the theme, “Collaboration for Resilient and Green Recovery.” During the meeting, ADB worked with CSOs in organizing a series of knowledge events and dialogues on developmental concerns across the region. The Civil Society...
Program covered important topics, such as civil society reflections on ADB’s COVID-19 operation; institutionalization and localization of the SDGs through participatory approaches; and meaningful youth engagement (MYE) and collaboration with young people to promote an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery from COVID-19. There were also discussions on ADB’s Energy Policy review and on collaboration for a resilient and green recovery.

During the Civil Society Program, ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa met with CSO representatives, acknowledging the critical role of CSOs in COVID-19 response and their engagement in ADB’s operations and policy work in 2020. The meeting, which was attended by over 800 participants, focused on ADB’s strategic direction in addressing climate change and promoting clean energy, as well as the bank’s engagement with civil society. President Asakawa acknowledged the unique strengths and expertise of CSOs as valuable partners in helping ADB to achieve development effectiveness in Asia and the Pacific.

Improving Institutional Processes for CSO Engagement

Institutional and operational documents form a key foundation for ADB’s success and help to ensure that ADB staff are informed of best practices and are guided in incorporating civil society engagement within operations.

In 2021, the NGOC updated its Operations Manual (OM E4) that provides institutional guidance on cooperating with CSOs. The OM E4 underscores engagement as a dynamic process that encourages constructive relationships between ADB, governments, private sector clients, and CSOs. In expanding civil society engagement, ADB recognizes the diversity among organizations. CSOs possess characteristics that differ from country to country, considering context-specific factors that affect their structure, composition, and roles in national development. The updated OM E4 is an important development as ADB continues to promote meaningful engagement across the institution.

Complementing the update of OM E4, the NGOC also released a Sourcebook on Engaging with Civil Society Organizations in Asian Development Bank Operations. The sourcebook guides ADB staff, consultants, and DMC officials on effectively engaging CSOs in ADB-financed operations. CSOs have an essential role to play with their unique strengths and specialized knowledge of their communities and constituencies. The sourcebook provides advice, templates, and tips for designing, implementing, and monitoring initiatives with CSO engagement.

Together, these documents provide clear guidance for both ADB and DMC staff working on the policy and compliance requirements for CSO engagement in ADB-financed operations. The sourcebook complements these documents by providing ADB and DMC staff with advice, tips, examples, technical direction, and templates on why, what, when, and how to engage with CSOs in ADB-financed operations.

Capturing Meaningful CSO Participation in Operations

In 2020, ADB introduced a new methodology for tracking meaningful civil society engagement and built upon this indicator throughout 2021. ADB first reported on the extent of CSO participation in its operations in 2001 and has continued to provide annual reporting on this engagement over the past 2 decades. While this initial reporting monitored operations with planned civil society engagement, it did not track whether projects delivered on these plans.

The new indicator tracks the percentage of completed projects that delivered meaningful CSO engagement against the number of completed projects that had planned to do so.

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Table 1: Different Approaches and Depths of Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Project Processing</th>
<th>Project Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Generation and Sharing</td>
<td>Information is • generated by ADB/recipient/client and shared with CSOs; • independently generated by CSOs and shared with ADB/recipient/client; or • jointly produced.</td>
<td>Low: ADB/recipient/client shares information with CSOs</td>
<td>Low: ADB/recipient/client shares information with CSOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Depth: Low, Medium, or High)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium: Opportunities for CSOs to share information with ADB/recipient/client</td>
<td>Medium: Opportunities for CSOs to share information with ADB/recipient/client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>CSO input is requested and considered as part of an inclusive policy, program, or project decision-making process.</td>
<td>Low: Online and/or written consultation only</td>
<td>Low: Online and/or written consultation only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Depth: Low, Medium, or High)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium: Opportunities for two-way, face-to-face exchanges (e.g., workshop, focus group)</td>
<td>Medium: Opportunities for two-way, face-to-face exchanges (e.g., workshop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>CSOs and ADB/recipient/client work jointly, but CSOs have limited control over decision-making and resources.</td>
<td>Low: Views of CSOs incorporated into design (e.g., use participatory methods)</td>
<td>High: Regular feedback from CSOs integrated during implementation (e.g., use participatory methods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Depth: Low, Medium, High)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium: Significant CSO representation on project design body</td>
<td>Medium: Stakeholder organization (e.g., CSO) implementation of a project component*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>CSOs participate in decision-making process and/or exert control over resources through a formal or informal agreement to work together toward common objectives.</td>
<td>Low: MOU or partnership agreed, or CSOs take some degree of direct responsibility</td>
<td>Low: MOU or partnership agreement implemented, including financing and management; or CSOs assume high level of ownership or responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Depth: Low, Medium, High)</td>
<td></td>
<td>High: MOU or partnership agreement negotiated, including cofinancing and management; or CSOs assume high level of ownership or responsibility</td>
<td>High: MOU or partnership agreement implemented, including financing and management; or CSOs assume high level of ownership or responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This includes community participation in procurement, CSOs providing consulting services, and CSOs providing nonconsulting services.


In this regard, ADB defines meaningful CSO engagement as having significant information sharing or consultation activities, or any type of collaboration or partnership with CSOs.34 The NGOC thoroughly collected information on projects’ planned meaningful CSO engagement by reviewing project documents, including Reports and Recommendations to the President (RRPs) and Summary Poverty Reduction and Social Strategies (SPRSS). The new tracking system required monitoring of the delivery of planned meaningful engagement by monitoring the project completion reports (PCRs) of projects that closed in 2021.

ADB’s meaningful civil society engagement indicator rests on four approaches to participation: (i) information generation and sharing, (ii) consultation, (iii) collaboration, and (iv) partnership, as outlined in Table 1. CSO participation is defined as meaningful when it involves high levels of information generation and sharing, consultation, and any level of collaboration or partnership.35

ADB = Asian Development Bank, CSO = civil society organization, MOU = memorandum of understanding.

Notes: These generic definitions can be adapted to specific types of projects and programs, e.g., rural water supply; and for priority operational themes, e.g., gender or individual projects. Any segments highlighted in yellow indicate planned, meaningful CSO engagement.


35 Ratings of indicators in old SPRSS templates (information sharing, consultation, collaboration, empowerment) are recalculated in the format of new indicators (information generation and sharing, consultation, collaboration, partnership) by the NGOC for the purpose of analysis. Re-ratings are based on planned CSO engagement recorded in the project RRP, SPRSS, and other documents linked to the RRP.
In 2021, 51 of the 103 (50%) projects with PCRs reflected planned and meaningful civil society engagement in their project documents. Of the 51 projects, 39 or 76% delivered on their planned civil society engagement. Similar to 2020, the figures are lower than the average of those from the analysis using the old indicator, which typically cited 90% or higher civil society participation in projects. The decline does not necessarily indicate a slowdown in civil society engagement in the ADB project portfolio, but instead reflects an improved and more thorough methodology to capture data and its ability to provide more comprehensive information on the dimensions of CSO engagement.

