Implementation of the EU Regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (RMIP) for
Asia Pacific (2021 – 2027)
CSO and LA Dialogue
6 March 2023

Table of contents

Executive Summary

Within the framework of the continuing dialogue on European Union (EU) programming for the period 2021-2027, the Policy Forum on Development (PDF) held a second online consultation on the [EU Regional Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (RMIP) for Asia and the Pacific (2021-27).](#) The event brought together EU staff and 39 representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs). The objectives of the meeting were to collate feedback from CSOs and LAs on the Regional MIP implementation to date and to establish concrete recommendations on how to maximise engagement.

The meeting opened with a welcome by **Peteris Ustubs**, Director of INTPA C – Middle East, Asia and Pacific and **Patrick Rabe**, Team Leader, Civil Society Engagement, INTPA G, followed by three sub-regional presentations by **Jean-Louis Ville**, Head of Unit C.3 – East Asia and the Pacific; **Tom Corrie**, Team Leader, C.2 – South and South-East Asia; and **Sarah Rinaldi**, Head of Unit, C.1 – Middle East, Central Asia. They explained how the group's comments and proposals made during the first consultation held in May 2021 has fed into the RMIP's current programming and regional implementation and gave an update on the activities and priorities for 2021/22.

The presentations were followed by a question & answer session, after which, participants divided into two smaller working groups on two thematic areas – **Climate Change, Energy and Environment and Governance, Human Rights and Security**. Their findings were reported during a closing plenary session. Participants were invited to submit written feedback on two complementary thematic areas – Promoting Jobs and Skills, Support to SMEs, Connectivity; and Migration and Forced Displacement.

The main themes raised by participants were how to ensure the objectives of the programme reach the local communities for whom they are intended, and how to enable and empower CSOs not only as service providers, but also as advocates and maintainers of civic space. In the Q&A session and in the working groups, participants discussed how to encourage dialogue and how to effectively join the dots at regional, national and local level. It was suggested to hold sub-regional dialogues of the PFD in order to gain traction at the relevant level. The working groups also highlighted the fundamental role of EU delegations (EUDs) in effective dialogue with governments.

In the working group on **Climate change, Energy, and Environment**, participants stressed that the EU should:

Foster dialogue and multi-stakeholder partnerships by:

- Strengthening local frontline actors (focus on membership – based organisations) and consolidating cooperation between large organisations and local organisations
- Supporting collectives and cooperatives which have sufficient technical know-how to manage (for example, water) resources whilst retaining community/local level ownership
- Harnessing existing mechanisms, including the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
- Supporting SMEs
- Cooperating with collective platforms for the provision of services in urban areas (for example in urban areas where workers can cooperate and build capacity and sustainable practices)
- Strengthening CSO partnerships with stakeholders including the private sector and government

Support good practices by:

- Focusing on nature-based solutions
- Focusing on responsible practices; sustainable water use (climate-energy nexus); integrated management plans for wetland ecosystems; and hydropower
- Supporting CSO advocacy towards governments in the elaboration and implementation of frameworks and regulations to ensure safety at work
- Including national systems for skills certification (with focus on women and migrants, including experience gained in other countries/return to work) in programmes
- Supporting early warning systems, early action and multi-risk approach via dialogue with local actors
- Looking at how robust agricultural development could help to decongest cities and improve food security/create food hubs/circular economy
- Looking more closely at how to incentivise, implement, and scale up green reporting at local level

In the working group on **Governance, Human rights and Security**, participants stressed that the EU should:

- Support the maintenance of civic space, democratic governance, and an enabling environment by: involving EUDs in providing financial and political support; providing neutral spaces in which to meet governments and international actors; and talking regularly with governments about shrinking space
- Improve policy coherence between human rights and trade/social negotiations in the region
- Address anti-corruption by emphasizing anti-corruption and human rights in regional summits
- Ensure clear and adequate communication so that CSOs can see their role in the programme, with particular focus on accessibility/understanding of the programme, including in areas of indirect management
- Create opportunities for CSOs' role not only as development actors but as maintainers of civic space
- Work with responsible local authorities to strengthen their role in controlling drug trade and human trafficking

