

# PARTICIPATION TOOLS FOR THE PACIFIC



## PART 1: Engaging Pacific Civil Society Organizations

This piece offers practical advice as to why working with civil society is important in the Pacific and how greater engagement between CSOs, government, and the Asian Development Bank can be achieved.

### INTRODUCTION

#### What is Civil Society?

Civil society is distinct from the government and the private sector and consists of a diverse range of individuals, groups, and nonprofit organizations. They operate around shared interests, purposes, and values with a varying degree of formality and encompass a diverse range — from informal unorganized community groups to large international labor union organizations.

Of particular relevance to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are nongovernment organizations (NGOs), community-based and people's organizations, foundations, professional associations, research institutes and universities, labor unions, mass organizations, social movements, and coalitions and networks of civil society organizations (CSOs) and umbrella organizations.



Source: Adapted from CIVICUS

#### Why engage CSOs?

ADB recognizes the unique strengths that civil society brings including local presence and specialized knowledge.



Source: V. Bhargava. 2015. Engaging Citizens and Civil Society to Promote Good Governance and Development Effectiveness. *The Governance Brief*. No. 23. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

## TYPES OF CSOS IN THE PACIFIC

Civil society in the Pacific is a diverse group of informal, formal, membership-based, advocacy, service-providing, local, national and international organizations and networks. Its thematic focus includes:



child rights and welfare



environmental protection



good governance and transparency



climate change



education and capacity building



housing



community development



economic empowerment and poverty alleviation



human rights



conflict prevention



food security



health



customary land rights



forest protection and good management



family welfare and domestic violence



disability rights and welfare



gender equality and women/girls' rights



wildlife protection



disaster risk reduction and emergency response



youth issues

### International Nongovernment Organizations (INGOs) / Local Nongovernment Organizations (LNGOs)

These professional, intermediary, and nonprofit organizations provide or advocate providing services for economic and social development, human rights, public welfare, or emergency relief. Their various names include mass organizations (in the People's Republic of China and the former Soviet Union) and private voluntary organizations. International NGOs are international organizations not founded by an international treaty. They are typically headquartered in a developed country.

*Examples:*

#### LNGO

Red Cross societies, National Women's Federation, Women and Children, Crisis Center, Tonga

#### INGO

WWF, Oxfam International

### Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

These grassroots organizations seek to directly resolve their members' concerns and advance their members' well-being. Their functions include activities on economic, social, religious, and recreational issues.

*Examples:*

water user groups, microcredit associations

### Informal or Unorganized Civil Society Groups

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*Examples:*

water user groups, microcredit associations

## Foundations

These nongovernmental entities, as nonprofit corporations or charitable trusts, offer grants to unrelated organizations, institutions, or individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes.

### *Examples:*

Ford Foundation, Aga Khan Foundation

## Professional Associations

These organizations represent their members' interests who engage in certain occupations or professions. They may also enforce standards on their members' profession.

### *Examples:*

associations of engineers, chambers of commerce

## Independent Research Institutes/ Academia

These independent nonprofit organizations conduct research and analysis and disseminate their findings and recommendations.

### *Examples:*

Divine Word University, PNG Institute of National Affairs

## Labor Unions

These formally organized associations of workers unite to advance their collective views on work-related issues, often organized by industry or occupation. They frequently associate themselves with umbrella federations, congresses, and networks.

### *Examples:*

Fiji Nursing Association, PNG Trade Union Congress

## Coalitions/Networks of CSOs/Umbrella Organizations

These CSOs unite by a common geography, membership, set of objectives, or area of activity.

### *Examples:*

Civil Society Forum of Tonga, Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific, Kiribati Association of NGOs, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organizations (PIANGO)



# CHARACTERISTICS OF CSOS IN THE PACIFIC

Civil society in the Pacific is very diverse, but there are some trends and characteristics that assist in understanding the development and structure of civil society in the region.

