ANNUAL REPORT

2021

Asia Development Alliance

ADA

Asia Development Alliance

Foreword from ADA Chair and Co-Chairs

Dear ADA Members Friends and Colleagues

Greetings of Solidarity!!

We are pleased to present ADA Annual Report 2021 to you. This report showcases ADA activities in the last year focussing on the issues of civic space, good governance, and transparency during the COVID pandemics, through our outreach, capacity building, and advocacy programs. During the last year, many countries introduced emergency measures following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic which has further concentrated power in governments and weakened civil society organizations (CSOs). On the other hand, the countries that responded well to the pandemics also enjoyed robust government measures and the vibrant civil society that go hand-in-hand. However, it is also true, that during the last year, hardly any country found mention of 'shrinking civic space' in the voluntary national review (VNR) during the High-Level Political Forum.

ADA has been garnering all support from its members, partners, and other rightsholder groups and has successfully advocated on the shrinking civic and democratic spaces in various online forums with a specific focus on SDG 16 plus and as a result of this massive support, we were able to organize our very successful 1st SDG 16 Plus Forum- Asia, during the UNGA, in September 2021. The Forum came up with the SDG 16+ declaration which was drawn up based on wide-ranging presentations and deliberations during the 2021 SDG 16 + Forum, and inputs were provided by participating organizations from across the Asia region and internationally.

Apart from our research-based advocacy efforts, we have been consciously emphasizing the capacity-building approach during the 9th GALA which was done for the Myanmar CSOs in partnership with the UNDP Myanmar. The main aim of the training program was to capacitate the civil society actors on various aspects of SDG with a special focus on 16 plus.

We recognize that our efforts would not remain the same without getting support from our members, trusted partner Forus and European Commission, JANIC and our continued support from TAP Network, AGNA and CIVICUS and the UN institutions like ESCAP and UNDP Regional Hub, and most importantly our all national CSO platform members and other CSO partners from across the globe. We are also very thankful to the Code-NGO for their continued help and support in handling our financial matters and special thanks to the ADA secretariat, Steering committee, and ADA advisors for their invaluable support and solidarity.

Together with our members and partners, ADA will continue to advocate for the rights of the people and civil society seeking equality for all. Some of the key highlights for 2022 would be training and capacity building programs on SDGs, especially SDG 16 Plus, finance for development, advocacy papers, and supporting and working in partnership with our members, partners, and allies at various national and international forums to assure inclusive and participatory framework.

In Solidarity

Hideki Wakabayashi (ADA Chair), Jamila Asanova, Linh Nguyen Phuong (ADA Co-Chairs)

on behalf of the ADA Steering Committee and Secretariat
Dated: 08-05-2022

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Executive Summary

The Asia Development Alliance (ADA) is a not-for-profit and non-governmental regional civil society platform in Asia established on 2 February 2013 at the founding assembly in Bangkok, Thailand. The founding assembly aimed to (i) represent national CSO platforms in Asia; (ii) to serve as a key connector to national governments, UN organizations, and other relevant stakeholders; and (iii) to create an enabling environment for civil society organizations and active citizenship.

The outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020 has severely challenged the democratic credentials of governments worldwide. Public health orders, crafted to reduce COVID-related causalities, have only restricted human freedoms. Civil and political freedoms have been most cruelly stripped bare and not for the health needs of the citizens, but for a mere power grab in many countries. The citizens have registered their protests, however, in the spirit of 'we are all in this together, they have generally cooperated and complied. As Covid is curtailed, governments are incrementally uplifting the orders. Civil society organizations have been playing a key role in defending democratic space and protecting human rights and freedoms in Asia.

ADA too, as one of the key players in the global arena, intensified its advocacy for an enabling environment for civil society organizations to influence public policy at the national, regional, and international levels that is centered on democratic and human rights values, as envisaged by the 2030 UN SDG Agenda.

