Asia Development Alliance Strategic Plan

Introduction

It was decided at the SC meeting during the preparation for 2021 GBM to make a review of the ADA Strategic Plan for 2020-2022 with the goal to draft the ADA Strategy for 2023-2025. The review was done by the ADA Steering Committee members in relation to implications on ADA advocacy at national, regional and global level from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the civic space, socio-economic conditions, inflation and crisis caused by the Russian war in Ukraine. The review along with ADA activities laid the basis for some changes which were reflected in the parts of external and internal analysis and strategies of the ADA Strategic Plan for 2023-2025. The review discussed by the SC members, circulated through ADA membership and approved at the GBM of 2022.

This strategy is built upon a set of foundational pillars that form the basis of ADA's work, including the organisation's Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Working Principles.

Vision: Strong CSO Platforms and the representing inclusive voices and the citizens enjoy all human rights .

Mission: Strengthening civil, society action through capacitating, communicating, collaborating & coordinating and advocating

Brief history of ADA: Our work and achievement

Asia Development Alliance (ADA) is a regional network of 31 National NGO Platforms (NPF) in 25 countries in Asia. ADA works to strengthen the capacities of members to ensure their effective and efficient participation in achieving the SDGs of Agenda 2030. ADA also advocates for the defense of an enabling environment for civil society organisations in the context of continued shrinking civic space to influence public policy at the national, regional and international level.

ADA is also a regional member of Forus, CIVICUS AGNA, TAP and other global CSO networks and coalitions engaged in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since its inception in February, 2013, ADA has emerged as a strong network for members, as a credible, legitimate, effective and sustainable institution, actively contributing to building it as an international community with growing membership with a pan Asia outreach.

As an international CSO learning platform, ADA brings together and strengthens CSO networks at global, regional and national level through joint collaborative efforts on preparing advocacy reports on national VNR process, issues of policy coherence, climate change, producing a tool kit on CSOs engagement in the VNR process, national indicators for

goal 16, global report on goal 16 based on national case studies in collaboration with the global platforms like TAP network, Forus etc.

ADA is reclaiming the discourse of development and connecting language, bringing forward diverse opinions of members, prioritizing areas linked to SDGs, deploying civic diplomacy to secure resources for CSO networks and helping in pushing the local agenda and defending the CS space (Central Asia, NE Asia)

In an efforts to localise SDGs , ADA has been organising training and capacity building initiatives called Glocal Advocacy for leadership in Asia (GALA) at regional, sub-regional and national levels, a bottom – up approach to train more than 500 CSO professionals/activists who have been leading their training and advocacy efforts to engage with various stakeholders on SDGs implementation, monitoring and review mechanism at the local levels apart from representation at various platforms. ADA has organised these trainings in Bangkok, Nepal, Cambodia, Bhutan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Kazakhstan , etc. to name a few with support from Forus and KOICA, TAP Network and other regional platforms.

Who we work with

Asian civil society: By Asian civil society we mean firstly our member national platforms, individual CSO members working for achieving the SDGs in their home countries advocating at sub-national, national, regional and global levels, other local level civil society organizations and movements working on human rights, environment and development issues relevant to the SDGs, particularly those of youth, regional and national networks who are challenging the structural challenges in engagements for a just development policies and practices.

Strategic partners: Including but not limited to, international and regional non-governmental organisations, international and regional networks & alliances, funders and non-traditional allies such as artists and art institutions, academia, research institutions, media and advocacy platforms to build solidarity and amplify our strategic interventions for achieving the SDGs, introducing human rights based approach, enhancing civic space for development policy strategy and planning in Asia.

State institutions and policy makers: Institutions and/or mechanisms for influencing pro SDGs policies and regulations and enhancing accountability at the national level such as Development Planning, Managing and Oversight Institutions (ministries, committees or commissions), likeminded parliamentarians, executives including ministers and officials.

Mechanisms: We facilitate the participation of member national platforms, individual member CSOs, Asian civil society representatives and conduct advocacy with international and regional mechanisms such as the United Nations High Level Political Forum on the SDGs, UN ESCAP Asia Pacific Forum on SDGs, sub-regional Multi-stakeholders Forums on the SDGs, C20 forums...