## Civil societies in the Pacific have close connections with the village, clan-based, and chiefly systems.

Village, clan, and chiefly systems can be seen as the earliest expressions of civil society in the region. These systems of governance and societal organization existed in parts of the Pacific well before colonization, and many continue to exist today.

Chiefly systems are present in many Pacific island countries, and in some countries or regions, development activities are unlikely to succeed without the chiefs' agreement or assent. Village-based community groups are also prevalent throughout the Pacific and range from informal groups through to registered groups.

## Faith-based organizations are central to community life in the Pacific.

Beyond the clan, chiefly systems and village groups, many of the earliest CSOs in the Pacific were established by missionaries, who formed youth and women's groups. Missionaries arrived in the Pacific in the mid to late nineteenth century and included Anglicans, Methodists, and Catholics. The Anglican Diocese of Melanesia was formed in 1861.

Faith-based organizations are prevalent throughout the Pacific. Today the churches and faith-based organizations play key roles in delivering services to communities and organizing village life. Outside of the capital or major urban areas, the churches may be perceived as quasi-state bodies, delivering much of the health and education services. In some countries, the churches also advocate for social change. In Timor-Leste for example, the Catholic Church played an advocacy role during the Indonesian rule.

## Wantok and Kastom are important concepts for understanding civil society in Melanesia.

Important concepts for understanding civil society in Melanesia, particularly Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea, are wantok, 'big man' and *kastom*.

### WANTOK

*Wantok* are the ties that bind kinship, language and clan groups, and these ties can cut across organizational and political groups, including civil society. Wantok ensures a high level of community participation and social protection, but it also creates reciprocity and obligations between kin.

### BIG MEN

The related concept of 'big men' is also important, which ties in with the chiefly system and those who can earn power and status by working for the community.

### KASTOM

Chiefly systems are informed by *kastom*, which is often understood as, 'tradition', 'custom' or 'customary law' and in some cases, is often used as a metonym for the 'chiefly system'\*. *Kastom* is a fluid concept that is specific to place and embodies the distinctiveness of different groups. It involves traditional beliefs, practices, and norms and can influence decision-making.

\* B. Douglas. 2007. Christian custom and the church as structures in 'weak states' in Melanesia. In H. James. *Civil Society, Religion and Global Governance: Paradigms of Power and Persuasion*. Routledge. London and New York.

## System of rank and nobility is central to some social arrangements in Tonga.

Tonga is the only hereditary constitutional monarchy in the Pacific. The system of rank has been central to social arrangements in Tonga. Traditionally, Tongan society was based on a rigid hierarchy with the King at the top followed by nobles, talking chiefs, and commoners. Rank still pervades society in Tonga, with the village parliament fono led by noblemen still in existence.

Rank has implications for civil society, as it prescribes who can speak out and who should remain silent. However, with the democratic transition and growth of civil society, lay people are now engaging in conversation and debate with those of higher rank.

## Many local NGOs were established in the lead-up to or post-independence of Pacific Island countries.

Prior to Pacific countries gaining independence from colonial powers, particularly throughout the 1970s and 1980s, many international NGOs established their presence in the colonial territories of the Pacific.

- World Vision, Care International, Plan, Oxfam, Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific and Live and Learn have offices in many Pacific countries and these were often established during colonial times.
- The Red Cross Society was present in Fiji in 1952 and in Tonga in 1961.

Many local NGOs, beyond the clan, village-based or chiefly organizations, were established post-independence.

Locally-based or indigenous NGOs tended to form in the lead-up to or post-independence.

- The Solomon Islands Development Trust was formed in 1982.
- The Wan SmolBag Theatre in Vanuatu opened its doors in 1989.
- The Civil Society Forum of Tonga was established in 2001.

## Civil society development in some Pacific countries has been influenced by conflict and division.

*Examples:*

**Timor-Leste:** The development of civil society has been shaped by the major phases in the country's history: Portuguese rule, Indonesian rule, and the restoration of independence.

