



Trainees learn dressmaking at a training center, run by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), an industry association, as part of the Skills for Employment Investment Program to scale-up qualifications of the labor force to contribute in higher growth of priority sectors.

Under Tranche 2, which was approved in November 2016, the government is expanding its partnerships with industry associations to include three additional sectors: agro-processing, tourism and hospitality, and nursing and health technology. Industry associations will provide \$3.5 million in cash and in-kind contributions to the project.<sup>24</sup> This represents the highest level of CSO engagement, i.e., partnership, with significant resources contributed by the project partners, in this case, the industry associations.

Lastly, CSOs provide guidance and oversight to the project. All industry associations are on the project steering committee, along with other CSO representatives. As one project team member said during an interview, “Industry associations know the market and industry demands much better than we do. It was not possible to deliver good training without them.” The project procured each of the industry associations for this program using single-source selection (direct contracting), where only one contractor is invited to bid. Direct contracting was justified in this project in recognition of the unique role the industry associations have in advising the government on the skills required for each industry sector.

### **Networks of grassroots CSOs are effective mechanisms for community coordination.**

The Bagmati River Basin has important cultural significance for Nepal. The Bagmati River is the major river in the Kathmandu Valley, and its water is considered holy. It also provides most of Kathmandu’s drinking water. Many cultural and religious ceremonies take place on its banks. Over the years, rapid urbanization and poor solid waste management turned the river into the equivalent of an open sewer with high fecal loads. In the dry season, 80% of the river flow is withdrawn for town water.

In 2013, ADB approved the Bagmati River Basin Improvement Project, which aimed to institutionalize integrated water resources management. The original project engaged CSOs for three packages: community mobilization, rainwater harvesting, and watershed management. For community mobilization, ADB engaged the Integrated Development Society Nepal (IDS), an experienced national CSO. IDS built a civil society platform, the

<sup>24</sup> ADB. [Bangladesh: Skills for Employment Investment Program - Tranche 2](#).

Bagmati Beautification Concern Platform (BBCP). The BBCP is a network of 457 small community CSOs.<sup>25</sup> It elected a committee and provided training in leadership, governance, GESI, gender analysis, event management, and integrated water resource management. The platform members enforced agreed practices for community waste segregation and recycling, vermicomposting, and rooftop gardening. The platform members encouraged community vigilance around solid waste dumping in the river.

When additional financing for the Bagmati River Basin Improvement Project was approved in 2019, the project team wanted to continue the strong community engagement and knew a grassroots network would be a valuable asset.<sup>26</sup> Familiar with IDS's work on the BBCP, the project awarded a contract to IDS in August 2020. The IDS assignment was to continue work on the NGO package for River Environment Improvement Through Community Leadership Development.

IDS is delivering the same strong community coordination and networking it provided under the original project to improve the health of other parts of the Bagmati. Also, under the additional financing for the project, IDS is continuing to work with the existing civil society platform, which covers Sundarijal to Sinamangal. IDS also works on other stretches and tributaries in the lower basin (Sinamangal to Balkhu) to form and link new civil society platforms into a federation of civil society platforms. They also continue promoting waste segregation, composting, and recycling. IDS works with local schools to raise awareness of solid waste management best practices and with *guthis* (local social organizations) to develop heritage management plans for the maintenance and restoration of heritage buildings to be restored along the river. IDS has produced successful communications campaigns and tutorial videos as part of the project, with one video receiving over 14,000 views from local people through these extensive networks. They also produced two documentaries on the project.

The success of the Bagmati River Basin Improvement Project depends on the active participation of communities and civil society organizations in conserving and managing basin water resources.



<sup>25</sup> The platform was registered as an NGO, thereby giving it a legal status.

<sup>26</sup> ADB. [Nepal: Bagmati River Basin Improvement Project – Additional Financing](#).