Within the digital environment:

- Ensure technical access and proper infrastructure to navigate the digital environment
- Focus on cybersecurity as an issue for women's security and ensure it is not a tool for sexual violence and discrimination
- Encourage more neutral technical dialogue on cyber matters while ensuring support initiatives (e.g., difficulties in sending money to disaster areas). Keep in mind alternative ways (i.e. bitcoin) to support progressive organisations inside a country

The meeting was concluded with an opportunity for remarks by representatives of local authorities. Dr **Bernadia Tjandrarewi**, Secretary General of United Cities and Local Government Asia Pacific, stressed that the role and importance of CSOs and LAs, and of the PDF had been acknowledged throughout the meeting. She highlighted the need for collaboration and co-creation, and for harnessing and extrapolation of best practices - with particular focus on reducing corruption, early warning systems and governance, and technology's role in providing accountability.

Jean-Louis Ville thanked all participants for their valuable contributions. He encouraged all organisations to submit written responses on the two complementary thematic areas which would help to shape the future direction of the programme and to influence its mid-term review.

Presentations

The presentations highlighted that feedback from the May 2021 consultation which focused on the green and just transition, and addressing the digital gender divide, digital access and affordability had been prioritised.

Addressing the feedback on the green and just transition, actions of the RMIP were provided as examples, including, among others: work within the Kiwa Initiative II which supports Pacific countries in attracting climate finance to protect biodiversity; the adoption of Integrated Ocean Management practices; the Regional Pacific NDC Hub which supports financing and implementation of policies towards a low-carbon pathway; SWITCH-Asia which supports regional organisations and governments in designing and implementing action plans on green and circular economy; and consolidating EU-India policy dialogue under the Clean Energy and Climate Change Platform (CECP).

In the context of addressing the digital gender divide, digital access and affordability, tangible examples given include: the actions of the Vaka Pasifika project, which aims to strengthen public finance management; the formation of digital tools on the impact of global warming and focused on ocean management; Dialogue and Action for Resourceful Youth in Central Asia: supporting inclusive skills development, preparing young Central Asian women and men for the labour market; and the Regional Team Europe Initiative on Digital Connectivity in Central Asia.

Participants were thanked for their reflections and contributions which, it was highlighted, form an integral element of the programme's planning and direction. **Peteris Ustubs** encouraged all members to voice their observations and recommendations to inform the mid-term review (2024). He explained that the RMIP forms a cornerstone of the **Global Gateway** implementation, which is the EU's new strategy for connectivity and contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), assisted, and financed through the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+). He outlined the key priority areas of the RMIP and the aim to narrow the global investment gap and to support the green and digital transition beyond EU borders. He emphasised the will to co-create and shape a just and inclusive platform through the PFD, working in parallel with Team Europe and the EU member states. In this context, he reminded participants of the conference on 9 and 10 March in Central Asia, aimed at increasing dialogue with CSOs.

Jean-Louis Ville gave an overview of the priorities and actions adopted during 2021/22 in the **East Asia and Pacific region**, with a focus on public finance management, sustainable consumption and production, climate resilience, and EU-Asia collaboration. He explained the key principles of the Global Gateway and the financing mechanism of the EFSD+ with a focus on establishing attractive investment opportunities, safety, and legal frameworks. He added that a successor programme focusing on women's rights in the region is in the pipeline.

Tom Corrie detailed the **South and South-East Asian** actions adopted during 2021/22. He gave details on the EU's Green EU-ASEAN Team Europe initiative with a focus on clean energy, circular economies, and sustainable landscapes, as well as the activities of the Global Gateway and India. He explained the wide range of programmes focusing on addressing digital disparities, decent work, migration, forced displacement and mobility, and highlighted the importance of establishing a baseline with which to analyse changes in displacement in future years.