**Solomon Islands:** The ethnic conflict in the Solomon Islands and the establishment of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) led to some division within the civil society sector. There was also concern that RAMSI gave preference to international NGOs over locally-based organizations.

# 7 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES AND CSOS IN THE PACIFIC

These characteristics of Pacific CSOs have implications for how ADB and governments engage with local communities in a Pacific context.

## 1. Chiefly and traditional system

In many parts of the Pacific, unless time is taken to work through and with local chiefly or traditional systems, development projects may struggle to gain traction and community support.

*Examples:*

**Vanuatu:** It is imperative to gain the support of local chiefs before working in a rural area – if the local chiefs are not engaged and supportive, the community is unlikely to engage.

In some parts of in the Pacific, CSOs must seek permission to access communities from the local government administration (e.g. the provincial or district governor). After this, permissions must be sought from the village chiefs or elders, again before approaching community members.



### Chiefly system collaboration yields better development outcomes

The New Zealand government supported the Tanna Island integrated water, sanitation, and hygiene project. The joint project of World Vision New Zealand, World Vision Vanuatu and the Department of Water Resources in Vanuatu supplied water and sanitation to 6,000 people in 18 communities on Tanna Island in Vanuatu. World Vision, the implementing NGO, developed a philosophy of strong engagement processes with local communities, which resulted in a successful project in terms of clean water, gender and sanitation outcomes.

World Vision spent extra time during project implementation building trust with the local communities, which included working very closely with the local chiefs, employing many local Tannaese staff, recognizing local customs, and working with local church groups. By taking the time to integrate into the local community and structures, World Vision was able to build community trust and acceptance of the project. The project's development partner, the New Zealand government, worked with the World Vision to allow extra time to integrate into the communities, with subsequent improvements in development outcomes.

## 2. Role of women

### Status of women

Women in the Pacific face numerous challenges including lack of political representation, lack of participation in decision-making, gender discrimination, domestic and sexual violence and lack of employment opportunity.

Matrilineal societies are also present in the Pacific including the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau. In Tonga, the fahu custom describes the status of women within the family hierarchy.

### Engaging women in development work

Women are often organized at the village or local level, particularly through village women's groups or church women's groups. Local CSOs tend to engage with these groups in development work. For example, the Vanuatu Women's Centre works with local networks in each community to combat violence against women (the local Committees Against Violence Against Women).

Often, permission must be sought by CSOs before engagement with local village women's groups. For example, the Samoan Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development's assent must be received before any CSO approaches the Sui Tama'itai (village women's group) in Samoa.

In many communities in the Pacific, it is culturally inappropriate for women to attend or speak out in decision-making forums. As such, some CSOs hold separate women's meetings to gain women's views.



### 3. Role of the churches and faith-based groups

#### Church

Church women's and youth groups are pervasive throughout the Pacific and play a very active role in people's lives.

*Examples:*

**Solomon Islands:** Church and faith-based groups are engaged with by local authorities to spread messages, information or ideas. Typically, community announcements are made after or during church services on Sundays. The steward may make an announcement.

**Papua New Guinea:** Announcements may be made at the village commons (sing-sing) after church.

#### Faith-based CSOs

Faith-based CSOs are very active in the Pacific. These consist of both international (Caritas, Adventist Development and Relief Agency and World Vision) and local (Pacific Council of Churches, Anglican Church of Melanesia and the Vanuatu Christian Council) faith-based NGOs. In many Pacific countries, meetings or events will open and close with a prayer or a prayerful song.



#### Strengthening service delivery through churches

Recognizing the central role of the church and faith-based organizations in Papua New Guinea, the Australian government provided AU\$75 million to the PNG Church Partnership Program from 2004-2016. In partnership with the Governments of PNG and Australia, seven churches in PNG, and their Australian counterparts improved service delivery to local communities.