Comparing data using the new methodology, more PCRs in 2021 described planned and meaningful civil society engagement in their project documents (51 PCRs) than in 2020 (42 PCRs). The proportion of delivery on these plans was slightly lower in 2021 (76%) than in 2020 (79%). Figure 1 illustrates a summary of these statistics.

ADB’s South Asia Department (SARD) continued to deliver the highest number of projects with planned meaningful CSO engagement, as reflected in 22 of 29 (76%) project planning documents. Of the 22 projects with planned CSO participation, 18 (82%) delivered meaningful CSO engagement, as planned. Following closely is the Southeast Asia Department, where 10 out of 29 projects (34%) included planned meaningful CSO engagement, with 7 of 10 projects (70%) implementing their plans. In the Central and West Asia Department (CWRD), 7 of 18 projects (39%) which closed in 2021 had planned meaningful CSO engagement. Of the seven projects, four (57%) delivered their planned activities with CSOs. The East Asia Department (EARD) had planned meaningful CSO engagement in 7 of its 17 (41%) projects with PCRs in 2021. Of these, six of seven (86%) delivered on their planned civil society engagement. In the Pacific Department (PARD), 5 of the 10 projects (50%) that closed in 2021 planned meaningful CSO engagement, and four of these five projects (80%) implemented their meaningful CSO engagement as planned (Figure 2).
Figure 3 presents data showing the two sectors with the highest number of projects that delivered on planned meaningful CSO engagement. These are transport (nine projects or 69% of all projects with planned meaningful CSO engagement), and agriculture and natural resources (seven projects or 88%). They are followed by the urban sector (five projects or 71%). In relatively small sample sizes, 100% of the projects in the water, finance, health, and information and communication technology sectors delivered on their planned meaningful CSO engagement. Consistent with past experiences, ADB project teams were able to incorporate more project stakeholders due to the significant number of CSOs working in these sectors.

As illustrated in Table 1, CSOs participate in ADB projects through four approaches: information generation and sharing, consultation, collaboration, and partnership. CSOs have been engaged through one or a combination of these approaches. In Figure 4, among the 51 PCRs in 2021 showing projects planned meaningful CSO engagement, 39 projects (76%) delivered both information generation and sharing and consultation, as planned. There were 45 projects that had planned collaboration, and 33 projects (73%) delivered this approach. Various reasons explain why some planned CSO participation activities were not implemented. In an urban project, for example, a consulting firm conducted external monitoring instead of CSOs doing it, as planned.

Partnership represents the highest form of CSO engagement, which is at times more complex and requires greater effort. In 2020, four projects planned to work with CSOs through partnership, and all of them achieved it (footnote 34). In 2021, 15 projects planned to engage CSOs through partnership, and 13 out of 15 achieved it. The figures reflect an increase in using partnership as an approach in engaging CSOs meaningfully, in projects whose PCRs were prepared in 2021.

Three projects delivered the highest level of partnership as presented in the following boxes (Boxes 2–4).
Box 2: Polytechnic Education Development Project

The Polytechnic Education Development Project in Indonesia helped to strengthen the quality and relevance of polytechnic education in supporting workforce development. Completed in 2019, the project promoted equality and access to education, particularly among girls and disadvantaged students, as contributing to a productive workforce. It developed the graduates’ competitiveness and entrepreneurial culture by strengthening governance and management of polytechnics. Under the project, ADB adopted a demand-driven approach where most project activities were not prescribed prior to loan signing. Instead, polytechnics were given the flexibility to propose initiatives based on their needs. Thirty-four polytechnics received funding of $1 million–$5 million per institution.

As its first major step, ADB reinforced the collaboration of the polytechnics with industry, particularly professional associations. Polytechnics that offer tourism study programs established a working relationship with associations of businesses in the hotel, restaurant, and travel industries. As a result, 421 memorandums of understanding between enterprises and polytechnics were established through the project, and more than 100 curriculums for different study programs in five industries were reviewed, revised, and endorsed.

ADB. 2012. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan to the Republic of Indonesia for the Polytechnic Education Development Project. Manila.


Box 3: Raising Incomes of Small and Medium Farmers Project in Nepal

In Nepal, the Raising Incomes of Small and Medium Farmers Project helped to promote value chain development of high-value commodities (HVCs) in 10 districts in the less-developed western region of the country. Through the project, supply chain links to buyers and markets were built; postharvest facilities were improved; and agribusiness support was provided, which aided subsistence farmers to shift into more profitable farming systems.

ADB engaged one nongovernment organization (NGO) in each of the 10 districts, which provided social mobilization and capacity building support. The NGOs engaged were instrumental in disseminating project information and facilitating linkages between producers and agro-processing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The NGOs also facilitated marketing support to farmers by securing buy-back guarantees between targeted farmer groups and agriculture cooperatives and SMEs.

By 2019, 2,585 supply agreements were secured through 878 farmer groups and cooperatives. More than 21,000 farmers affiliated with these groups benefited from improved seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural machinery in addition to the market linkages. It is estimated that the farmers were engaged in HVC production on an additional 8,074 hectares of land. As a result, small and medium farmers realized a return of 239% from the same unit of land by switching to HVCs from traditional cereal farming.

NGOs played a critical role as interlocutors to the farmers in the project district and were essential to these achievements.


Box 4: Neighborhood Upgrading and Shelter Project in Indonesia

ADB worked with community implementation organizations (CIOs) to improve basic infrastructure and access to service delivery in slums across Indonesia. Through the Neighborhood Upgrading and Shelter Project Phase 2, community members took part in a community mapping activity to gather information on the condition of existing infrastructure. Villagers participated in consultation meetings in the preparation of the Neighborhood Upgrading Action Plans and Community Action Plans.

The project utilized direct community contracting mechanisms between the city government and the CIOs to implement over 1,000 community civil works packages.

The CIOs continued to be involved by organizing consultations and disseminating project information on the grievance redress mechanism. Following the completion of construction activities, the project formed community groups to carry out the operation and maintenance of the infrastructure. Overall, participatory processes helped strengthen the community’s sense of ownership, as well as the groups’ capacity to manage projects. Community member involvement also created work opportunities that resulted in additional income for the villagers.

Better shelter. A low-cost housing village was built through the Neighborhood Upgrading and Shelter Sector Project in Bau Bau, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia (photo by ADB).

In reviewing the PCRs published in 2021, Figure 5 describes how the 39 projects delivered on their planned meaningful CSO engagement, with CSOs carrying out the following roles:

- CSOs were consulted during implementation (29 projects or 74%).
- CSOs implemented some components of the projects (29 projects or 74%).
- CSOs are beneficiaries of projects (23 projects or 59%).
- CSOs were directly engaged in gender action plans (21 projects or 54%), such as facilitating consultation with communities regarding gender action plans (15 projects); raising the participation of women through their increased representation at CSOs (13 projects); and implementing activities related to gender action plans (17 projects).

