

ADB
Asian Development Bank

Development Department
Regional and Sustainable
7 September 2005

Mr. Hemantha Withanage
NGO Forum on ADS, inc.
85-A Masikap Extension, Central District
Diliman, Quezon City 1101, Philippines

Dear Mr. Withanage,

Thank you for your interest and involvement in the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Water Policy implementation review. Our President, Mr. Haruhiko Kuroda, has requested me to reply on his behalf.

I understand that you have several queries regarding the focus, process, and scope of the implementation review. ADS has set up an expert review panel to guide the review process, 5 years after the Water Policy was approved in 2001. The focus of this review is to assess policy implementation, if recommendations are made to revise the policy itself, they will be taken up under a separate exercise.

Every component of the implementation review is being conducted in a manner that ensures broad stakeholder participation* transparent proceedings and reporting,; and wide dissemination of the policy and the results and recommendations of the review. Moreover, ADB's website, www.adb.org/water, is serving as a clearinghouse for regular updates and information about the wafer policy and the comprehensive review planned this year.

Regarding the selection process for the review panel, ADS set up the panel lby the end of March 2005. The selection of panel members considered the desirable range of expertise and experience across regional perspectives, gender, and key areas targeted in ADB's Water Policy: national policy reform, water resources management, water service delivery, conservation, regional cooperation and communication, and governance.

As outlined in their terms of reference (TOR), the review panel members are 6xpected to meet three times over the course of the review to examine various inputs, discuss stakeholder feedback, and prepare the panel report. During the final meeting in early December,; the review panel is expected to finalize the panel report and recommendations to ADB management.

Regarding the selection of the in-country consultations, regional department director~ who serve on the Steering Committee for the Cooperation Fund for the Water Sector at ADS recommended that up to seven consultations be scheduled in countries representing the five regional departments at ADS. Recognizing that it is not possible to hold consultations in every country where ADS has water projects, the schedule and country selection were coordinated with the Resident Missions, related regional events, and other ADS policy reviews planned for 2005. In November, a regional workshop is planned at ADS Headquarters in Manila :

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Regarding your concerns about the scope of the review, the review questions and the WaterAid case studies that you highlight in your letter do not cover the full scope of the review. In fact, the review questions you outline in your letter were excerpted from a draft report for the Cambodia consultation, and represent only a subset of the questions asked in- breakout groups in the in-country consultations.

In addition to the seven key areas outlined in ADB's water policy, the comprehensive review will also consider a number of key internal and external issues and drivers relevant to implementing ADB's water policy and strengthening efforts to address the region's water sector needs. In its first report posted on our website in May 2005, the review panel outlined a list of 26 key focal areas for the review, including dams and development. A complete list is included on the web page: <http://www.adb.org/water/Policy/review-panel-work-session1.asp> for your review.

In addressing these key topics, the review panel will obtain feedback gathered from several different modalities, including in-country consultations, regional workshops, water-related conferences, ADB staff workshops, surveys and comments gathered on ADB's water website, interviews, case studies, desk study of various project documents, and involvement in external research studies relevant to the review.

During the in-country consultations, participants are asked to provide their assessment of ADB's water policy implementation, highlighting progress, remaining challenges and constraints, and required actions to improve performance in key areas outlined in the policy: water sector reforms, integrated water resources management, and water services delivery both in water supply and sanitation and irrigation and drainage. Participants are also asked to recommend necessary investments and new opportunities that ADB should pursue in the short and medium-term to improve water sector operations. Questions focus on issues of coverage, efficiency, and sustainability, as well as capacity, participatory practices, and social and environmental concerns.

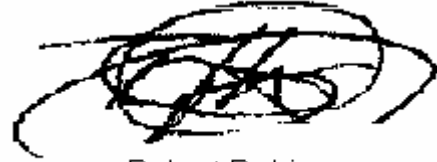
In addition to answering the survey questions and breakout group questions, participants are also given the opportunity to identify and express any pressing concerns that were not covered in any of the consultation exercises. Based on feedback received after the Cambodia consultation, questions were updated to include the issues of affordability and access.

Regarding the case studies in question, WaterAid initiated the proposal to inform ADB's water policy implementation review by working with its partners and other civil society organizations to examine the effectiveness of a sample of ADB-supported water and sanitation projects. While ADB agreed to cofinance a portion of the project to assist with their efforts, WaterAid is leading the research and financing for these case studies. You may wish to consult with Sameer Dossani, your predecessor who we understand sits on the peer review board for WaterAid's study.

NGOs, research organizations, and academe are welcome to contribute case studies and research findings to inform the review. In fact, in presentations at water-related conferences and during the NGO portion of ADB's annual meeting, and in ADB's e-bulletin for civil society organizations, Partnership Newsletter last spring, we invited NGOs to participate and contribute to the review by completing our surveys, participating in our in-country consultations, submitting comments on our website, and contributing research findings to inform the review.

For regular updates and more detailed information on ADB's water operations and the water policy implementation review, we encourage you to visit our website often at <http://www.adb.org/water>. Please feel free to share our web links and background materials with your networks.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Dobias', enclosed within a large, irregular scribble.

Robert Dobias

Director, Gender, Social Development and Civil Society Division

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