During the last one year, ADA organized and spearheaded more than 25 national, regional or international advocacy events around the issues of enabling environment for the civil society in view of deteriorating civic and democratic space in many countries of Asia, right from Afghanistan, Myanmar to many south and southeast Asian countries where civil society has been curtailed by governments who use oppressive laws, cut off funding and harass civic actors who speak out in defense of democracy. In others, civil society needs support to become more effective in holding government to account, advocating for democratic reform, fighting corruption, protecting human rights, or fostering democratic participation.

Last year, ADA intensified its approach and worked more closely with its members in terms of advocacy and outreach and further collaborated with the UN ESCAP, UNDP, and Global Alliances at the regional and global levels, participated in and organized side events, and worked closely with many Asian member states apart from the global CSO platforms like Forus, TAP Network, Action for Sustainable Development, AGNA and many more.

ADA also added three new members from Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, which were approved by the steering committee. We organized 12 Steering Committee meetings, one every month. ADA strongly believes on increasing accountability and transparency between government and civil society and other aliies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Asia Development Alliance (ADA) is an innovative regional network empowering civil society for effective social change. It gathers around 33 national CSO platforms (NPFs) from South, Southeast, Northeast and Central Asia, altogether representing over 12,000 member organizations. ADA's long-term goal is to encourage Asian civil societies to increase their vigilance and collective efforts against violations of democratic and human rights ideals and to address shrinking civic space.

ADA has advocated for an enabling environment for civil society organizations to influence public policy at the national, regional, and international levels that is centered on democratic and human rights principles, as envisaged by the 2030 UN SDG Agenda. ADA is recognized as a legitimate and mandated representative of the voice of CSO platforms across Asia.

ADA is also a regional network among members of Forus, CIVICUS AGNA (Affinity Group of National Associations), and other global CSO platforms engaged in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) apart from C20 thematic issues.

During the last year, even as governments in the region took action to help those most in need and respond to ongoing crises like pandemics, conflict situations in the south and east Asia, financial crises (Sri Lanka), and moreover the Russia-Ukraine war has had a huge impact on Asia leading to intensifying refugee crisis, continued depleting resources and more so. The vulnerability has increased, and huge gaps persist across different population groups. Amid these challenges, the region is not on track to achieve the 2030 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. In fact, progress in the region has slowed down, and with every passing year, the 2030 targets are further out of reach and with the current pace There is, therefore, an added urgency to ensure that responses to the pandemic in the region and at the national level accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

Looking at the background, our activities in 2021 focussed around three core areas at the National, Sub-regional, Regional and Global levels, as per our commitments for the year.

![ADA – Asia Development Alliance logo]

a. Strong Governance and Accountability

SC members of ADA (2020-22)

ADA Steering Committee consists of 7 elected members and 2 nominated advisors :

Mr. Hideki Wakabayashi- JANIC-Japan
(North-East Asia)
Chair

Ms. Jamila Asanova , Civil Society Development Association – ARGO, Kazakhstan
(Central Asia)
Co- Vice-Chair- ADA

Ms. Linh Phuong Nguyen , MSD- Vietnam
(South-East Asia)
Co-Vice-Chair-

Mr Arjun Kumar Bhattarai ,
NGO Federation of Nepal
(South Asia)
Treasurer – ADA

Ms Sin PUTHEARY,
Cooperation Committee of Cambodia
(South-East Asia, Internal Auditor – ADA

Ms. Urantsooj Gombosuren , CSOs Network on SDGs – Mongolia
(North-East Asia)
Co-Chair- C20 Working Group

Mr. Abdul Awal,
Campaign for Good Governance – SUPRO,
Bangladesh
(South

ADA Advisors

Mr. Anselmo LEE,
Korean Association For Human Rights Studies, RoK

Mr. Harsh Jaitli,
Voluntary Action Network India

ADA Constitution

In April 2020, the [ADA constitution](#) was also finalized with support and inputs from ADA steering committee members, advisors, and all ADA members, which was finally approved by online voting.

ADA has been organizing monthly steering committee meetings for almost four years now in order to keep the governance board actively engaged. This has also improved the decision-making process within ADA. The decisions regarding new members' induction, capacity Development and advocacy efforts, ADA sustainability including fundraising opportunities, and meeting potential donors have been constantly discussed.