The project strengthened the capacity of the partner PNG churches and enhanced the engagement of the churches in PNG's public sector governance. Recognizing the pivotal role that the churches play-- oftentimes seen as a quasi-state entity-- in the delivery of health and education services in remote areas of PNG, the PNG Church Partnership Program expanded the capacity of partner churches to deliver pro-poor services, improved church capacity and strengthened inter-partner/church dialogue and communication.

The project evaluation noted that the institutional strengthening support provided was the most effective component of the project. It concludes building church capacity results in more effectively planned and managed pro-poor development activities in PNG.

Source: ADRA Australia. Papua New Guinea Church Partnership Program. *A Case Study in Sustained Investment in Church Development Capacity*.

### 4. Language and literacy

#### Language

The Pacific is very diverse linguistically with indigenous languages proliferating, and a range of European languages (English, French, Portuguese) also spoken in different countries.

*Examples:*

**Papua New Guinea** has over 600 indigenous languages while the Solomon Islands has over 100 indigenous languages.

**Timor-Leste** has had a range of national or official languages which reflect its conflict-affected history.

**Vanuatu** has three official languages: French, English, and Bislama.

**Fiji** has English, Fijian, and Hindustani as the most spoken languages.

#### Literacy

Illiteracy is also an issue that must be considered.

In some countries, promotional or communications materials are heavily picture-based and focus on story-telling, in part due to the oral culture and tradition of many Pacific Island countries. Some NGOs use comics with pictures and few words to mitigate illiteracy issues.



### Radio is the way to go in Solomon Islands

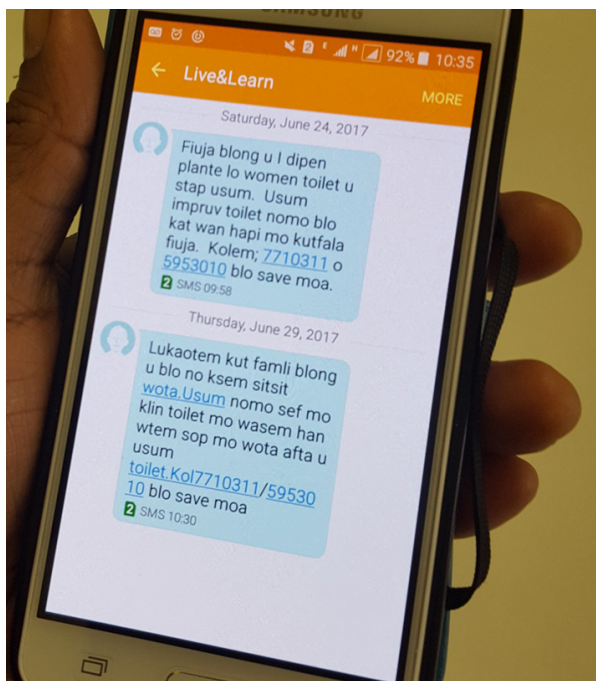
Radio is the medium with the greatest penetration in Solomon Islands, with over 90% of the population having access to radio. Radios can be battery operated and thus not connected to the grid. NGO Vois Blong Mere (Women's Voices) Solomon Islands produces a 15-minute radio show in Pidgin English that is aired on Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation. It has produced a four-part radio series on family and domestic violence. Catholic Communications also produces radio content and newsletters. One radio station, Gud Nuis FM, is church-owned.

The Solomon Islands has enjoyed a range of other community radio initiatives. The Solomon Islands Development Trust, a prominent CSO in Solomon Islands, prepares and broadcasts a weekly 15-minute radio program called *Reach Out*. It is broadcasted on the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation radio twice a week. The program focuses on sustainable livelihoods, transparency and good governance, peace, and development. The NGO Don Bosco ran a community radio station called Radio Bosco broadcast by volunteers for several hours a day, which focused on the Tetere community and provided spiritual guidance and educational information. United Nations Development Program conducted a program with the Government of Solomon Islands which established eight community-run FM stations in Isabel Province, linked under the banner of the Isabel Learning Network. The program started in 2006. Some listeners are in remote areas and use radios operating on solar power. They operate on the "Radio in A Box" or "FM Radio in a Suitcase" model. Several of these stations are still operating.