IDS reported that high volunteerism is a key driver behind BBCP. The community was initially skeptical of IDS activities but eventually IDS successfully engaged them in leading river health monitoring. IDS also reported that the platform has good prospects for sustainability. The BBCP is undertaking various small-scale social enterprises and is still going strong on its own merits. IDS suggested that volunteerism in the lower basin under the current project will be more challenging as the more urbanized areas of Kathmandu have less of a volunteer ethos. IDS work on this project demonstrates that gaining community trust and having community credibility are important elements for working successfully with grassroots networks, which often comprise mostly volunteers.

**Recurring collaboration enhances local CSO capacity to perform essential community coordination roles.** In 1989, a group of human settlement activists established the Sevanatha Urban Resource Center in Colombo to improve shelter and livelihood options for urban poor people.<sup>27</sup> Sevanatha has been involved in this sector ever since and has a high level of expertise in this area of work. In 2013, ADB hired Sevanatha Urban Resource Center under the Greater Colombo Wastewater Management Project and Sevanatha successfully delivered community coordination activities. The outcome of this work was the construction of a small sewerage network, treatment, and disposal setup in an underserved settlement in Colombo. The construction was carried out by the beneficiary community through their community-based organization. The CSO managed the overall construction activities.



**Engaging with CSOs as contractors has a very positive impact on community awareness generation, participation, and inclusion.**

— Respondent from survey on ADB's CSO engagement in South Asia

In 2012, ADB approved the MFF Greater Colombo Water and Wastewater Management Improvement Investment Program with the overall objective of improving water supply and wastewater service and management in Greater Colombo.<sup>28</sup> The CSO reported that its first assignment under Tranche 1 allowed them to develop capacity to engage with implementing agencies, to implement a project involving construction and procurement of materials and labor, and to become more accustomed to ADB's financial reporting requirements. From the government and ADB sides, the CSO's experience in managing social issues and community mobilizing helped them resolve several matters of concern.

Under Tranche 3, approved in 2015, the Sevanatha Urban Resource Center was recruited to (i) carry out a socioeconomic analysis, GESI activities, and assessment of wastewater service delivery; (ii) facilitate the project management unit (PMU) and the design, supervision, and institutional development consultants in management of resettlement and post resettlement

<sup>27</sup> Sevanatha Urban Resource Centre. [About Sevanatha Urban Resource Centre](#).

<sup>28</sup> ADB. [Sri Lanka: Greater Colombo Water and Wastewater Management Improvement Investment Program \(Facility Concept\)](#).

program; (iii) lead community awareness and people's participation; and (iv) implement citizen education for wastewater service management, and health and hygiene education.<sup>29</sup> Sevanatha Urban Resource Center is building on the work it did under earlier tranches. One success factor in Sevanatha's engagement is how SARD built Sevanatha's capacity over many years to engage with ADB and the partner government on projects of this nature.

Another success case of Tranche 3 was the consultation and participation plan. The plan outlines the role of civil society and the contracted NGO, and includes targets for participation, the type of participation envisaged, the objectives, who is responsible, the time frame, and the respective budget for each line item. Having this level of explicit detail in the project planning documents plays a major role in ensuring that activities unfold as planned. This level of planning is rarely detailed in ADB project documents and thus an area for SARD to consider for improving engagement (Table 2). Participation plans (also called consultation and participation plans) are required if the summary poverty reduction and social strategy (a mandatory annexure to the report and recommendation of the President) indicates that the project has planned meaningful CSO engagement.<sup>30</sup> In this case, a participation plan is mandatory and should be linked to relevant project documents and resources identified to help ensure the planned participation of CSOs is delivered. A CSO participation plan may be embedded within the GAP, GESI action plan or safeguards documents only if all planned CSO engagement is already documented there. SARD, and all ADB regional departments, should observe this requirement. Consultation and participation plans address the objectives of the CSO engagement, types of participation, timeframes, budget, and responsibility for engagement.