Sarah Rinaldi's presentation on the **Middle East and Central Asia** explained the increasing geopolitical importance of the Central Asian region, and the renewed interest from Central Asian partners to strengthen collaboration with the RMIP. She highlighted the work done, reflective of the feedback given during the initial consultation, including focus on growing the intra-regional dialogue with CSOs and the private sector and developing connectivity with the EU in complementarity with bilateral programmes. She explained the priorities for 2021 - health and youth issues - and those for 2022 regarding digital connectivity and green issues, gender-based violence and transport.

Question and Answer Session

Participants were invited to raise questions and to comment. It was asked how the **Global Health Strategy** would be implemented at regional level and how it fits with the programme. Jean-Louis Ville explained that much of the regional implementation occurs at national level and through bilateral mechanisms; the RMIP does not address all themes.

It was noted that **public finance** is a priority for local governments in Asia Pacific, but there is no specific element in the programme that relates to investment. Jean-Louis Ville explained that the topic of investment was in the pipeline and would most probably feature in priorities at national level as well as through bilateral discussions. He added that there would be a call for proposals from the private sector alongside establishing collaboration with banks.

The **importance of a multi-stakeholder approach** was also highlighted, as was the need for digitisation at local level - otherwise, it was pointed out that some of the goals could not be implemented. Participants were reassured that their comments regarding a multi-stakeholder approach were taken on board and that the ethos of subsidiarity and complementarity are applied to amalgamate bilateral and local levels - which can be seen for example, in the support to the Afghan health system following the Taliban takeover.

The increasing role of the PFD in policy dialogue was underlined, and the possibility to sub-regionalise the process to gain traction was proposed. **Patrick Rabe** noted the comments made and explained that regional dialogue with country delegations is complemented by local consultations with CSOs through the Civil Society Foal Points in EUDs, but that efficiency and foreign policy dialogue should be borne in mind. **Tom Corrie** underlined the close working relationship with ASEAN partners. He suggested looking at how to engage with LAs and CSOs using appropriate language and existing flexible tools to strengthen their work.

Discussions also highlighted that **green tech policies and activities** are sometimes abused and it is important to ensure that they do not have negative effects on the environment and for smaller producers. It was also asked what support exists in areas of continual climate crisis such as Pakistan. It was explained that in addition to bilateral dialogue with countries, the EU has participated in Team Europe conferences to mobilise funds and to work with local authorities and stakeholders in a consistent manner regarding the loss of livelihood in rural areas. They also highlighted that post-recovery programmes have been established within national MIPs and that disaster risk management has been prioritised.

Another key area highlighted was **migration and working conditions** – it was asked how the programme can bridge the gaps in regions where decent work does not exist and social protection is not well-developed (notably for migrants). **Tom Corrie** explained the focus is placed on working with UN and NGO partnerships regarding refugees and the displaced, and that approaches are tailored to specific needs and sub-regions including migration management components. It was explained that in the future there is the intention to partner with the EU private sector on the topic of decent work.

A general observation underlined the necessity to **simplify procedures for CSOs** regarding access to EU resources and offer them more technical support for capacity-building. It was explained that the EU offers support to CSOs to build capacity as service providers and in policy advocacy, and through coupling larger NGOs with smaller ones to promote knowledge transfer.

Thematic discussions

The working group discussions were structured around two thematic areas (see guiding questions in footnotes 1 and 2), with the opportunity to contribute on two additional themes in writing. This section summarises both oral and written contributions. The two additional thematic written inputs are summarized in the annex.

Climate Change, Energy and Environment[1]

The wide-ranging discussion raised several themes that were repeated in both oral and written inputs. Participants stressed the need for funding, partnership and a fundamental prioritization of nature-based solutions in a holistic and integrated approach which would allow for impact mitigation using local expertise.

