

17 May, 2001

Mr. Robert Dobias,
NGO Network Coordinator,
Office of Environment and Social Development,
Asian Development Bank

Dear Robert,

We are writing to you further to our discussions at the ADB Board of Governors Meeting in Honolulu last week. Following a series of meetings exploring specific ADB policies and the more general issue of ADB / NGO collaboration, we wanted to formally raise a few issues which emerged as common constraints NGOs are experiencing in seeking to work more closely with the ADB. These comments need to be considered in the context of the great diversity within the NGO community - in philosophy, structure, size and objectives in terms of working with the ADB. They represent common issues for some agencies seeking to collaborate more closely with the ADB.

1. **Participation Constraints.** Most NGOs have limited resources, both financial and human, usually tightly tied to existing programs. To ensure broad and relevant NGO participation at critical points in the consultative framework to operationalize the poverty reduction agenda, (eg. Poverty Analysis, Country Operational Strategy, Poverty Focused Project Identification) the **ADB needs to provide a funding mechanism.** Similarly, to ensure a broader participation at the NGO seminar alongside Annual Board of Governors' Meetings, some funding for local NGOs at least needs to be considered.
2. **Policy Constraints.** The existing procurement guidelines were identified as constraining NGO involvement in ADB projects. With a limited resource base, most NGOs cannot participate through the competitive tender processes laid down in the procurement guidelines. As the ADB has identified involvement with NGOs as representatives of civil society as being key to the achievement of poverty reduction, a more flexible policy is required. This policy should include both **more active ADB identification of how NGOs can be involved in specific activities – eg. participatory poverty assessments, project components or other inputs - together with procurement guidelines which are less prohibitive for NGOs.**
3. **Accreditation.** The NGO sector is broad and diverse. At this meeting concern was expressed about a number of “so-called” NGOs which were emerging purely in response to the opportunities presented for working with ADB. NGO representatives advised the ADB that some **process of NGO accreditation be instituted.** Rather than introducing a new process, the ADB could recognize existing national NGO accreditation processes that apply to most NGOs.

As NGO representatives we appreciated the many opportunities provided during the Annual General Meeting for consultations with senior bank staff on a diverse array of policy issues. We feel, however, advance notice of the proposed program, at the time when invitations to register was sent to NGOs, would have encouraged more NGOs to attend and improved the level of discussion. Also scheduling of the meetings so as not to clash with the alternate program at the University of Hawaii would have helped to maximize participation. Finally a more accessible location would also have facilitated greater NGO participation at these meetings.

These comments are offered in the spirit of the continuing constructive dialogue and we look forward to discussing these and other issues with the new NGO centre in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Undersigned NGO representatives at the ADB Board of Governor's Meeting, 2001.

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