**Table 2: Snapshot of the Consultation and Participation Plan for the Greater Colombo Water and Wastewater Management Improvement Investment Program Tranche 3**

C&P Activity	Target Stakeholders	Type of Participation	Objectives of the C&P Activity	Responsible Unit/Persons	Time Frame	Cost Estimate
1 consultation workshop with underserved settlements communities (end users and affected persons) from the project area (half day)	Representatives of under served settlements	Information sharing Consultation	Introduce the project, highlighting its importance and benefits Discuss importance of participation in waste water management groups in underserved and unserved areas, maintenance of facilities, opportunities for participation in project Mitigate potential conflict	PMU, DSIDC, in cooperation with project NGO, and contractors	Year 1	Consultation workshop = \$750

C&P = consultation and participation, DSIDC = design, supervision, and institutional development consultants, NGO = nongovernment organization, PMU = project management unit.

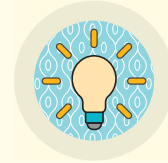
Source: ADB. 2015. *Greater Colombo Water and Wastewater Management Improvement Investment Program – Tranche 3. Periodic Financing Request Report*.

<sup>29</sup> ADB. 2015. *Greater Colombo Water and Wastewater Management Improvement Investment Program – Tranche 3. Periodic Financing Request Report*.

<sup>30</sup> Refer to Appendix 1 for the definition of “planned meaningful CSO engagement.”

## TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Private sector representative organizations, which many people do not realize are CSOs, are excellent partners on some ADB-financed projects, particularly in education. They can contribute significant expertise and cofinancing.
- ✓ One example of niche expertise that CSOs provide is strengthening the design of capacity development activities in project implementation.
- ✓ Networks of grassroots CSOs are powerful instruments for wide-scale community coordination activities and can work with communities to generate high levels of community ownership and sustainable project interventions, thus increasing impact.
- ✓ Grassroots CSOs require support (capacity development, materials and other resources, funding) to be effective implementation partners in ADB-financed projects.
- ✓ Local CSOs bring value in community coordination where they can bring or gain trust and local understanding to a project.
- ✓ Repeat engagement of CSOs provides ADB with the opportunity to build an organization's capacity to work with ADB and government processes.
- ✓ Single-source selection, or direct contracting, may facilitate procurement when engaging a CSO with a niche or specialized skill set.
- ✓ Detailed project documentation of the roles of CSOs, particularly in their terms of reference and in consultation and participation plans, facilitates smooth implementation.
- ✓ Project teams need to orient CSOs to ADB processes early, particularly at procurement.



## Special Initiatives during Project Implementation

**CSOs offer innovative strategies and approaches that strengthen project implementation.** CSOs play a number of special roles that strengthen project implementation. In this section, projects from India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka demonstrate the roles that CSOs play in SARD projects to strengthen project implementation. In the first example, CSOs act as a bridge among project stakeholders to deliver innovative outcomes on a water project. In the second example, CSOs will bring tailored community behavior change approaches to an urban waste project. In the final example, an international CSO worked closely with private sector stakeholders to optimize project impact.



**CSOs act as a bridge among project stakeholders to deliver innovative outcomes.** In three districts of West Bengal, over 15 million people live with substandard groundwater quality. Drinking water in these three districts is contaminated with chemicals, including arsenic and fluoride. Groundwater salinity is also an issue. Approved in 2018, the ADB-financed West Bengal Drinking Water Sector Improvement Project aims to provide 24/7 continuous household rural water supply to 2.6 million people using a smart water management system across 66 *gram panchayats* (governing bodies at the village level). The West Bengal Drinking Water Sector Improvement Project is partnering with the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific (JFPR), the Urban Climate Change Resilience Trust Fund, and the World Health Organization.<sup>31</sup>

The project recognizes the need for widespread, continuous, and meaningful participation of stakeholders focusing on poor and vulnerable groups. The project contracted two NGOs to undertake this work, Sigma Foundation and Taru-Ramakrishna Mission East Medinipur (a consortium). The Sigma Foundation is a research and advocacy NGO with a strong grassroots base in the community. The Ramakrishna Mission also has a strong base in the community and has been working with local people for decades and has a high level of credibility and strong community support.

An important impact of engaging Sigma and Ramakrishna Mission is the role they play as a bridge between project stakeholders. Each NGO covers one project district and actioned initiatives to strengthen project implementation. In each project area, working closely with government agencies and the project implementation unit, they take on many roles, including implementing safeguard plans and completing household surveys on water supply. They raise community awareness and implement components of the GESI action plan, including school outreach. The project team described this as their “root-level” work, i.e., the core activities they are contracted to do.