Source: Emma Walters with additional reporting from Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Community Media in Solomon Islands, and National Broadcasting Policy.



Radio is a popular medium for getting news and other information in Solomon Islands as it can be battery operated, reaching communities without electricity. Photo credit: ADB.



The NGO Live and Learn uses mobile phones for social messaging campaigns in Vanuatu. Photo credit: Emma Walters.

## 5. Use of mobile phone technology

Civil society in the Pacific is increasingly using mobile phone technology for spreading messages, alerting the community to issues, and for campaigns. While this medium is text-based, short, sharp community announcements are often made by text message.

Mobile phone penetration is increasing in the Pacific, with 4.1 million unique subscribers in 2014, compared to 2.3 million in 2009. This represents an annual growth rate of 12.6%, well ahead of the global and developing region averages for growth of mobile phone penetration.

While penetration is growing, it is still lower than other developing regions. At the end of 2014, the Pacific had a penetration of 37%, compared to the developing market average of 55%.



## 6. Patchy internet connectivity, but a taste for social media

While parts of the Pacific have access to reliable internet with reasonable bandwidth, many areas, particularly highlands, outer islands, and non-urban areas, have intermittent, little, slow, or no internet connectivity. This has implications for how ADB communicates with and receives communications from CSOs – ADB cannot assume that publishing materials online will reach all CSOs in a target area.

*Example:*

**Papua New Guinea:** Invitations to workshops outside Port Moresby are often delivered by phone, fax and by hand, as CSOs outside the urban areas may not have reliable internet connectivity or email addresses.

However, for some sections of civil society in the Pacific, the internet is proving a forum to campaign and connect.

*Example:*

**Solomon Islands:** Forum Solomon Islands International is a Facebook page for expatriate Solomon Islanders. It is highly active and robust in its criticism of the government. It has been registered as a CSO in the Solomon Islands.

Many other CSOs are active on Facebook in the Pacific.

## 7. Country and region-specific cultural traditions

There is a range of specific cultural traditions for each country of the Pacific, and in many cases, for different parts of the country.

*Examples:*

**Papua New Guinea:** Traditions and culture vary from clan to clan, region to region.

**Tonga:** If a non-Tongan is to engage with local communities then he/she must be highly skilled and knowledgeable about anga fakatonga or the 'Tongan way', such as the importance of presenting themselves humbly to be then given status.

**Fiji:** The cultural concept of madua (shyness) encourages acceptance and frowns upon the questioning of authority. This means that most often the chief or village elder has the final say in community decisions, and there are specific seating arrangements for community meetings, recognizing the social hierarchy.

In some countries of the Pacific, it may be more appropriate to meet with men and women separately. It is important to be conversant with the specific cultural traditions and social customs of the country in which one works.



### Community meetings in Fiji

For community meetings in many Melanesian countries, be prepared for a slower pace – both in preparation before the meeting and the meeting itself. In a typical rural setting, meetings may require participants to travel significant distances on foot and meetings often do not start on time. In addition, time must be given to allow for introductions, tea breaks, midday heat and home and work commitments.

Important meetings often begin and close with a formal ceremony. At community meetings, participants will sit cross-legged on traditional mats, usually observing a specific cultural protocol and seating arrangements, with gender and age playing a key part in designating participants' status. Traditional seating arrangements can impede lower status groups from fully participating. There is a group hierarchy around ceremonial kava drinking bowl, tanoa, which must be observed: those with higher status sit close to the kava bowl, while those with lower status sitting further away. As a guest or outsider, it is considered impolite to refuse the offer of kava. The concept of madua is important in Fiji. Translated literally as shame, or being ashamed, madua encourages respect of elders and an unwillingness to question authority.



In Fiji, visitors are invited to drink kava with village elders before doing business with the community.  
Photo credit: Ryan Cifra.