Among 39 projects that delivered on their planned meaningful CSO engagement, 13 projects (33%) fostered capacity development and formation of grassroots organizations.
The NGO and Civil Society Center’s Engagement at the Project Level

In 2021, the NGOC led the implementation of three TA projects related to civil society engagement in ADB operations.

Leveraging NGO expertise in development. Under TA 9769: Deepening Civil Society Engagement for Development Effectiveness (Subproject 2), the NGOC works closely with BRAC and World Vision India to apply the Graduation Approach to the Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Housing for Urban Poor Sector Project in Tamil Nadu, India. Under the program, ADB leverages the local on-the-ground expertise of World Vision India to work with low-income households that will be relocated from flood-prone areas to ensure that they are provided with livelihood opportunities and training in their new locations. Together, ADB, BRAC, and World Vision India conducted market and skills assessments to match households with livelihoods, linked households to services in their new location, increased households’ access to savings and low-interest loans, and provided coaching to communities. The program is an innovative approach to improving resettlement outcomes, which carries the potential to be scaled up for better and more inclusive development effectiveness in resettlement programs.

Tapping CSO innovation. Through TA 9592: Deepening Civil Society Engagement for Development Effectiveness—Deepening Civil Society Engagement in Selected Countries in Southeast and South Asia, ADB has expanded civil society engagement in Central and West Asia by engaging with five CSOs in Armenia, Georgia, and Uzbekistan. In Armenia, ADB partnered with the Child Development Foundation to establish a hotline and support families in addressing the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. In Georgia, the NGOC worked with a local organization, Tandagoma, to implement an innovative learning demonstration project in three kindergartens, which focused on supporting children with disabilities. Since the project’s completion, the NGO’s innovative approach has been replicated across Georgia. In Uzbekistan, ADB partnered with a local organization focused on agriculture, KRASS, to reach rural communities in Khorezm and Karakalpakstan and engage them in livestock training and techniques. ADB also partnered with Center Nihol to implement a community awareness-raising campaign on water, sanitation and hygiene across seven cities in Uzbekistan. Nihol’s work has since been scaled up to engage three additional communities. Finally, ADB worked with the Business Women’s Association of Uzbekistan to increase awareness around the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Corridor 2 Karakalpakstan Road Project, inform people about entrepreneurial activities surrounding the project, and expand the project’s impact on women in the area.

In 2020, under the TA 6594: Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 through Community-Led Interventions, ADB issued a call for proposals to CSOs across Asia and the Pacific for localized solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ten outstanding proposals were selected from Armenia, Cambodia, Cook Islands, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Thailand with a preference for local, community-based organizations.
Box 5: Microloans for Housing, Water, and Sanitation

ADB partnered with Habitat for Humanity International in 2021 to support microfinance institutions (MFIs) in delivering housing loans that will benefit low-income families in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The Microfinance Risk Participation and Guarantee Program offers microloans for housing, home improvement, and water and sanitation for vulnerable and climate change-exposed communities. The project aims to aid MFIs to access financing from commercial banks of up to $30 million in the first phase. Through ADB’s technical assistance, Habitat for Humanity will build the capacity of MFIs to design, pilot test, and roll out the loans. The project expects 20,000 households to benefit from the housing microloans in the program’s initial phase.

ADB Private Sector Financial Institutions Division Director Christine Engstrom said, “Low-income families find it difficult to build resilient houses as they lack adequate and affordable financing options due to the collateral requirements of commercial banks. The MFIs have the networks to reach these communities, but often lack the technical capacities to deliver housing microloans to them. Building on Habitat for Humanity’s technical and training expertise, this inaugural partnership will enable ADB’s Microfinance Program to better address this market gap.”

On the other hand, Anshukant Taneja, Lead of ADB’s Microfinance Program said, “This partnership is timely, as microhousing for the poor and investing in community resilience are key drivers of economic recovery from the pandemic.”

Meaningful Engagement with Young Citizens

ADB’s youth initiative, Youth for Asia (YfA), recognizes that the 663 million young people in Asia and the Pacific are critical in development. YfA’s guiding approach is that meaningful youth engagement (MYE) takes place when “under enabling conditions, youth representatives actively participate throughout the program life cycle, and enter into youth–adult partnerships that empower youth and may contribute to long-lasting outcomes.”

Since its establishment in 2013, the YfA has been supporting governments and youth partners to work together to deliver project components contributing to the SDGs. The second year of working virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic did not hamper YfA’s ability to meaningfully engage youth across Asia and the Pacific and enable them to deliver youth-led projects and initiatives.

CSOs are undertaking various activities, from improving community hygiene practices to preventing domestic violence and identifying alternative livelihoods for those affected by COVID-19.

Theory of Change

Young citizens from across Asia and the Pacific meaningfully engaged as partners to achieve inclusive and sustainable development results.

Working with the youth. ADB Youth for Asia’s Theory of Change aims to promote meaningful youth engagement (photo by ADB Youth for Asia) with (MYE).

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To monitor the success of the Theory of Change pathways, YfA has established indicators at outcome and output levels. At output and activity completion levels, the following results were delivered in 2021 (Table 2).

In 2021, in Indonesia, the YfA launched a pilot study to develop youth-led and youth-targeted analytical tools that measure multiple dimensions of poverty and vulnerability as experienced by young people in Cirebon City. YfA also developed a Meaningful Youth Engagement Roadmap for Water Security and Resilience 2021–2030, which guides MYE aligned with five key dimensions of the National Water Security Framework from ADB’s Asian Development Outlook 2020.

In collaboration with Restless Development and the Cambridge University Institute for Sustainability Leadership, YfA launched a pilot study that explored how some of the most vulnerable groups of young people experienced and responded to the pandemic in Indonesia and Nepal using an innovative diary-writing technique. In 2021, YfA developed an online course on MYE, which introduces practitioners to the MYE framework and its application in a project life cycle. Insights from the road map, as well as complementary research and case studies, were used to illustrate how MYE could be mainstreamed in various development sectors and could provide lessons related to its application. In addition, the Asia and the Pacific Youth Symposium, which serves as a social dialogue platform that convenes governments, young leaders, and other stakeholders to discuss major and emerging issues, was held on 12–27 August 2021.

On top of these activities on the ground, YfA has undertaken some groundbreaking foundational work during 2021. YfA supported the development of the first small-scale TA on MYE that will mobilize youth from Ger areas of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, to identify and pilot youth-centric livable cities. YfA also began the implementation of a youth-led climate action project in the four atoll nations that are most at risk from extreme climate change effects (Kiribati, Maldives, the Marshall Islands, and Tuvalu), with a $400,000 allocation from the Ireland Trust Fund.