However, the work they do extends beyond those tasks. The NGOs act as a bridge not only between the community and the project team but also among all project stakeholders. According to the ADB project team, the project implementation unit, the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), the contractors, the smart water management consultant, and the design and supervision engineers all work with the NGOs. It is a complicated network of organizations, but the project involves the NGOs in each aspect to some degree, including the more technical engineering components. “The NGOs are very important stakeholders in this project,” said one team member. The NGOs’ engagement in multiple aspects of the project, and their key facilitation roles, attest to their importance during project implementation.

These NGOs undertake other work that directly strengthens implementation strategies, such as working with the *gram panchayats* and the implementing agency and the PHED on an agreement for managing water supply to rural areas and 80 of the state’s 114 municipalities. The project’s sustainability rests on a new agreement as to who will operate and maintain the system between the *gram panchayats* and the state government PHED. The NGOs helped draft this model memorandum of understanding, playing a vital facilitation role

<sup>31</sup> ADB. India: West Bengal Drinking Water Sector Improvement Project.

between the *gram panchayats* and the state government. They also work with the PHED and local communities in identifying locations for water management centers, which will house smart water supply assets and equipment in each project area. These NGOs play a central role in ensuring the project succeeds and is sustainable.

Another special strategy used to strengthen project implementation is developing model water and sanitation safety plans. ADB arranged for the Centre for Science and Environment, a CSO in New Delhi, to deliver a training session for the two project NGOs on how to prepare a water and sanitation safety plan. Both NGOs have now prepared plans. This is a novel approach and ADB hopes the government will use this strategy for developing water and sanitation safety plans across the state, not just in the 66 *gram panchayats* for this project. Sigma Foundation received the Water Champions 2021 Award from the Centre for Science and Environment for developing their model plan.<sup>32</sup>

**CSOs apply tailored community behavior change approaches.** With growing tourism and urbanization, the Maldives faces the challenge of what to do with over 774 tons per day of mixed solid waste brought to the regional waste management facility in Thilafushi. The Greater Malé Environmental Improvement and Waste Management Project provides a sustainable solution with a modern waste collection, sorting, transfer, treatment, and disposal system.<sup>33</sup> The project uses a 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) community awareness and behavior change strategy. The project will finance enhanced community-based island waste management systems on 32 inhabited outer islands and will benefit 216,000 people, roughly half the population of the Maldives.<sup>34</sup>

Educating and changing the behavior of people in a large project catchment area requires the expertise of a CSO. The government will recruit a CSO under an attached JFPR grant to deliver strategies to support project implementation and deliver the behavior change campaign.

The CSO will design and deliver a tailored public awareness and community capacity building campaign, working with local CSOs and other stakeholders, using social and traditional media, to motivate sustainable behavior change for solid waste management in local communities. It will also support the government with GAP implementation.

For the community awareness component, the CSO will develop a public awareness and communications strategy and plan. The communications strategy will include activities to inform and guide behavior change interventions. One of the targets is to provide support to the communities to institutionalize the change. The communications strategy will also guide the development of a project website and the setting up of social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube). Social media and Viber groups are well-used so messages can be easily passed on and these platforms work well in the Maldives.

---

<sup>32</sup> Sigma Foundation. [SIGMA Foundation bags the Water Champions 2021 Award by CSE, New Delhi.](#)

<sup>33</sup> ADB. [Maldives: Greater Malé Environmental Improvement and Waste Management Project.](#)

<sup>34</sup> ADB. 2018. [ADB Assistance to Improve Environmental Protection in Maldives.](#) News Release. 29 June.

**CSOs work closely with private sector stakeholders to optimize project impact.** The Skills Sector Enhancement Program approved in 2014 is a results-based loan improving the employability of the Sri Lankan workforce, particularly young people. The project focuses on four sectors: building and construction, light manufacturing and engineering, information technology, and tourism and hospitality. The project is working with industry sector skills councils (ISSCs), which are CSOs representing the private sector.<sup>35</sup> The partnership between the ISSCs and the government is formalized in a memorandum of understanding.