Financing

The EU was encouraged to ensure climate financing to countries and affected communities. In written inputs, partners suggested that the EU should invest in local businesses, cooperatives, smallholder producers and family farmers in rural areas to help rural communities to become catalysts of an inclusive and equitable rural transformation that, in turn, can support sustainable urbanization.

Partnership

A multi-stakeholder focus was highlighted, and it was also recommended to strengthen CSO partnerships with stakeholders including the private sector and government. The effective harnessing of existing mechanisms, including the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), was also discussed.

Participants gave very concrete examples in explaining the crucial role of civil society and local governments. The roles of CSOs are multiple:

The role of CSOs as **watchdogs and in advocacy**. Key priorities for the water-energy nexus should include ensuring the demand for energy is met without compromising other critically important natural resources. This can be supported via EU investments in non-damaging renewable energy and its accompanying infrastructure while supporting CS to engage in challenging and removing damaging hydro dams.

The role of CSOs in **knowledge collection, management and capitalisation**. CSOs can provide science-based and best practice restoration guidance. In Afghanistan, for example, it was suggested that CSOs could be involved in documenting the knowledge of now extinct water management systems and structures such as Karez for sustainable use of water and contribute to food security, especially in the arid and semi-arid regions with reduced consumption of petroleum-based irrigation.

---

[1] Guiding questions included: Q1 What should be the key priorities in the development of the water – energy nexus in the region? How could CSOs be better involved in the decision and implementation process? Q2 For CSOs and LAs engaged at national level in policy areas such as sustainable consumption and production, circular economy practices and decent work: how can CSO and LA facilitate the flow of investments or influence the uptake of sustainable consumption and production/circular economy practices by SMEs (beyond the provision of training)? Could they provide examples? Q3 What are CSO and LA overall views on the needs and priorities in the area of green/sustainable urban development in the region?

> *The role of CSOs in supporting policy development based on communities' experiences in the transition to renewable energy. E.g. in Bangladesh civil society formulated a national energy transition policy and proposed to the government for less reliance on high-carbon fuels and more on renewable energy sources in the future, as well as increased utilization of domestic mineral resources and less reliance on energy imports.*
>
> ***ActionAid International***

Inclusion of CSOs in **decision making processes and implementation** is critical. The role of civil society in **mobilizing partnerships** was stressed. On the water-energy nexus, it was recommended to foster dialogue and partnerships by strengthening local frontline actors (with a focus on membership-based organisations) and establishing and consolidating cooperation between large and local organisations. There should be mutual agreement on the transformative development of the water-energy nexus, through consultation and dialogue with impacted communities, in order to ensure the livelihoods and wellbeing of communities in the context of movement or displacement as a result of investments. CSOs should **be invited to country-level consultations** in all thematic programming. Further, the heavy financial and administrative barriers to CSO participation should be addressed to allow for increased representation.

It was noted that a **territorial approach** is accepted in the ASEAN in which large organisations and smaller local organisations cooperate, and that such opportunities should sit on the broader horizon of programme planning. DG INTPA observed the need for better coordination between CSOs, development partners and government and to connect the dots to promote clear dialogue. The intention to involve CSOs as part of the dialogue on cross-border energy trade was relayed.

> *There has been interest in the formation of cooperatives in the water, electricity and market accessibility through water users' associations, electricity cooperatives and farmers' producers' organizations (FPOs) for the development of the water–energy nexus in the region. Key success factors of running cooperatives include low-cost of farm inputs, reliability of electricity and water as inputs, and creating market opportunities commanding reasonable price-lock-ins through better negotiations with the off-takers.*
>
> ***International Cooperatives Alliance- Asia Pacific***

Several participants recommended to focus on **supporting producer collectives** and cooperatives which have sufficient technical knowledge to manage resources whilst retaining community/local level ownership. It was recommended to follow best practice, as such, US rural associations were noted as a good example. Specifically, in Asia, the International Cooperatives Alliance has been working to promote cooperatives (see box) .