## 5 CONSTRAINTS OF PACIFIC CSOS

CSOs in the Pacific face many capacity constraints. Some are similar to the capacity constraints of the Pacific Island states as a whole while others are specific to the civil society sector.

### 1. Reliance on donor funding

Many CSOs are reliant on donor funding, particularly international donor funding. While funding may be high in times of crisis or emergency, international and local CSOs struggle for ongoing funding at other times.

Lack of funding impacts CSOs in several ways:

- Pacific CSOs find it difficult to retain highly skilled staff; many positions are filled by volunteers, with few or no paid staff;
- CSOs find it difficult to maintain or obtain necessary infrastructures such as equipment and physical resources;
- CSOs' internet and information and communications technology (ICT) capacity may be non-existent or limited;
- CSOs may tailor their activities to suit donor preferences; some CSOs operate on a project-to-project basis, rather than working towards an overall strategy. This is in part due to the scarcity of donor funds available for 'core' or operational or non-project-related salary funding. The requirements for pre-financing by CSOs and delays in disbursing funds to CSOs also cause capacity issues for Pacific CSOs.

In engaging with ADB, CSOs are keen to determine what funding is available for them, how long it will take and what the process is for accessing it.

It is very important for ADB and government implementing agencies when engaging with CSOs to be clear from the outset if there is funding (or no funding) available for them to access at the project level.

### 2. Difficulty meeting donor requirements

Many CSOs, particularly local CSOs, struggle to meet donor requirements in terms of proposals, reporting, governance systems, auditing, financial accounts and staff procedures.

#### Proposals and reporting

CSOs often put grant and proposal writing high on their list of capacity needs - this is high because of the overwhelming reliance of CSOs on donor funding for sustainability. The requirement to produce documents in English, and fill in forms with complicated logical frameworks in the inaccessible language (including Means of Verification, Objectively Verifiable Indicators, outcomes and output indicators, impact pathways) puts applying for funding out of the reach of some local CSOs.

#### Online bidding

Similarly, the requirement to bid online (such as through the ADB's consultant management system) is an onerous requirement for some local CSOs, particularly when internet and electricity connections are patchy.

#### Financial requirements

Many CSOs struggle to meet donors' financial requirements. Some local CSOs, particularly at the village level, will not have a bank account, let alone audited financial statements. Many CSOs' governance systems are weak, partly due to the lack of paid staff and high levels of volunteerism.



#### Donors adapt to Pacific context to support civil society

Many development partners in the Pacific recognize the challenges of engaging directly with local NGOs. Issues of less than optimal financial management processes, English language challenges, poor ICT capability, limited human resource capacity, and poor governance mechanisms are common with local NGOs.

Simultaneously, some development partners recognize that local organizations have deep connections with beneficiaries and local communities and understand local culture and power relations. A model exists in the Pacific with development partners engaging with larger and well-established NGOs and INGOs with these organizations in turn sub-contracting, partnering, and capacity-building with 'downstream' NGOs and CBOs. Development partners who utilize this approach include the Australian Government Department of



Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the New Zealand Government Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the European Union (EU) and others.

**DFAT:** Under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), DFAT contracts with major INGOs including World Vision, Care International, Oxfam, Save the Children. Each of these INGOs then allocates funding to local NGOs around specific projects. Under the PNG Church Partnership Program, DFAT contracts with the Australian-based large NGOs, which then each subcontract to their in-country counterparts.

**MFAT:** The NZ Partnership Fund for International Development (NZPFID) is a contestable fund where a New Zealand-based NGO partners with a local-based NGO, and in some countries, there is a requirement to partner with a government agency.

**EU:** The EU provides grants to civil society through a range of mechanisms, generally through calls for proposals. It typically grants to larger NGOs, and then these organizations will subcontract to local NGOs.

### 3. Capacity differential between urban/rural and main island/outer island

There is often a disparity and capacity differential between civil society based in urban areas or capitals or main islands, and those based in regional, remote areas or outer islands. This disparity is both geographic and technological.