**Orient the NGOs, give very clear guidance on how an ADB project should operate. It is important to orient the NGO partner before applying and after onboarding to avoid any misunderstanding.**

— Interviewee for ADB's report on CSO engagement in South Asia, 2015–2021

The additional financing for the Skills Sector Enhancement Program, with an attached JFPR grant, was approved in 2018 and set additional GESI targets for TVET participation.<sup>36</sup> The project team determined that strengthening private sector engagement in TVET delivery and supporting women's employment in unconventional areas were tasks that could be best performed by an international NGO and conducted a roadshow to talk to NGOs with expertise in TVET and gender in Sri Lanka. When the project advertised the consultancy in 2018, the team contacted multiple NGOs to inform them of the opportunity. Unlike most commercial consulting firms, many of these NGOs were not registered in ADB's Consultant Management System (CMS). The project team shared information on how these NGOs should register in CMS to submit expressions of interest. This initial support to orient them to ADB and government processes was a necessary step. As a result, six international NGOs registered in the CMS for the first time and most of these submitted expressions of interest.

The project awarded the contract to Plan Australia, the grant implementation firm, under the attached JFPR-funded grant on Demonstrating Innovative Approaches for Private Sector and Women's Empowerment in Technical Vocation Education and Training in Sri Lanka.<sup>37</sup> Oxfam in Sri Lanka is now leading this work after the Plan Australia Sri Lanka Office closed down in 2020.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> ADB. 2021. *Sri Lanka: Skills Sector Enhancement Program (Additional Financing). Updated Program Implementation Document.*

<sup>36</sup> ADB. *Sri Lanka: Skills Sector Enhancement Program - Additional Financing.*

<sup>37</sup> ADB. 2018. *Sri Lanka: Skills Sector Enhancement Program (Additional Financing): Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction Grant - Demonstrating Innovative Approaches for Private Sector and Women's Empowerment in TVET in Sri Lanka.*

<sup>38</sup> It was understood that Plan Australia had envisioned working with Plan Sri Lanka on this contract but Plan withdrew from the country in late 2019. Oxfam Sri Lanka is now leading this work under a subcontract from Plan Australia signed in May 2020.



Oxfam brings its expertise in engaging with and linking private sector representative organizations and community-based organizations to maximize the project's impact. Oxfam's role is supporting the ISSCs in activities and subprojects that increase the employability of young women, offer entrepreneurship development programs with a focus on young women, and help industry sectors apply gender-inclusive recruitment practices. For the tourism ISSC, this includes working with local homestay associations, which are private sector-oriented CSOs. Oxfam helped the ISSCs convene a women's advisory council to increase their sensitivity to women's issues. The new women's advisory council includes women representing larger multinational and national companies and successful women business leaders and includes 19 members with representatives from three regional chambers of commerce (also classified as CSOs). The women's advisory council helps the ISSCs sharpen their gender focus and plans, provide technical support to industry planning on gender initiatives, and supports industry and networking events. For example, a businesswoman from the women's advisory council offered seminars for 300–400 women on issues in the TVET sector. Oxfam sees the involvement and commitment of these high-level businesswomen as a unique and innovative aspect of the program.

### TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ CSOs offer innovative and tailored strategies and approaches that strengthen the implementation of ADB-financed projects in South Asia.
- ✓ CSOs can work effectively on private sector-focused projects to increase project impact.
- ✓ Engaging CSOs in all aspects of the project (including the technical side) increases their engagement and ability to provide specialist services and offer innovative solutions.
- ✓ Clear documentation on the roles for CSOs on ADB projects helps all parties maximize the added value CSOs bring and reduces misunderstandings.
- ✓ Orienting CSOs to ADB and government process early in the engagement assists with smooth project implementation.
- ✓ Scoping CSOs and their capacities to deliver during project design helps achieve maximum benefit from CSO engagement.
- ✓ ADB's CMS is challenging for CSOs to navigate and they need support.