The Steering Committee has been very conscious in their efforts to represent ADA in various external networks like Asia Democracy Network (ADN) , Action for Sustainable Development(A4SD), Forus, TAP Network, Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCEM), and others in a very responsible manner. This has further strengthened the bond between the secretariat and the Steering Committee, which is a good sign for ADA's governance transparency and inclusive participation.

In 2021, we organized 12 Steering Committee Meetings, all Online due to the COVID-19 pandemics

b. Capacity Building

In 2021(April 2021 - March 2022), we organized the following Training and Capacity Building Programs at national and sub-regional levels

• Glo-cal Advocacy Leadership Academy (GALA), Myanmar, 01-03 December 2021: Promoting People-centered Partnership for Peace, Prosperity and Planet (PPP): An introductory training for civil society organizations in Myanmar

UNDP Myanmar and Asia Development Alliance (ADA) organized these three days of introductory (virtual) training programs aiming to build the capacity of CSO and NGO networks to carry out an independent review of the progress of implementing SDGs in Myanmar from the lens of poverty and environment nexus. This joint UNDP and ADA initiative provided awareness-raising opportunities to CSO/NGOs in SDG monitoring and reporting by bringing in regional experiences. This first activity was training on "Promoting People-centered Partnership for Peace, Prosperity, and Planet (PPP) through Advancing Climate Justice".

• Information Sharing Session on SDGs , Myanmar, January 31, 2022
To follow up on previous discussions in December, UNDP in collaboration with ADA organized an information-sharing session with the following objectives:
o To seek feedback on the formation of a potential CSO-led SDG initiative network, and
o To share up-to-date information on upcoming regional SDG forums.
The majority of participants joined the first capacity-building workshop in December 2021. The meeting was largely informal in setting and participants were encouraged to openly share their views.

c. Outreach and Advocacy

During April 2021 - March 2022i.e., the extended global lockdown, ADA participated in more than 25 national, regional or international advocacy events and represented the voices from Asia. As a result of participation, ADA's visibility and outreach magnified both at the regional and the global levels. ADA has also emerged as a strong regional CSO platform from the global south representing the national CSOs platforms from Asia , voicing their concerns with great credibility.

ADA Statements

- CSO Collective Statement on VNR - APFSD, March 30, 2022
- ADA statement during South Asia Forum on Sustainable Development, 15 Nov, 2021, Colombo
- The Statement of North-East Asian Civil Society 2021
- Declaration of the SDG 16 Plus Forum, Asia
- South Asia Statement on Afghanistan Crisis

ADA in HLPF 2021

We organized two following side events
Accelerating the SDGs Monitoring and Implementation actions using SDG 16+
This UN HLPF official side event was organized by the National Planning Commission of Nepal with Asia Development Alliance (ADA) Forus, TAP Network, KCOC, OHCHR, KOICA, JANIC, and the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance. It brought together experts from government, civil society, and the UN institutions to address critical challenges pertaining to the monitoring of SDG 16+, which refers to the fact that SDG 16 ("Peaceful Just and Inclusive Societies") is interlinked with many other SDGs and should thus be implemented as such, in a transversal manner, enhancing issues like government accountability, building trust and sustaining peace.

Watch the recording
Why the Multi-Stakeholder Engagement and Capacity Building Commitments of SDG 17 should be prioritized in the Asia-Pacific region
This side event focused on the implementation of SDG 17 ("Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development") in the Asia-Pacific Region in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic. Additionally, Forus launched its new SDG 17 report. This side event was led by the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG) with the support of the Economic Planning Unit of the Government of Malaysia. Other partners included the Government of Japan, UNESCAP, ADA, Forus, JANIC, KOICA, KCOC, ASEC, and the Malaysian CSO SDG Alliance.

Full program here.

Watch the recording

ADA in Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

We presented CSO Collective Statement on VNR - APFSD, on March 30, 2022

ADA Organised and co-hosted the following side events:

- Policy Coherence in Climate Justice – hosted by ADA
- The side event broadly looked at these two questions:
- How far have the countries in Asia/ Global South been able to address the policy coherence between SDG target 13 and Paris Agreement on climate actions? Case studies from Malaysia, Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India Nepal, etc.
- What are the key lessons learned in delivering the policy aspirations on the ground, especially how local people are involved in the process of climate governance and in fiscal decision-making from a rights-based perspective?

