



Completion Report

Project Number: 47376-001
Technical Assistance Number: 8611
June 2017

Support for ADB-Civil Society-Developing Member Country in Southeast Asia Cooperation

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| TA Number, Country, and Name: | | | Amount Approved: \$225,000.00 | |
| TA 8611-REG: Support for ADB-Civil Society-Developing Member Country in Southeast Asia Cooperation | | | Revised Amount: not applicable | |
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Description

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has long recognized the value of civil society participation in projects, which contributes to development effectiveness. Despite the trends of higher civil society participation in ADB-financed projects, ADB needs to continue to focus on the quality of this collaboration and broaden the scope of its outreach across all developing member countries (DMCs) under its Southeast Asia Department (SERD).¹ Knowledge products and knowledge-sharing events are needed to further leverage the expertise of civil society organizations (CSOs).

Expected Impact, Outcome, and Outputs

The impact of this small-scale capacity development technical assistance (TA) will be increased civil society engagement in ADB-financed operations in SERD DMCs. The outcome will be improved communications and interaction with civil society in SERD DMCs. The TA had two outputs: (i) increased ADB-civil society-DMC interaction, communication and knowledge sharing and (ii) analysis of opportunities for ADB-civil society-DMC collaboration in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The TA remained relevant because it contributed to improved quality of ADB-financed operations.

Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities

The TA's objectives, scope, and implementation arrangements were relevant, appropriate and achievable. The TA's design—which allowed for flexibility to respond to needs for civil society participation as identified by ADB resident missions throughout the length of the TA—was appropriate and improved the quality of ongoing ADB-financed projects as well as supporting a few standalone initiatives. The terms of reference were clear, and government contributions were as planned. ADB approved three minor changes in scope, two to engage additional consultants to respond to needs from DMCs, and one to allow for the TA to cover the costs of travel and per diem for a resource person. The TA was extended by one year from 31 July 2015 to 31 July 2016 to support the civil society consultations for the country partnerships strategies (CPSs) in Viet Nam and Myanmar, which at the time had been delayed.

Output 1. Thirteen new initiatives bringing together DMC governments and civil society took place in six countries.² These included providing additional support to three ongoing projects that wanted to strengthen existing activities through civil society engagement; financing six standalone initiatives carried out by CSOs, DMCs, and resident missions; and providing training preparation and delivery to government officials in Lao PDR and Viet Nam. The TA intended to support civil society consultations during the preparation of SERD CPSs; Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam teams requested support.³ In Lao PDR, a civil society expert assisted the ADB in identifying which CSOs could contribute most effectively through CPS consultations and documented the process in a booklet entitled *Voices for inclusive and sustainable growth: Lao PDR CPS Civil Society Stakeholder Consultation*.⁴ Impact of CSO involvement included concrete suggestions for CPS text, as well as greater understanding of ADB priorities among CSOs.

A web-based knowledge product that details ADB-DMC-civil society collaboration through the project cycle, *Working with ADB: A Primer for Identifying Business Opportunities for NGOs*, was posted online in July 2016.⁵ The publication has been shared through a range of civil society outreach events.

Posters and flyers for civil society stakeholders in Myanmar were prepared. The set of three flyers addressed what is ADB, what are ADB's main policies, and how ADB engages with civil society, and were prepared in five languages

¹ Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

² All seven SERD countries except for Cambodia, who did not have an NGO Anchor for the duration of the TA.

³ Although the TA intended to also support the Myanmar civil society CPS consultations, ADB's Myanmar Resident Mission financed the consultations through other funding. Likewise, although plans were developed to support civil society engagement during preparation of the Viet Nam CPS via a civil society expert as in Lao PDR, the rolling together of CPS and the Strategy 2020 mid-term review consultations with civil society resulted in ADB's Strategy and Policy Department supporting the civil society consultations in Viet Nam.