Diplomatic community, bilateral and multilateral development and financial organizations: Including embassies, missions and international development organizations, development banks and their representatives at international, regional and national level from across the world to influence their agenda, discussions and to achieve outputs in favor of Asian civil society partnerships to contribute in achieving the SDGs in particular the SDG16 with all targets, SDG17.14, SDG17.16 and SDG 17.17   targets in their countries

The context we work:

External analysis: The current context is characterized by uncertainties and changes, including democratic backsliding, disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging diseases, global financial crises, the worsening climate emergency and environmental degradation, economic recession caused by Russia-Ukraine war and overall shrinking civic space. Whether direct or indirect, all these impact the progress in achieving the SDGs. In response to the challenges Asian governments tend to adopt authoritarian models of governance. This can be observed through the cases in number of Asian countries like Myanmar, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and many others how autocratic regimes come to replace democratic institutions. CSOs in Asian countries face common challenges with the fragile democracy and hostile governments. CSOs access to foreign funding has been restricted by different laws such as the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act (FCRA) in India, or the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act in Bangladesh . It becomes a common trend in developing countries to tighten the regulations on financial transaction and reporting in the name of prevention from terrorist attacks and money laundering. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war are other contributing factors hindering Asian civil society to source and mobilise financial resources for sustainable operations.

  Despite these challenges and the context ADA is situated in, we are encouraged by our members and partners' advocacy work to mobilise for achieving the SDGs, protecting civic space, democratic governance, access to information, the right to participation in decisions for development priorities, demanding accountability and effectiveness from governments to deliver their commitments to sustainable development. A growing number of civil society beyond the ADA membership are equipped to engage with regional and international mechanisms on the SDGs, especially the UN HLPF, in attempts to amplify voices of people by providing firsthand messages of their issues. ADA will continue its role to encourage and support members to build their capacity for engaging with governments to improve policy coherence for sustainable development (SDG 17.14 target),   to enhance global partnerships complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources for achieving the SDGs (SDG 17.16), to monitor and demand the commitments of governments to encourage and promote effective partnerships including civil society partnerships building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships (SDG 17.17).

Internal analysis: The above points shows our strength on these different fronts as it boosts NGO capacity to interact with national governments and authorities while providing knowledge, intelligence, support and solidarity across countries and regions at the same time.

We want to capitalise on these strengths:

- Our collective achievements so far as described above.
- A Committed leadership from the governance board (ADA Steering Committee)
- Long-term support from Forus/EU and intermittent support from global platforms like TAP Network, Action For Sustainable Development which has allowed continuity and flexibility over the first period of building ADA capacities up to now.
- Representativeness with active members in 19 countries all over Asia.
- Good relations among members based on trust and respect.
- Strong relationships with other CSOs networks and platforms (CIVICUS, AGNA etc.) and the potential of strategic partnership development with other key players

Our Weaknesses

- The registration of ADA is still in the process and not completed.
- One person secretariat (with one RF) with limited capacity to develop and fulfill fund-raising strategy to secure funds for effective work.
- ADA receives and disburse fund through a financial agency (Code NGO)

Strategic goal

ADA together with its members aims to strengthen the capacity of national CSO platform to enhance and influence public policies and effectiveness and impact of civic engagement and advocacy on SDGs at the local and national level , regional and global levels with focus on monitoring and review of UN Sustainable Development Goals

Objective 1: To strengthen the ADA' institutional, organizational and operational capacities

- Develop and implement ADA funding strategy (possible actions: setting up a team from member organizations on resource mobilization, mapping up potential donors and build and keep regular communications, drafting project proposals for seeking funds, and implement a special plan for it etc.) ;
- Building and strengthening ADA institutional capacity for strategy development, review of implementation, review of policy and procedures by setting up a strategy team;
-Establishing among members sub-regional groups: SA, SEA, CA, NEA etc. for easy organizing and advocacy to engage UN ESCAP sub-regional forums on SDGs for-example.
- ADA resource mobilization team and ADA strategy development team will consist of member organizations from each sub-region.

Objective 2: To develop capacity of members for effective advocacy at national, regional and global levels

-Needs assessment survey among members on critical development issues and certain skills development,

-Organize capacity building trainings, workshops, experience sharing dialogues/consultations according to the needs

- Set up a team from members on membership development which may help in conducting needs assessment survey, training, workshops, experience sharing dialogues/consultations etc.