On the topic of sustainable production and consumption, circular economy and decent work, the discussion focused on the need for the provision of **tangible support to SMEs** – who often form the backbone of the local economy but are not linked to or supported by a digital framework. A best practice example was given regarding Indonesia where SMEs have been supported through marketing, exhibitions, and being linked to online sale platforms, whilst support for start-up companies includes tax exemptions for a certain period. It was also highlighted that access to finance is critical to SMEs wishing to expand their businesses and focus should be placed on creating mechanisms in this area. The point was made that **non-traditional CSOs such as social enterprises and tech startups are important** players as well.

There was a call for support of CSO advocacy towards governments in the elaboration and implementation of **frameworks and regulations to ensure safety at work,** including tackling violence and harassment towards women at work. It was highlighted that a lack of social protection and childcare prevents women from training and work progression whilst negatively affecting the economy.

It was recommended to establish **national systems for skills certification** (with a focus on women and migrants, including experience gained in other countries) in programmes.

Nature-based solutions

The EU should **prioritize the restoration of nature and natural processes and focus on nature-based solutions**, especially in riverine and wetland areas, for the benefits of people and the environment. In this line, the EU should address sand mining as part of a holistic, systemic effort to build more resilient deltas, and this could be a cost-effective way to address the climate exposure of the deltas and some of the planet's most vulnerable communities.

It was also suggested to focus on **responsible practices, sustainable water use, integrated management plans** for wetland ecosystems and hydropower. The need to reconcile agriculture, grazing and fishery management with wetland conservation and the maintenance or restoration of the

> *Building with Nature solutions can accelerate adaptation, enhance water and food supply, livelihoods, carbon storage, biodiversity conservation and health. It represents a paradigm shift from minimising negative impacts to maximising positive benefits for society and nature. As a result, there is growing recognition for Building with Nature as a leading climate change adaptation strategy.*
>
> ***Wetlands International***

natural water dynamics was stressed, as well as the need to restore and incorporate wetlands in urban planning and create partnerships with engineering firms which can support wetlands-solutions. In terms of **green economic practices**, it was highlighted that it is important to establish work with local authorities that will fit within the existing frameworks. It was also recommended to look at ways to incentivise, implement, and scale-up **green reporting** at local level.

With regard to the needs and priorities for sustainable urban development, the discussion focused on how to best approach an **integrated communications system in disaster response,** including early warning systems, early action and a multi-risk approach via dialogue with local actors. Participants stressed the importance that the aims of the regional programme reach the local communities for whom they are intended.

During the discussion on the **circular economy,** a recommendation was made to collaborate with collective platforms for the provision of services in urban areas (workers can build capacity and sustainable practices). Specifically, cooperatives stressed using their business model to scale up climate action.

The EU could support CSOs and LAs as key actors to **monitor and address rising food insecurity** across the region and support governments to develop national adaptation plans, taking into account climate induced migration and ensuring a human rights-based approach, participation, inclusivity and developing locally-led solutions. It was suggested that robust agricultural development could help to decongest cities and improve food security whilst the creation of food hubs between rural producers and urban buyers would promote a circular economy.

Governance, Human Rights and Security[2]

The working group first discussed how to support CSOs which operate in **shrinking civic spaces**. The need for **concise and harmonised communication** was underlined, so that CSOs can clearly see their role in the programme. Particular emphasis was made on **enhancing the accessibility and understanding of the programme,** including in areas of indirect management.

In order to support the maintenance of civic space, democratic governance, and an enabling environment, it was recommended to involve **EU delegations (EUDs) in providing financial and political support**, in addition to working on regional statements and providing neutral spaces in which to meet governments and international actors. The need for **regular, structured dialogue** with governments about the issue of shrinking space was also highlighted. It was stressed that opportunities for dialogue with national governments are key, in addition to **early warning mechanisms**. CSOs requested information about the arrival of Financial Action Task Forces, (FASF) about which there is currently no communication.