### Table 2: Youth for Asia Indicators Aligned with Theory of Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth for Asia Indicator</th>
<th>Year-End Result (full year 2021)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of young people taking leadership roles in YfA projects and activities (disaggregated by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, education, occupation, project cycle stage)</td>
<td>112 (65% female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of youth components incorporated in ADB projects</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of government and civil society stakeholders engaged in intergenerational partnerships through YfA projects and activities</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of events on MYE for ADB staff, youth, DMC governments, and civil society delivered</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of events outside in which YfA actively participated and promoted MYE</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of youth-led knowledge products on MYE produced and disseminated</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of participants of YfA events (disaggregated by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, education, occupation, organization)</td>
<td>2,921 (58% female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of direct beneficiaries of MYE activities (disaggregated by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, education, occupation, organization)</td>
<td>4,225 (57% female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of outreach viewers of YfA knowledge products</td>
<td>831,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of adult-led MYE initiatives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADB = Asian Development Bank, DMC = developing member country, MYE = meaningful youth engagement, No. = number, YfA = Youth for Asia. Source: ADB Youth for Asia.
Building Staff Capacity for Effective CSO Engagement

Throughout 2021, the NGOC conducted extensive internal training for ADB staff to promote civil society engagement across ADB operations. The training for Civil Society Anchors was conducted among 60 members of ADB’s CSO Cooperation Network who are based in operations departments and resident missions. The purpose of the program was to increase their understanding of the approaches on meaningful civil society engagement in the context of Strategy 2030, ADB’s new Operations Manual, and the new CSO Sourcebook.

Highlights of the training included:

- **Panel discussion with CSO Leaders.** ADB invited CSO experts on safeguards and governance to speak to the CSO Anchors network, share their experiences in working with ADB, and provide their recommendations on strengthening ADB–CSO relations.

- **Key features of the new CSO Sourcebook.** The NGOC’s CSO engagement expert walked through the highlights of the new CSO Sourcebook, and participants broke out into discussion groups on (i) approaches and depths of participation, (ii) due diligence in identifying and assessing the capacity of CSOs, (iii) engaging CSOs in procurement, and (iv) partnerships with CSOs.

- **Initial results on case studies on South Asia.** The NGOC partnered with ADB’s South Asia Department (SARD) to examine the experience of ADB and civil society in South Asia from 2015–2021, as approximately 76% of SARD sovereign projects during this period had planned meaningful civil society engagement. Training participants learned about the findings of this initial analysis and heard from SARD project teams who presented select cases to highlight what works and what does not work in CSO engagement in ADB projects.
• **CSO Anchors’ 2022 Action Planning on CSO Engagement.** CSO Anchors discussed their planned actions for 2022 to promote CSO engagement in ADB’s work. Common action plans across the departments included training on civil society engagement for staff, supporting the capacity building of CSOs on engaging with ADB, promoting CSO engagement at various stages of the project cycle, and knowledge sharing on CSO engagement across departments and resident missions.

In response to popular demand across ADB, the NGOC expanded its training program by organizing 30-minute webinars on strengthening CSO engagement, which was attended by over 195 members of ADB staff. The webinar series addressed key issues surrounding the new Operations Manual and staff instruction on promoting engagement with CSOs, and documenting CSO engagement within ADB operations.
For the past 20 years, ADB has supported meaningful engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) across the region to help deliver better development results.

### 2001–2005

1. **Pacific Islands Association of NGOs**
   - **Multisector**
   
   In 2001, ADB brought together Pacific NGOs, International NGOs, and donor organizations in Nadi, Fiji. Participants adopted “A Framework for NGO Capacity Building in the Pacific” and appointed the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) as the framework implementer. PIANGO has consistently been actively involved in ADB operations in the Pacific, as well as in consultations leading to the formulation of Strategy 2030.

2. **World Wide Fund for Nature**
   - **Environment**
   
   On 26 September 2001, ADB and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), ADB’s first such accord with an NGO. The two agencies have formed a partnership for sustainable management of natural resources in the Asia and the Pacific region. ADB and WWF have jointly organized knowledge events, prepared publications, and cofinanced regional biodiversity initiatives.

3. **Philippine Business for Social Progress**
   - **Urban**
   
   In 2002, ADB approved a $3.6 million grant for a pilot public–private partnership (PPP) to upgrade slums in Metro Manila, Philippines. ADB collaborated with the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), a corporate-led NGO, to implement the Strategic Private Sector Partnerships for Urban Poverty Reduction (STEP-UP) Program. The purpose of the project is to reduce poverty among the urban poor of selected communities in Metro Manila through PPPs.

4. **Tata Energy Research Institute**
   - **Energy**
   
   In 2003, ADB engaged Tata Energy Research Institute, a national NGO in India, to carry out benefit monitoring and evaluation, undertake stakeholder consultation, and monitor resettlement plan implementation under the Calcutta Environmental Improvement Project. As a nonprofit research organization, Tata Energy Research Institute provides expertise in the fields of energy, environment, and climate change, among others.

5. **Environment and Public Health Organization**
   - **Water**
   
   In Nepal, the Environment and Public Health Organization implemented the Community-Based Water and Wastewater Management Project, which was funded as a pilot and demonstration activity by ADB. The project promoted simple but effective water and wastewater technologies and demonstrated their application at the community level.

### 2006–2010

6. **China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation**
   - **Poverty**
   
   Through the NGO–Government Partnerships in Village-Level Poverty Alleviation Project, ADB collaborated with the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) to organize NGOs to facilitate village-level poverty alleviation projects in Jiangxi Province based on participatory village planning. The CFPA is one of the largest charity organizations in the People’s Republic of China focusing on poverty reduction as well as promoting reform, mobilizing social participation, and building partnerships.

7. **Business Women Association of Uzbekistan, Tadbirkor Aeln**
   - **Gender**
   
   The Business Women Association of Uzbekistan, Tadbirkor Aeln, actively collaborated with ADB through RETA 6431: Promoting Rural Women’s Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies. The NGO provided training programs among women in the rural areas, which helped women acquire business skills in areas such as drafting business plans, the basics of management and marketing, taxation issues, and the basics of accounting.

8. **Bina Swadaya**
   - **Disaster management**
   
   Under the Earthquake and Tsunami Emergency Support Project, ADB partnered with Bina Swadaya to place community empowerment as a central approach in providing disaster management rehabilitation and reconstruction support to the affected regions of Aceh and Nias in Indonesia. Bina Swadaya has been actively involved in programs that promote community empowerment and social entrepreneurship in Indonesia.

9. **National Rural Support Programme**
   - **Community-based**
   
   Using a community-driven development approach, the National Rural Support Programme was involved in community development activities under the Sindh Coastal Community Development Project in Pakistan. The project focused on reducing poverty among the inhabitants of the coastal zone of the Thatta and Badin districts in Sindh Province.