Objective 3: To conduct advocacy through members for creating effective development policy monitoring and accountability mechanisms at   national, regional and global levels

-Continue policy research and may repeat research on same theme to make more in-depth analysis;

-Produce position papers for advocacy purposes at different levels;

-Organize workshops on policy challenges and solutions at national, regional and global levels;

-Assessments of advocacy activities results;

-Set up an advocacy and campaign team from members.

General observations:

1. Research

Past few years there has been an increase in the government legislation and requirements in response to the money laundering and terrorism financing laws in most of the regions, especially Asia for instance. Many ADA members are already working with CSOs across the regions, and it is an area ADA can focus on as well.

a. Enabling operational environment for civil society operations

- Rebuild the mechanism for developing documentation (Good practices/achievements) on contribution of CSOs across the region, to improve our own narrative and proposed research on
    - Law on Association and NGOs
    - Finance for Development
    - Cyber Law and National Internet Gateway
    - Mid-Term review of National Strategic Development Plan and their implementation
- Those research processes could have crosscutting issues such as the importance of decolonization of the systemic process to resources and research based advocacy on how to collaborate with ethnic and indigenous and marginalised communities.
- Also, research on what's done on civic space in the region? (using both primary or secondary data)
- Continued work on CSO accountability - SDG 16 Plus
- The need to strengthen the CSOs to be more transparent and accountable about the work they do, to strengthen the narrative about the importance of CSOs.
- Evidence generation on implementation of global commitments especially SDGs and UPR by national governments and then advocacy on findings to hold governments accountable

b. Sustainable Development Goals
- Policy Coherence in Sustainable Development
- Monitoring of SDGs in terms of financial gaps and multi-stakeholders partnership and support for CSOs partnership
- ADA should be a good network for going crises to crises

c. Climate

- Community-led led relocation as a result of climate change impact needs a united CSO voice to advocate for the impacted communities.
- Climate governance / justice
-

d. Business of Human Rights

- Research on how the businesses (corporate sector) and Public Development Banks are operating (whether and what governance and accountability measures in place)

2.   Advocacy

- Advance in the creation of a storyboard session, as a pilot set in Asia.
- Knowledge exchange with members and their experiences of advocacy at the sub-regional level.
- Small funding for decentralised activities with a regional view.
- Look at cross-cutting issues from inter and intra-regional experience sharing
- ADA needs to focus on coordination with the national and the regional CSO coalitions by identifying common agendas for advocacy actions at the regional and global level.
    - Deliberations on shrinking financial resources , finance for development
    - Climate justice, people's vaccine
    - Connect national agendas with international issues.
        - Take into account the sub-regional scenarios of advocacy (SAARC, ASEAN etc).
        - Week of United Action around Global events- HLPF, APFSD, C20, G7
    - make use of the available data- ADA could take that survey
    - Follow SDGs calendars for campaigns
- Advocacy on pro-people's policy
- The gap created as a result of the disconnect between national NGOs and the Government needs to be filled. This is to be done through constant engagement with the government mechanisms at all levels.
- Engage more with regional bodies including the UN ECOSOC on cross-boundary issues like civic space, increasingly challenging democratic context (coups d'etat), and increasingly obnoxious NPO regulations.

Few specific advocacy potentials -

Asia
- Involvement in the sub-regional forums like ASEAN, SAARC
- Engaging with the UN ESCAP's Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and People's forums
- Writing policy papers on C20, Voluntary national review, finance for development etc

3.   Capacity Building

Currently, most of the ADA members are working with state Networks/ coalitions to improve the operational environment at the sub-national level, thereby expanding its reach to grassroot organisations within the state.

- Enhance the capacity of the member organizations.(finance and technical)
- Preparedness for disruption by using collective voice from the members

- We depend heavily on legitimacy from Govt, focus more on community work

Organizations specific Capacity Building Proposals
- ADA can facilitate the capacity building on SDGs, linking human right, democracy and development apart from creating shadow reports and CSOs statement
- Offer capacity building to other ADA members on advocacy and policy influence, civic space, and resource mobilization.
- Strengthen the capacities of organizations in advocacy and share good practices.

4.   Outreach
- ADA outreach narrative to attract new actors and members
- Presence and participation in the Civicus Civil Society Week. How to work as a network in different regions, facing different challenges.
- Choose a problem to deepen, make an awareness campaign, do some fundraising and make a collaborative project (national organizations as regional focal points)
- What the organizations shut up and what we do not share. Peer experience.