---

[2] Guiding questions included: Q1 How can the EU best support CSOs operating in shrinking spaces regarding areas and topics to work on, and who face increasing barriers to collaborate with INGOs and other actors? Q2 Are cybersecurity concerns adequately addressed in the context of EU programmes? How could this aspect be improved? Q3 in the context of discussions on connectivity initiatives with the EU and other donors, what are the most important aspects for your constituents? Are there any gaps in these discussions that should be addressed? Q4 What are CSO and LA views on the overall needs and priorities for tackling transnational crime in the region (drugs, environmental, human trafficking)? How do you see the role that can be played by CSOs/LAs?

The calls for strengthening multi stakeholder partnerships and **engagement in multilateral settings,** along with **flexible funding** (including small grants or sub-grants) were repeated. The point was made regarding joint accountability – that both CSOs and the EU should take responsibility for finding solutions. Linkages with thematic programmes to support civil society and human rights defenders would also be beneficial.

The role of CSOs in **service delivery,** especially since the pandemic, was stressed, noting the limitations on CSOs in remote areas such as the Pacific Islands. EU support via calls for proposals, for example, under the SWITCH programme, are helpful and can improve collaboration.

DG INTPA noted the challenges to CSOs working as partners in these areas. They explained that the programme works alongside UN agencies and other member state agencies which, in the majority of cases, include CSOs as local implementors on specific topics. They also channel specific activities through the **Team Europe Initiatives** and support the work of the **Open Government Partnership** (Asia and the Philippines). They noted the concern about widening the integration of CSOs in this context.

They thanked participants for their recommendations and highlighted the objectives of the CSO Roadmap and a call for proposals regarding early warning in the context of enabling environments. They explained that efforts to create opportunities in the CSOs' role - not only as development actors but as advocates and maintainers of civic space - are conducted in regular consultation at national level and are imbedded in their policy and within the civil society programme.

There were calls to improve **policy coherence** between human rights, and trade and social negotiations in the region. The example of accelerated restrictions in Cambodia and Thailand were given and the wish for a political push on behalf of the EU was expressed. It was also suggested to address anti-corruption and human rights in regional summits beyond tackling petty crime, which does not address the larger issue and has sometimes resulted in restricting speech and civil society space.

With regard to **cybersecurity,** it was discussed that CSOs and grass-roots organisations need to have technical access and adequate infrastructure in order to navigate the digital environment and to advocate campaigns. It was suggested to strengthen the development of **alternative digital platforms,** such as platform cooperatives, that promote the democratisation of data, and ensure redistribution of wealth and decent jobs and social protection for workers in the platform economy. It was also recommended to address the issue of how CSOs' work (in particular, regarding human rights work) is perceived by governments across Asia because it is weaponised by some, if it deviates from national policies.

The effect of applications of cybersecurity on **women's security** was raised, and calls to ensure that it is not used as a tool for sexual violence and discrimination were made.

A number of participants discussed connectivity issues regarding the EU, international agencies, and other donors. They emphasised the obstacles posed by governments in terms of financial flow; disaster areas unable to receive funds, and diaspora citizens blocked from sending money to their countries. They suggested establishing **neutral and technical dialogue** with governments on cyber matters and alternative methods of currency (for example, bitcoin) whilst continuing dialogue to ensure that disaster support is maintained. A call for EUDs to raise the issues with governments was repeated.

With regard to tackling **transnational crime** and with specific focus on controlling drug trade and human trafficking, it was recommended to work with the responsible local authorities to strengthen their role and in the context of programme planning. The importance of building LA capacity and raising public awareness of the associated risks was stressed. For CSOs, **longer term funding** and **focused capacity building** are still needed. CSOs can help in identifying crime convergence (such as of illegal wildlife trade and human trafficking). The **human rights and gender dimensions** need to be identified including greater protection for environmental defenders. It was acknowledged that working on transnational crime requires close collaboration with national governments, which may be difficult for some CSOs.