• PCSD is seen as a framework for analyzing the synergies and trade-offs between and across sustainable development policy throughout all stages of the policy-making process and ensuring inclusive, participatory, and transparent decision-making.
• PCSD is now recognized in global governance as a key 'Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and a key element for delivering the SDGs at the global level and to be pursued by all governments
• People's Scorecard- with APSD as co-host
• Why VNR – with Pakistan Development Alliance as host
AWAZ Foundation Pakistan #PDA4SDGs Global Call To Action Against Poverty, Planning Commission Of Pakistan #AsiaDevelopmentAlliance organized an official side event on How can #VNR be more Inclusive?

Delegates from Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism join in solidarity with peasants and farmers across the globe in celebration of the Global Day of The Landless.
Civil society organizations, people's movements, and grassroots sectors held a silent protest at the United Nations Conference Centre 9th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD).
Together, they call toward genuine agrarian reform, to stop land-grabbing and the corporate capture of agriculture, and to stop fascist attacks, human rights violations, and killings of rural peoples and farmers!
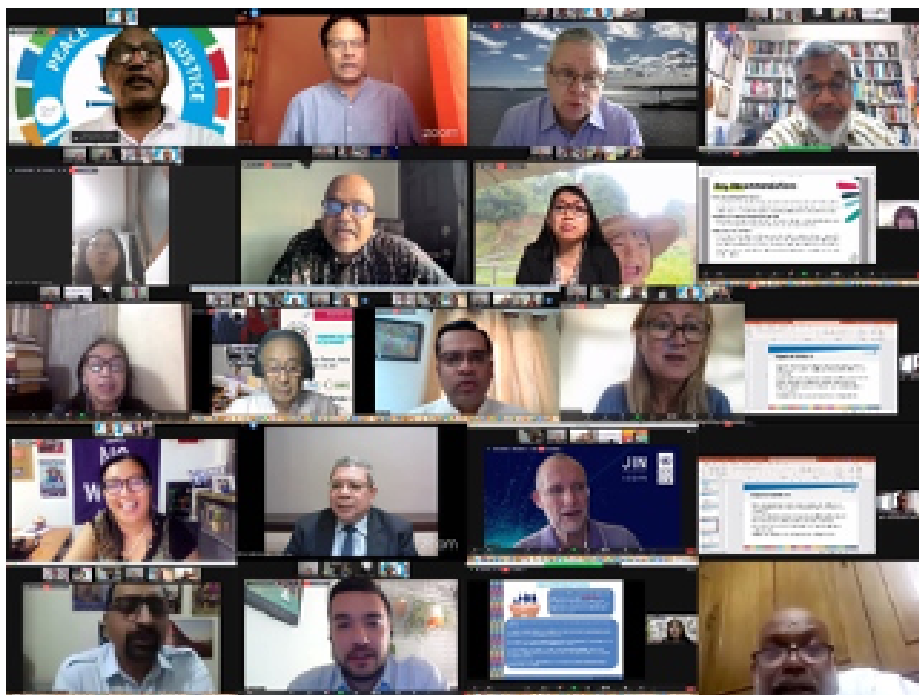
1st SDG 16+ Forum, Asia- 2021 – Organised by ADA

The first SDG 16+ Forum, Asia was organized by Asia Development Alliance and its members, Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (TAP) Network, Forus, and Global Call to Action against Poverty on September 22, 2021. This forum was part of the Global People's Assembly on the sidelines of the United National General Assembly, attended by national, regional, and global partners, national governments, and the UN institutions bringing voices together to reiterate our belief in inclusive institutions, a just society and embracing democratic values and concluded that Democracy and Peace can only be made with people and not without them.

The Forum came up with the SDG 16+ declaration which was drawn up based on wide-ranging presentations and deliberations during the 2021 SDG 16 + Forum, and inputs were provided by participating organizations from across the Asia region and internationally.