10. **Christian Commission for Development**
    - **Resettlement**
    
    Under the Road Network Improvement and Maintenance Project, ADB worked with the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh, which implemented the project’s resettlement component. The NGO led a public information campaign and organized group discussions on land acquisition, entitlements of compensation, and other issues.
11 **Muslim Aid**  
**Housing**  
Muslim Aid implemented a $4.9 million housing program that helped demonstrate ADB’s continued commitment to reach out to survivors of the December 2004 tsunami in the more remote areas of Aceh province, Indonesia. Muslim Aid is a faith-based international relief and development agency, which tackles poverty and relieve human suffering in poor countries in accordance with Islamic teachings.

12 **Save the Children Federation**  
**Community-based**  
In Viet Nam, Save the Children Federation helped implement ADB’s Community-Based Early Childhood Care and Development. The international NGO identified an integrated early childhood care and community development model targeted on migrant workers and selected ethnic minority groups.

13 **Mercy Corps**  
**Gender**  
In Mongolia, Mercy Corps implemented subprojects under the technical assistance program, Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. The NGO was involved in targeting rural women entrepreneurs to improve their business and technical skills, enhance their knowledge of the agricultural market, and improve overall awareness of gender equality among communities in Mongolia.

14 **Plan International**  
**Multisector**  
ADB and Plan International launched a flagship partnership to promote youth engagement across Asia and the Pacific. The partnership helped promote youth employment and entrepreneurship, as well as youth participation in key areas such as gender, climate change, and information and communication technology, among others.

15 **ACTED**  
**Community-based**  
ACTED is an international humanitarian organization that provides both emergency and long-term rehabilitation support for populations affected by lengthy conflicts. In Tajikistan, ACTED led a consortium of CSOs alongside ADB to devise a coherent strategy for village-based participatory flood management and to reestablish woodland protection against floods.

16 **Haroman Timor Foun**  
**Water and Health**  
In Timor-Leste, the Haroman Timor Foun, together with the Haburas Ita Moris, implemented a water and sanitation behavior change program focused particularly on schools in Manatuto and Pante Makassar district towns. The NGO undertook a comprehensive baseline survey on the water sanitation and hygiene situation in both towns and established community water and sanitation groups.

17 **Wan SmolBag**  
**Health**  
Through the Port Vila Urban Development Project, Wan SmolBag was engaged to build community awareness on hygiene and deliver hygiene education programs to informal settlements in Vanuatu’s Port Vila area. Wan Smolbag effectively used films, theater, and creative media to promote social awareness and dialogue on important issues.

18 **International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy**  
**Gender, Energy**  
The International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA) is an international network of like-minded organizations and professionals, which promote women’s equal and equitable access to and control over sustainable energy services. In Nepal, ADB collaborated with ENERGIA to increase rural poor women’s access to affordable and reliable clean and renewable energy sources and technologies through the project, Improving Gender-Inclusive Access to Clean and Renewable Energy.

19 **AIESEC**  
**Youth**  
ADB and AIESEC launched a partnership that led to youth placements within ADB projects to strengthen each project’s outcomes and inclusive impacts. AIESEC is a global platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential, run by students and recent graduates of institutions of higher education.

20 **Asia Foundation**  
**Multisector**  
In 2017, ADB signed an MOU with the Asia Foundation to expand cooperation in supporting development efforts across the Asia and Pacific region, including strengthening governance and public sector management, increasing environmental resilience, empowering women, and supporting regional cooperation. The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across Asia.
Trends and the Way Forward under ADB’s Strategy 2030

Strategy 2030 sets out ADB’s vision to achieve a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific. Developing strategic partnerships and maintaining key dialogues, particularly with civil society, is essential to achieve this mission. CSOs are vehicles through which citizens, especially those from poor and vulnerable groups, can aggregate their interests, voice their preferences, and exercise the power necessary to affect sustained change. CSOs are uniquely placed to complement governments’ poverty alleviation programs with tailored community-based and community-driven assistance. They can directly reach the poorest and most vulnerable households through their local knowledge, on-the-ground presence, and tailored solutions. The NGOC will continue to build ADB’s relationships with CSOs as it seeks to enhance its ability to engage citizens directly in the development process.

CSOs will play a key role in ADB’s accomplishment of the operational priorities (OPs) of Strategy 2030 as follows:

OP1: addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequalities
OP2: accelerating progress in gender equality
OP3: tackling climate change, building climate and disaster resilience, and enhancing environmental sustainability

III FUTURE
OP4: making cities more livable
OP5: promoting rural development and food security
OP6: strengthening governance and institutional capacity
OP7: fostering regional cooperation and integration

The NGOC is proud to highlight ongoing projects that—while not a comprehensive overview of ADB’s work with civil society—exemplify the close collaboration between ADB and civil society on the OPs, and offer insights into both the present and future collaborations.

Operational Priority 1: Addressing Remaining Poverty and Reducing Inequalities

Strategy 2030’s first operational priority focuses on addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequality. It comprises three interconnected focus areas: (i) enhance human capital and social protection for all, (ii) generate quality jobs, and (iii) reduce inequality in opportunities. Specifically, OP1 focuses on improving the capacity of education, health, and social protection institutions. In this regard, ADB will continue to enhance partnerships with relevant institutions, including CSOs, with the purpose of generating knowledge, sharing good practices, and improving policy dialogue to strengthen social protection institutions.\textsuperscript{39} ADB recognizes the important contribution of CSOs in reducing inequality in opportunities.

A Road Map for Strengthening Disability-Inclusive Development, 2021–2025. ADB’s road map for disability inclusion was approved on 23 November 2021 and lays out a strategy to ensure disability-inclusive development in ADB. The road map benefited from extensive consultations within ADB and external stakeholders. External stakeholders included organizations of persons with disabilities (PWDs), such as the Pacific Disability Forum, and those working with PWDs, such as Life Haven for Independent Living, CBM Australia, Global Disability Innovation Hub, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the United Nations Children’s Fund. One of the features of the road map is the creation of an external disability inclusion reference group, which will support the implementation of the road map and the participation of PWDs in informing, monitoring, and shaping disability-inclusive development in ADB. Membership in the reference group requires: (i) being a representative of a national, regional, or international organization of PWDs; (ii) self-identifying as a person with disability and having experience with the societal barriers of living with a disability; or (iii) serving as an academic or expert on disability-inclusive development in an ADB member and is in a position to inform ADB’s strategy development, planning, monitoring, and review in terms of disability inclusion. All candidates must have a proven track record in disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific and be willing to engage with ADB in informing, monitoring, and validating its approach to disability inclusion.