*Examples:*

**Fiji:** Most civil society is based in Suva.

**Vanuatu:** The transport and infrastructure challenges facing the dispersed population also affect the civil society sector.

### 4. Difficulty retaining qualified staff

There is a high demand for capable and qualified staff in the NGO sector. This is often a disparity between the staff qualifications of those employed by international NGOs and those employed by local NGOs.

International NGOs are more likely to have trained and qualified staff, as they are able to pay higher wages. Local NGOs find it difficult to attract staff with higher levels of qualifications.

In general, across the Pacific, those with high levels of experience and qualifications are in high demand.

### 5. Number of languages and level of fluency

Some countries have a multitude of local languages (Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands) while others have different generations fluent in different languages (Timor-Leste).

*Example:*

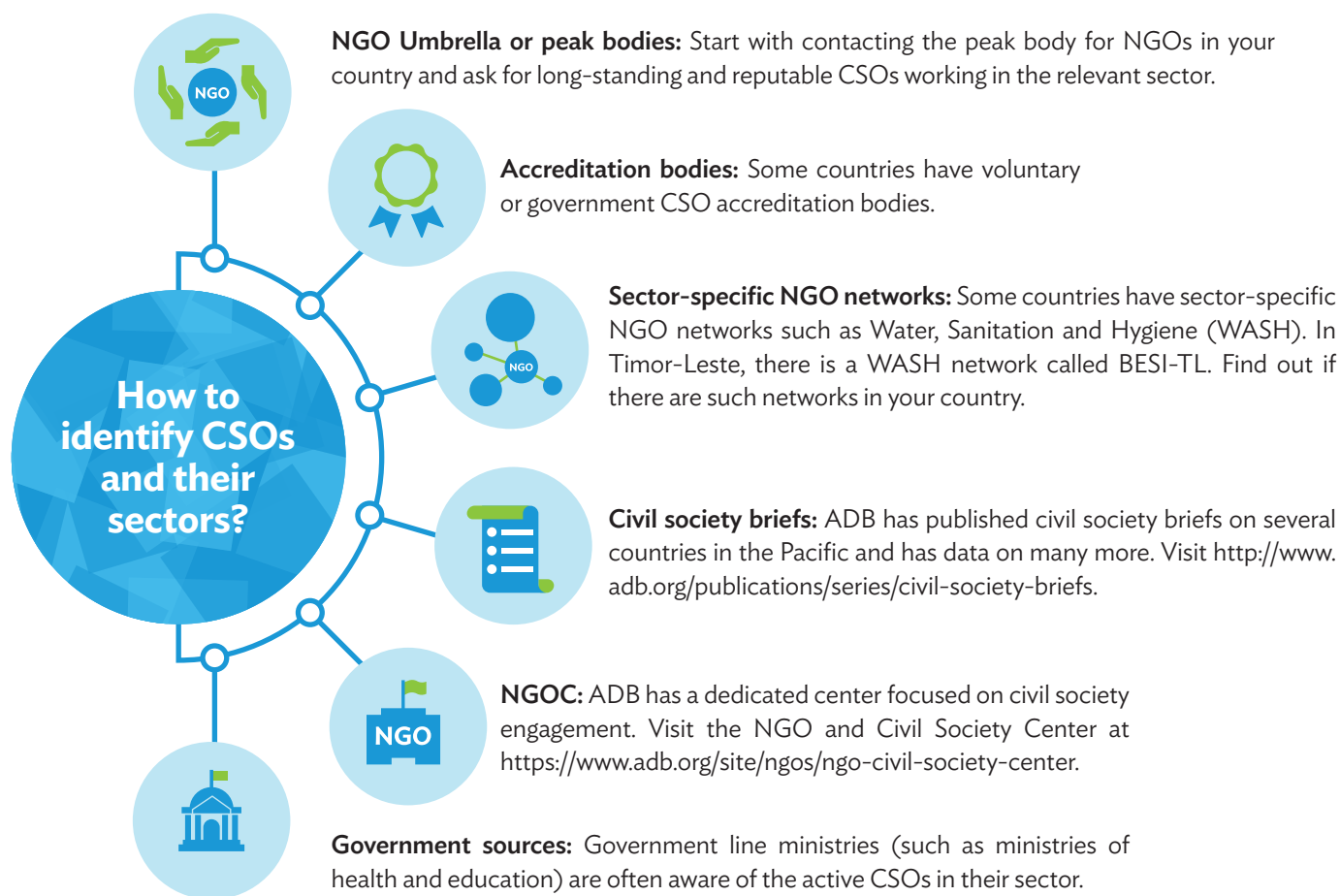
**Timor-Leste:** The official languages are Portuguese, Tetum, with English and Indonesian regarded as working languages under the constitution. Fifteen other indigenous dialects, including Fataluku, Kemak, Makassae, and Galoli, are also spoken.