⁴ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/305351/laopdr-cps-cso-consultation.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/189091/identifying-business-ngos.pdf>

that corresponded to ADB project locations: Myanmar (Burmese), Karen Pwo, Karen S'gaw, Shan, and Mon. The two posters, which corresponded to the first two brochure topics, were printed in the same five languages. Because of the high demand for the materials, the TA financed reprinting of the materials in 2016. Although the TA intended to support the production of radio spots, changes in the relevance of radio in the project areas led to the decision to cancel that activity and instead finance the reprinting of the materials in local languages. The field testing of brochure content demonstrated to ADB the low level of understanding about ADB among CSOs and target communities. The posters and brochures appeared to reduce the number of basic questions asked about ADB during consultations.

Output 2. An analysis of opportunities for ADB-civil society-DMC collaboration in Lao PDR was completed. There is general recognition by both ADB and many of its stakeholders in Lao PDR that strategic engagement with civil society represents an opportunity to increase development effectiveness, drive more innovative and efficient projects, and manage risks. The report recognized that while there are many opportunities to increase engagement, a focus on clear and transparent communication to address areas that are currently barriers to collaboration is necessary.⁶ The report outlines opportunities for these stakeholders to work together on ADB-financed initiatives to leverage the best resources and expertise available to deliver effective, innovative and efficient development projects.

Inputs of the project comprised (i) 2 international consultants for 1 month each, and (ii) 5 national consultants for a total of 13 months, all engaged by ADB on an individual basis. In addition, the project supported 17 resource persons. The consultants all performed satisfactorily. ADB, as executing agency, performed adequately. The workshops were of good quality, as were the knowledge products and reports generated under the TA. Clients indicated satisfaction with the TA's outputs. Changes made during TA implementation were in response to demand from resident mission and project teams and ensured the TA was meeting the needs on the ground.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

The project's outcome, improved communications and interaction with civil society in SERD DMCs, was achieved. The TA was effective, as across the SERD portfolio, the quality of civil society participation has increased. During CPS preparation, SERD staff in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam involved civil society participants in more meaningful ways than information sharing meetings; examples included inviting peer reviewers from civil society and inviting resource persons to advise on how to reach out effectively to CSOs during CPS preparation. Other countries sustained initiatives introduced under the TA, such as Viet Nam, which secured additional funding to provide more in depth training on civil society engagement following this TA's training. However, the staff survey proved to be an ineffective way to measure knowledge of key civil society actors in relevant sectors in SERD DMCs because of the ranges of types of engagement, the different ways in which they engaged in ADB-financed projects, and challenges in measuring staff knowledge of these actors. Therefore, the outcome was evaluated through documented communications and interactions resulting from the TA-financed initiatives. Although impossible to confirm, the lack of new civil society concerns in SERD projects may be a result of increased SERD staff's knowledge and engagement with key civil society actors in their areas of work.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA is rated successful. The inputs led to the intended outcome of improved communications and interactions with civil society in SERD DMCs, and the TA objective is sustainable, as ADB, CSOs, and DMC governments have better capacity to collaborate for development effectiveness.

Major Lessons

Small funds made available to complement ongoing ADB-financed projects and initiatives such as CPS preparation can make a big impact on the quality when invested in civil society participation. Increasing local ownership of ADB-financed projects enhances sustainability and reduces civil society concerns being raised. In 2014, SERD reported 11 projects with civil society concerns; in 2016 only 3 projects did.

Although the individual TA-financed initiatives were made more sustainable through increased civil society participation, ADB must support civil society engagement more systematically to sustain and expand the improved development outcomes. The TA was relevant to the needs of SERD DMCs, yet its outcome is not sustainable without ADB's commitment to greater civil society participation.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

ADB's NGO and Civil Society Center is now providing technical assistance to similar requests from all regions. This support should build from the examples provided in this TA and continue to allow funding for requests that arise during project implementation. Further ADB commitment to civil society engagement would institutionalize the gains from this TA and strengthen development outcomes.

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⁶ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/47376/47376-001-tacr-en.pdf>