Operational Priority 2: Accelerating Progress in Gender Equality

ADB will continue to contribute to accelerating gender equality outcomes across five areas: economic empowerment, human development, decision making and leadership, time poverty reduction, and resilience to external shocks. Experience has shown how CSOs, particularly grassroots organizations, have effectively supported community mobilization activities to achieve gender-related outcomes. ADB will leverage and strengthen gender-related capacity development of civil society partners, particularly those involved in ADB operations.\textsuperscript{40}


Building Civil Society Capacity on Gender Equality. The TA program Moving Gender Equality Forward through Civil Society Engagement aims to improve civil society’s engagement in the implementation of gender equality programs in Mongolia. ADB engaged the Social Development Policy Research Institute to support Mongolia’s National Committee on Gender Equality in gender-related studies and capacity development of government officials, women entrepreneurs, and CSOs. For the design and delivery of the national public communication campaign, ADB collaborated with the Centre for Human Rights and Development, Beautiful Hearts Against Sexual Violence, and NEST Center for Journalism Innovation and Development.

Under the project, 22 national NGOs were trained on participatory monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of sectoral gender-responsive policy, while 105 NGOs across Mongolia were trained on participatory monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of local gender subprograms, and on public communication skills to facilitate community sensitization on gender equality.

Small-scale grants were given to 27 local NGOs from five provinces to pilot participatory monitoring and evaluation for the implementation of local gender subprograms, as well as to design and deliver the community sensitization campaigns on gender equality in their respective localities. This helped not only to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs but to provide them an opportunity to contribute towards ensuring the implementation of Mongolia’s Gender Equality Law in the grassroots.

Operational Priority 3: Tackling Climate Change, Building Climate and Disaster Resilience, and Enhancing Environmental Sustainability

Addressing climate change, building climate and disaster resilience, and enhancing environmental sustainability are critical in the face of rapidly growing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing risks from climate change. OP3 seeks to build partnerships with think tanks, NGOs, academia, and the private sector to address these issues. In line with the principles of this operational priority, ADB is exploring and developing new modalities for collaboration with key actors involved in climate finance (Box 6).

Mainstreaming Environmental Sustainability with Save Philippine Seas. Save Philippine Seas is a CSO that aims to conserve marine resources by mobilizing “seatizens” for collective action and behavior change. The organization works on shark conservation, waste management and circular economy, and environmental education. It has a decade of experience in capacity building activities, policy advocacy campaigns, and community-led programs for marine conservation. From September to November 2021, Save Philippine Seas co-organized ADB’s Circular Economy Sprint Series titled, Closing the Circle: Reducing Plastic Pollution and Promoting Green Businesses. The learning series introduced the concept of a circular plastics economy in project preparation and operations. Using the CSO’s expertise in community engagement, sessions were designed using participatory methodologies, which provided staff with a

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43 Save Philippine Seas. Who We Are (accessed 27 July 2022).
Box 6: Access to Green Finance Project in Tajikistan

In Tajikistan, ADB’s Access to Green Finance Project aimed to promote a sound microfinance system to provide credit for households, specifically energy-efficient and environment-friendly homes. The project has helped build the capacity of microfinance institutions to facilitate efficient green finance intermediation and promote energy efficiency, which especially targeted rural households and women.

ADB partnered with Habitat for Humanity Tajikistan (HFHT) to provide housing support for more than 6,000 low-income households. The support was given through construction services and loans in collaboration with its microfinance partners in the country. The services offered by the HFHT covered new home construction, completion of partially constructed homes, renovations, remodeling, and disaster-response projects.

As part of the project’s efforts to increase public awareness about energy efficiency, three women’s NGOs were involved in planning and organizing the training programs. The project likewise collaborated with the local branch of the Committee of Women and Family Affairs and local governments (hukumats).

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Strengthening the capacity of poor women to participate in climate resilience-related decision-making will support their empowerment and promote fundamental shifts in behavioral and decision-making systems.

Building Community Resilience through Partnerships. ADB launched its Community Resilience Partnership Program (CRPP) at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow from 13 October to 13 November 2021. The program supports governments and communities to scale up investments in climate adaptation at the local level. The CRPP was designed over the last 2 years with extensive consultation with partners, including CSOs.

A partnership-based approach drives the implementation of the CRPP. This approach will encourage close collaboration between stakeholders—including national and local governments, local civil society organizations, policy research organizations, think tanks and academia, the private sector, and national and international financial institutions—to ensure that resilience solutions have local political traction, are just, and inspire further actions in the region and globally.

Recognizing the importance of working with local actors in building community resilience, the CRPP has identified Huairou Commission as one of its key partners. The Huairou Commission is a women-led social movement of grassroots groups from poor urban, rural, and indigenous communities in over 50 countries who collectively work for transformative change that improves the living conditions, status, and quality of life of women and their families.

One of the Huairou Commission’s key programs focus on resilience, including strengthening the capacity of grassroots women to be agents of change in building resilience. It is expected to play a key role in the implementation of the CRPP, especially in reinforcing the capacity of grassroots women’s organizations to assess climate risk and identify, prioritize, and implement local adaptation measures in partnership with local governments.

Strengthening the capacity of poor women to participate in climate resilience-related decision making will support their empowerment and promote fundamental shifts in behavioral and decision-making systems.

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1 ADB. 2013. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Grant and Administration of Technical Assistance Grant to the Republic of Tajikistan for the Access to Green Finance Project. Manila.
Operational Priority 4: Making Cities More Livable

Through OP4 of Strategy 2030, ADB helps its DMCs to build livable cities that are green, competitive, inclusive, and resilient. ADB engages citizens and CSOs throughout the project cycle to provide a platform where the most vulnerable can be heard. Effective CSO participation will facilitate citizen-centric approaches in service provision aimed at making cities more livable and inclusive.

Enhancing Resilience of the Urban Poor.
The stresses of rapid urbanization in Asia will be compounded by the adverse effects of climate change. These trends, together with pandemics such as COVID-19, are heightening the precariousness of urban environments. Harnessing the power of CSOs can help enhance the resilience of the urban poor.

In Indonesia, the organization UPLINK (Urban Poor Linkage), focuses on pro-poor development in Indonesian cities. UPLINK is a national coalition of CBOs and NGOs, which facilitates knowledge sharing to promote pro-poor policy making at the city and national levels.

Community-based groups are important for better service delivery and citizen capacity building. ADB’s TA, Creating Investable Cities, is a post-pandemic, and multisector initiative that helps cities in Asia and the Pacific increase their capacity to develop quality municipal infrastructure and enhance resilience so that they can build smartly.

Inclusive Design Development. Since 2020, ADB’s Urban Sector Group (USG) has collaborated with the Social Development Thematic Group to design and implement the Inclusive Design workshops. CBM of Australia, a nonprofit development organization committed to improving the quality of life of PWDs, was engaged in 2020. This year, ADB partnered with the Global Disability Innovation Hub, a University College London-affiliated research and practice center operating in 35 countries and driving disability innovation for a fairer world. The partnership was for an Inclusive Design bootcamp that will help ADB incorporate urban infrastructure and service delivery in its projects based on the project cycle. It was attended by 30 ADB staff from operations departments, resident missions, and the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department.