Yuksalish Non-governmental nonprofit organization, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform, and Climate Watch Thailand were added as two new members of ADA and thus totaling 31 Members including 3 observers in 23 Countries until March 31, 2021.

Focus in 2022

The civil society in most the Asian countries has been facing extreme harassment attributed to the continued shrinking space, as a result of poor governance, accountability, and transparency issues and their restricted participation in the national plans and policies apart from information gap and lack of disaggregated data and no reliability of the citizen's led data.

One of the important issues that we came across was various human rights violations coupled with a lack of accountability in justice, especially in relation to climate action that builds upon People's centered partnership for peace, planning, and prosperity on the human rights treaties and linking them with the development. The SDGs have been also put to criticism on account of having the private-public money put together for the so 'called development' It's not the development that makes the people richer rather it becomes all the more problematic. Mekong River dam collapsed and how the Interlinkages of the SDGs, that full fill one goal but ignore others, systemic issues, and policy coherence and human rights issues hence there is also a need to understand why SDGs should be adapted apart from, difficulties in their implementation/understanding and Challenges faced. If the SDGs are not matched with state sovereignty, it could be a challenge. Hence, it's important to create linkages between the SDGs the human rights to make it more relevant

Also, through our training and capacity building, advocacy, and outreach efforts, we propose to organize our GALA training program to build the capacities of the CSOs so they could be able to contribute to the official VNR process or write their own shadow/parallel report. We also propose to support a few CSO colleagues to represent their countries in the official C20, Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development – APFSD, Democracy forums, High-Level Political Forum, and another such engagement opportunity as resource persons. The efforts will be also made to create /strengthen the national CSO coalitions in a few countries like Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Myanmar.

Goal and Objectives

Goal: ADA aims to strengthen and empower the capacity of national CSO platforms that bring together a wide range of civil society experts and activists to enhance and influence public policies and effectiveness and impact of civic engagement apart from advocacy on SDGs by providing ground-breaking and innovative capacity-building tools and programs, and also learn from and benefits from the invaluable expertise, experiences and unique perspective of its members.

Objective 1: Training and Capacity Building

To become one of the key players in training and capacity building for effective advocacy and campaign through the human rights-based approach to development (HRBA) from national to global levels, using interlinking SDGs (with a focus on Goal 16) as a tool for multisectoral engagement.

Expected Outputs

ADA members have the capacity to be legitimate and influential actors representing NGOs' voices in their national environment.

Action

• ADA organizes (virtual or physical) training and capacity building events (GALA) at sub-regional/national/and regional levels
• (depends on the COVID Pandemic situation)

Indicators (Yearly basis)

- At least 1 capacity-building event organized (GALA) 2022
- ADA support at least 2 members to participate in national/regional/global events in 2022
- Two CSO/shadow reports each by July 2022

Objective 2: Advocacy

Enhance effectiveness in representation and coordination among Asian CSOs at the international level (regional and global)

Expected Outcomes
ADA's capacity to take the lead on international advocacy initiatives and to influence decision-making processes has been strengthened

Action
- ADA hosts 2nd SDG 16 Plus Forum- Asia
- ADA's organizes side events during regional and global events like APFSD (Bangkok), HLPF (New York), C20 (Italy), various democracy forums, and other events in 2022
- ADA's participation/representation at national/regional/global platform]
- ADA co-authors research reports/position papers, shares with UN institutions/member states and present them at various national and internal forums

Indicators (Yearly basis)

- Declaration of SDG 16 Plus Forum-Asia
- At least 2 ADA members speak as resource persons at various national/regional and global forums (APFSD, HLPF, C20)
- One position paper on CSO's engagement in the G/C 20 before C20 2022
- Linking SDG 16 Plus

Engagement with international organizations

ADA engages with the following key inter-governmental and multilateral institutions and processes in Asia and globally as a priority;

① UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)
② UNESCAP – Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)
③ UNDP Regional Knowledge Exchange (RKE)
④ Asia Development Bank (ADB)
⑤ G20 Summit (G7, BRICS, MIKTA)