Introduction

Why an ADB Environment Monitoring Project?

In 2002, a number of organizations participated in a campaign to influence the formulation of the ADB's first Environment Policy (subsequently passed in November, 2002). The campaign was seen as both a success and a failure. A success in that at long last, the ADB appeared to be taking some environmental concerns seriously (the passing of the policy was itself evidence of this) and a failure in that much of the language that campaigners wanted in the document was left out.

In light of this experience, it became clear that NGOs and grassroots campaigners needed some hard evidence to document that the ADB's approach to environmental management was (and remains) deeply flawed. Furthermore, regardless of what was on paper, there was the question whether the ADB was actually implementing what it had agreed to both after the passage of the 2002 Environment Policy and, before that, in the environment-related regulations in the ADB's Operations Manual.

This project, begun in 2003, represents a first step towards this end. Though all the projects discussed in this book were passed prior to passage of the 2002 policy, it is hoped that a close examination of these projects will lead to an understanding of problems of implementation. In addition, it is our hope that this book will be the first of several efforts to look at the ADB's environment portfolio. Should the same exercise be undertaken in about three years time, looking at projects passed after 2002 from the point of view of grassroots community, then the ADB can be properly measured. And should it be found that the ADB is causing more harm than good in terms of environmental protection (a statement to which, we think, an impartial observer would have to agree after looking at the evidence collected in this book), one can only hope that the institution will learn a lesson.

How to use this book

This book essentially contains two parts. The bulk of the book is a look at four ADB projects that impact their respective environments. The four case studies are 1) The Southern Transport Development Project in Sri Lanka (compiled by Hemantha Withenage of the Sri Lankan Working Group on Trade and IFIs); 2) The Sundarbans Biodiversity Conservation Project in Bangladesh (compiled by Ashraf ul-Alam Tutu of the Coastal Development Partnership/SBCP Watch Group); 3) Nucleus Agro-Enterprises TA loan in Papua New Guinea (compiled by Lee Tan of Australian Conservation Foundation/Friends of the Earth Australia); and 4) Marcopper Mining Project in the Philippines (compiled by James Esguerra, Philippine consultant).

These case studies serve to document ongoing violations of social and environmental justice from a grass roots perspective as well as to monitor these projects against the ADB's own policies and guidelines. While the ADB is not accountable to any court in the world, it may be held accountable for projects that have violated its own policies through its Accountability Mechanism (also known as Inspection function). Therefore the emphasis on policy violations is of special importance for affected communities that would like to obtain some kind of redressal or compensation.

The second part of the book, comprised of the final chapter, includes summaries of all ADB provisions related to the environment. These summaries are intended as user-friendly monitoring tool that affected communities and NGOs can use to review ADB compliance with its environmental provisions. The results from such monitoring can also be used for preparation of claims to ADB's Accountability Mechanism, also known as Inspection Function. The Inspection Function serves as a recourse mechanism for project-affected people. If affected people and NGOs believe that they have been harmed by an ADB project, they can appeal to the Inspection Function. A key responsibility of the Inspection Function's Compliance Review Panel (CRP) is to establish whether ADB has violated its policies in a particular project. This monitoring tool can help project affected people and NGOs review ADB's compliance to its environmental policy provisions and therefore help facilitate the preparation for claims to the Inspection Function. The system we have devised for the monitoring tool is easy to use: simply identify the year in which the project you are interested in was passed, and take a look at the policies that that project should be bound by.