The bootcamp was organized into four sessions:

- Session 1: Why Inclusive Design Matters to ADB
- Session 2: What Genuine Inclusive Design Looks Like
- Session 3: Who is Responsible for Inclusive Design Delivery
- Session 4: When and How Inclusive Design is Delivered

ADB is working with Global Disability Innovation Hub to produce practical e-training by mid-2022 and make this accessible to governments, development partners, and CSOs based in DMCs, among others.

ADB also had several projects in Armenia, Bangladesh, Georgia, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan, to incorporate inclusive design components to the project design. Some of these projects already engage or plan to engage local CSOs to better reflect the local inclusive design needs.

Operational Priority 5: Promoting Rural Development and Food Security

ADB has long recognized the important role of CSOs in effectively implementing rural development programs. OP5 understands that the governance of rural development programs requires an enabling environment, such as capable local governments, fiscal and nonfiscal incentives for investors, and collaboration with CSOs to help ensure social protection. The process calls for investments in local government capacity building, as well as adequate support for CSOs. Through OP5,
ADB will continue to enhance partnerships in finance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and policy and knowledge solutions.44

In the People’s Republic of China, ADB tapped CSOs in promoting environmental improvements and green development in ecologically sensitive rural areas and communities.45 CSOs were also instrumental in strengthening the master plan and operational plans to integrate preemptive landslide risk reduction investment and safeguard rural communities in the Kyrgyz Republic.46 In India, CSOs were part of public consultations on how to improve post-harvest marketing and value-chain development for horticulture crops identified in the prefeasibility studies.

In Nepal, the proposed Nuts and Fruits in Hilly Areas Project aims to increase the income of agricultural households in the hilly areas of Nepal. The project will strengthen institutional capacities for nursery development and management, enhance farm-level nut and fruit production, and support value addition of fruits and nuts as part of efforts to improve the resilience of farmers to climate change.

ADB continues to explore collaboration with CSOs especially at the strategic level. Discussions with the Gates Foundation are underway in the areas of climate-smart agriculture, inclusive digital payment, and women’s economic empowerment in rural areas in South Asian countries. Capacity development and knowledge sharing of innovations are organized regularly to learn about trends and emerging areas for potential investments.

The sixth operational priority supports public management reforms which seek to strengthen governance in DMCs and promote an enabling environment for sustainable growth. It aims to enhance the capacity of countries to improve resilience, expand service delivery, uphold environmental and social safeguards, adhere to fiduciary standards, and effectively implement anticorruption measures in all its projects and programs.47

Over the last few decades, experience has proven that effective CSO participation improves the quality of ADB operations and ensures inclusiveness by placing citizens, particularly the poor and marginalized, at the center of the development process. Citizen engagement is important in improving the quality of public services in DMCs. CSOs serve as vehicles through which citizens, especially those from vulnerable groups, can aggregate their interests to voice their preferences, and exercise the power necessary to affect sustained change (footnote 47). To leverage this critical

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45 ADB. People’s Republic of China: Hunan Xiangxi Rural Environmental Improvement and Green Development Project.
46 ADB. Kyrgyz Republic: Landslide Risk Management Sector Project.
role of civil society, ADB continues to engage with CSOs in the areas of public accountability, transparency, and participation.

Under OP6, ADB will continue to develop mechanisms for civil society engagement that will facilitate the creation of operational partnerships through streamlined grant processes. It will encourage citizens to become more involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of ADB operations and knowledge work. ADB will continue to collaborate with CSOs to strengthen social accountability and contribute to responsive service delivery in DMCs.

Catalyzing Transparency and Accountability through Information and Communication Technology. In an effort to promote the use of technology to catalyze transparency and accountability in service delivery, ADB launched a hackathon, which sought to identify a citizen-led project or application that will ensure transparency in COVID-19-related government programs. GoodGovPH, a youth-led social enterprise for good governance in the Philippines, won the hackathon. The organization developed a welfare assistance chatbot called Bantay (Guard), which assists users with eligibility queries and other concerns about the government’s social welfare programs.

Box 7: Partnering with the Peace Training and Research Organization in Afghanistan

ADB’s support for fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) and small island developing states (SIDS) is guided by the FCAS and SIDS Approach (FSA). The FSA promotes meaningful engagement with CSOs and other non-state organizations through regular dialogue and partnerships. This is especially relevant in fragile contexts, where state entities may not be able or willing to deliver needed services. This approach highlights the need for active and inclusive participation and consultation with CSOs, including women- and youth-led groups, at both country strategy programming and project levels.

A detailed fragility and resilience assessment (FRA) was completed in early 2021 as part of the diagnostic work for the preparation of the then-new ADB Country Partnership Strategy for Afghanistan. The FRA was prepared using participatory methods and an inclusive approach, which included extensive consultations with CSOs and Afghan communities.

ADB partnered with the Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO), a local NGO that specializes in providing context-specific knowledge and improving policy and decision making through research and analysis, to conduct surveys in rural and urban areas across five provinces of Afghanistan.

Over 480 people, of which 45% were women, were consulted. They represent a wide range of socioeconomic profiles within each community, such as religious leaders, local staff of CSOs, university lecturers, students, farmers, returnees, internally displaced persons, and unemployed citizens. While ADB placed its assistance in Afghanistan on hold effective 15 August 2021, core findings of the FRA remain relevant. The community survey was updated and expanded by the PTRO, without engagement with the de facto government, by conducting interviews with 1,100 representative Afghans, of which 30% were women, in urban and rural settings across 10 provinces. The updated survey results provided first-hand understanding of the situation in Afghanistan.


Footnote 47, p. 21.
Meet Bantay. A chatbot named Bantay (Guard) provides users with information on accessing the social welfare programs of the Government of the Philippines (photo by Bantay Bayan PH).

Bantay also generates feedback, which is transmitted to relevant government agencies to improve the delivery of social services. ADB has provided a small grant to GoodGovPH to support the development of Bantay, which has now been promoted in targeted communities. The application will be disseminated for use across the country.

ADB continues to partner with key global, regional, national, and local CSOs for policy development in critical areas for effective governance. ADB and the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative are collaborating to publish a knowledge product that will provide a comprehensive overview of the status of beneficial ownership reforms in the region, including progress and best practices on such reforms, emerging challenges, and practical guidance and recommendations for governments. ADB is also working with the United Cities and Local Governments, Asia-Pacific Chapter to prepare SDG snapshots at local and national levels in Indonesia. The primary objective of the snapshot is to assess the enabling environment of subnational governments in localizing the SDGs. ADB also invited the Pacific Islands Tax Administrators Association to speak at the first high-level regional tax conference held virtually last November 2021. Together with the International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation, ADB participated in a bilateral consultation to discuss potential collaboration on capacity building for domestic resource mobilization and international tax cooperation.