The multilingual nature of the society of Timor-Leste has impacted on the capacity of civil society. The fact that some government publications are produced foremost in Portuguese (over Tetum), plus the decision not to include Bahasa Indonesia as co-official language (although it is a 'working language'), has caused some division between elements of civil society and government.

It has been suggested that the younger, Bahasa-speaking generation or the Tetum-speaking activists have found it difficult to engage with the government due to a perceived government preference for the use of Portuguese.

## TOOLS AND TIPS

### How to identify CSOs and their sectors?



### What should you remember when engaging CSOs?

#### Be transparent about funding

Many CSOs have resource constraints. As a bank, they may see ADB as a potential source of funding. It is important to be clear and transparent about the availability of funding and not raise CSO expectations of funding.

#### Make engagement two-way

Provide opportunities for CSOs to give ADB feedback. Seek meaningful ways to showcase their expertise.

#### Don't be a 'FIFO' expert


Many Pacific CSOs are generally wary of 'fly in, fly out' (FIFO) visits by international consultants and donor agencies. Look for local experts, prepare to engage with CSOs over the long term and make sure you close the loop with the CSO by providing information on the outcomes of your engagement with them.

#### Be targeted

Target those CSOs with experience or focus in the sectors of ADB's work.

#### Engage with CSOs in the design phase of projects

Engaging with CSOs with local skills and knowledge early in the design of projects can lead to better development outcomes.



### **Be aware of CSOs' capacity constraints**

CSOs are likely to require pre-financing and timely dispersal of funds; they may require capacity-building around ADB processes and procedures.

### **Don't assume CSOs have internet connectivity**

Many CSOs in the Pacific have limited access to the internet and few, often outdated, computing/ICT resources. Uploading information to a webpage will likely only reach the well-resourced, urban-based CSOs.

### **Communicate in local languages**

Be aware that some countries have a multitude of languages; be sure to use those that are in use in the project area when communicating with beneficiaries.

### **Use culturally relevant approaches when engaging with local CSOs**

Much of the Pacific has a story-telling or oral culture: Talanoa and other storytelling approaches are broad cultural approaches in the Pacific that emphasize communication through storytelling and sharing. Recognize the traditions of the church: meetings often start with a prayer and finish with a prayerful song. Recognize local cultural norms around age and gender.

### **Be aware of local power structures and how CSOs will work with these**

Be aware of the influence of local power structures including the nobility in Tonga and chiefly and kinship systems in Melanesia. Engaging with CSOs who work through local power structures may make the difference between community engagement and disengagement.

### **Close the loop**

Tell CSOs how the information they provide will be used, and what the next steps will be. Later, tell them how the information was used, and the outcome of their input. This builds trust and promotes accountability.



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# RELATED LINKS

- [Participation Tools for the Pacific - Part 2: Stakeholder Analysis](#)
- [Participation Tools for the Pacific - Part 3: Design and Monitoring Framework](#)
- [Participation Tools for the Pacific - Part 4: Assessment](#)
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