Civil Society Organizations and Good Governance. To further strengthen the integration of CSO engagement with good governance, the implementation of ADB’s Second Governance and Anticorruption Action Plan (GACAP II) through governance assessments was recently enhanced to achieve the following:

(i) Establish the level of CSO engagement with government agencies across the three assessment themes of GACAP II and in relation to the processing and implementation of ADB-financed programs and projects.

(ii) Identify and analyze stakeholder engagement in multilateral civil society initiatives, particularly in the role civil society plays to promote good governance.

(iii) Provide recommendations to strengthen and develop civil society engagement in each of the three assessment themes, if and as relevant.

ADB continues to partner with key global, national, and local CSOs for policy development in critical areas for effective governance.

A new long-term strategic framework for the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program leading to 2030 has been developed.\(^5\) Through CAREC 2030, ADB will strengthen engagement with civil society in promoting people-to-people contacts, including among border communities with strong traditional ties, across countries. Student exchange programs; medical patients’ visits to tertiary health care facilities in neighboring countries; and the opening of bilateral and regional tourism opportunities are some ways to bring people together and can result in direct, more tangible benefits to cross-border populations.

Through CAREC 2030, ADB will strengthen engagement with civil society in promoting people-to-people contacts, including among border communities with strong traditional ties, across countries.
Conclusion

In this year’s report, ADB commemorates the 20th anniversary of the NGOC and the CSO Cooperation Network by reflecting on how ADB’s relationship with civil society has evolved over the years.

Since its founding in 1966, ADB has worked with both public and private institutions to support the region’s development. Its informal cooperation with NGOs started in the 1980s, when it sought information and background on local situations at the project design stage. Since then, this relationship has grown to involve NGOs in policy reviews, country programming, and all stages of the project cycle based on their knowledge of local contexts and use of participatory approaches.

The creation of the NGOC at ADB headquarters and the CSO Cooperation Network across ADB’s resident missions in 2001 set in place the institutional arrangements for cooperating with CSOs through regular consultations and dialogues, and for training ADB staff to understand the roles of NGOs and ways to involve them in ADB’s activities. With a growing recognition of the broader civil society space—encompassing community-based or grassroots organizations, advocacy groups, labor groups and trade unions, research groups—ADB continued to expand its collaboration and partnership with civil society representatives. An increasing number of ADB projects demonstrate active engagement with civil society.

As ADB recovers from the impact caused by the most devastating pandemic in a century, the challenging times have revealed extraordinary examples of resilience and solidarity across Asia and the Pacific. ADB has not lost its focus on the need to effectively collaborate with CSOs in achieving its development objectives. Across 2021, the NGOC made significant strides in strengthening collaboration between ADB and civil society. It has engaged CSOs in and through policy reviews, technical assistance programs, initiatives on meaningful youth engagement, and ADB staff training to raise the profile of civil society across the institution. All these efforts build on the lessons of the past and look forward to the future.

Implementation and Monitoring of Song Bung 4 Hydropower Project Resettlement and Ethnic Minority Development Plan in Viet Nam.

Native from the Co Tu ethnic minority in Zuolh (Zúolh) commune, Nâm Giang district, Quảng Nam Province, ADB had intensively supported the resettlement process and livelihood development programs of the community affected by the Song Bung 4 Hydropower Project (photo by ADB).
ADB and the NGOC will continue to strengthen relationships with civil society as ADB moves forward, guided by Strategy 2030. Across the seven operational priorities—addressing remaining poverty and inequality, accelerating progress in gender equality, tackling climate change and disaster resilience, making livable cities, promoting rural development and food security, strengthening governance, and fostering regional cooperation—the future will be about working with civil society to find community-based solutions and technologies to address the region’s most pressing development challenges. The global crises brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the threat of climate change call for extensive and unprecedented collaboration between all stakeholders to achieve the SDGs. Together, ADB and civil society can bring the voices of citizens from local to national and global decision-making arenas to support them in building a better future.

Strong foundation. ADB builds on the lessons of the past as it continues to expand engagement with CSOs in support of Strategy 2030.
Figure A1 illustrates that loans are the type of modality with the highest number of projects with planned meaningful civil society organization (CSO) engagement (20 out of 51 projects, or 39%). Among four types of modalities, projects financed through grants have the highest delivery rate of planned meaningful CSO engagement (100%, or 5 out of 5 projects). Projects financed through both grants and loans also have high delivery rates (89%, or 8 out of 9 projects). Those financed through multitranche financing facilities have the lowest delivery rate of planned meaningful CSO engagement (53%, or 9 out of 17 projects).

Figure A1: Meaningful CSO Engagement in 2021 Project Completion Reports, by Modality

PCR = project completion report.
Figure A2 presents the approaches achieved by 39 projects that delivered meaningful CSO engagement as planned. All 39 projects achieved medium or high level of information generation and sharing as part of the engagement approaches while 62% of the 39 projects delivered a high level of consultation. Respectively, 51% and 23% of the projects delivered medium level and high level of collaboration. Of the 39 projects, nine achieved a low level of partnership, one achieved a medium level of partnership, and three achieved a high level of partnership.

Figure A3 provides more details on the role of CSOs, by sector, in the 39 projects that delivered meaningful CSO engagement according to plan. There were 29 projects that involved CSOs in the implementation of specific project components, mainly from the following sectors:

- agriculture and natural resources (6)
- education (4)
- water (4)
- urban (4)
- transport (4)
- finance (3).

There were 21 projects in which CSOs played a role in gender action plans, mostly from the following sectors:

- education (4)
- agriculture and natural resources (3)
- transport (3)
- urban (3)

**Figure A2: Levels of CSO Engagement Approaches in 39 Project Completion Reports Showing Projects Delivered Meaningful Engagement as Planned**

PCR = project completion report.
A total of 12 projects that fostered capacity development and formation of grassroot organizations or CBOs are in the following sectors:

- agriculture and natural resources (6)
- water (2)
- urban (2)
- transport (1)
- finance (1)

In the transport sector, four projects engaged CSOs in safeguard resettlement:

- representation of grievance redress committees (3 of 4)
- monitoring of resettlement process (3 of 4)
- consultation with communities regarding resettlement planning and implementation (3 of 4)
- implementation of activities related to resettlement plans (2 of 4)
Figure A.3 continued

CSOs = civil society organization, GAP = gender action plan, GRC = Grievance and Redress Committee, RP = resettlement plan.
Twenty years ago, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) created the NGO and Civil Society Center as its focal point for partnering with civil society organizations (CSOs) to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of its operations. This publication reflects on lessons from these 2 decades of collaboration. It outlines the evolving relationship between ADB and CSOs as they have worked together across Asia and the Pacific on both operations and policy reviews, and notes accomplishments of 2021. It highlights the potential for ADB and CSOs to increase their collaboration to support the region’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and address the threats of climate change.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members —49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.