> *A recent report published by WWF and Open Development Initiative highlights that local environmental activists are limited in their ability to contribute to the environmental data ecosystem by persistent gaps in the availability of and access to data, infrastructure, and tools; restricted data flow; safety and security concerns; and a lack of trust in the data and systems that are available. To address these issues, useful actions can include:*
>
> - *Supporting responsible data policies to open the flow of data;*
> - *Supporting community-led development of secure and relevant tools; and*
> - *Building greater trust within the network and in the data ecosystem*

> *"A starting point for addressing transnational organised crime is **ratification and implementation of existing crime treaties**, e.g., UN Convention Against Transnational organised Crime, UN Convention Against Corruption, as well as adherence to the FATF Guidelines and Recommendations, conducting National Risk Assessments, etc. In addition, CITES, although not a crime-treaty, is also highly relevant in this context."*
>
> ***WWF***

It was noted that there are saturated geographical pockets of extremism, and narcotics and human trafficking in Central and South-East Asia and that governments should be encouraged to tackle the issues head-on. It was also suggested to explore complementary avenues and actors, such as through the UN, to amplify human rights issues. However, it was also noted that critique of governments is an extremely sensitive area.

Suggestions were made to **create new knowledge around emerging products, services and markets**—in particular, around new technology that can be adopted to address social and economic needs in a changing environment.

Conclusions

The comments and recommendations made during the meeting and in written submissions underline the value and **importance of collaboration with and between CSOs and LAs,** and the integral role of dialogue in affecting tangible change in the Asia-Pacific region. Participants acknowledged that their feedback expressed during the initial consultation had been integrated in the RMIP – and that focus should now be placed on consolidating, widening, and improving channels for dialogue and response, so that the target beneficiaries receive the support intended for them.

ANNEX I

Written contributions on Jobs and Migration

Participants were invited to provide comments regarding the two topics that were not discussed in groups during the meeting: Promoting jobs and skills, support to SMEs, connectivity; and Migration and forced displacement. Specific guiding questions were shared for each topic. The following is a summary of the main messages and recommendations provided by the following organisations:

International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP) (on jobs and migration)
Danish Red Cross (on governance, jobs and migration)
Action Aid (on jobs and migration)
WWF (on climate, governance and migration)
Wetlands International Europe (on climate)

Promoting jobs and skills, support to SMEs, connectivity

Which role can CSOs and LAs play in promoting decent work in SMEs (beyond the provision of trainings)? Can CSOs and LAs already engaged in this field provide examples of their engagement with strategic partners and results achieved? How can these be scaled up in the region?

The role that CSOs and LAs play in promoting decent work in SMEs, beyond the provision of trainings, include:

- Bringing **international expertise** and **showcasing relevant models to promote decent work** with the cooperative model, increasing awareness and building capacity. This can contribute to fostering the policy environment and help build a narrative on how legislative developments and emerging trends could revitalise the cooperative sector to deliver on national strategic objectives.
- **Strategically sharing information, analyses and understanding related to SMEs** through regular dialogue and reflection on the existing policies, platforms, and mechanisms in order to see improvement and responsiveness in the promotion of decent work in SMEs in the communities, to increase livelihoods and wellbeing.
- Supporting **cash transfers** for start-up support, linkages with the financial institutions and private sector. CSOs can also contribute to maintaining a peaceful environment at the community level for SMEs to be sustainable.
- Supporting **SMEs to engage with bigger enterprises** to create space for them to introduce their work, mission and goal as well as core values around human rights and gender justice at sub-national, national and regional levels. This kind of engagement could be done through forums and public platforms to support transparency of information and decision-making.
- Ensure **accountability** of different actors, which is key to upholding economic rights for all and economic justice through fair redistribution and allocation of resources and diverse actors' participation in decision making.

Examples of CSO and LA engagement with strategic partners and results achieved include:

- Based on the principle that workers and users should democratically own and govern the platforms influencing their lives, ICA-AP supports **platform cooperatives**: new types of cooperatives which are enabled by digital platforms. Compared to other types of platform-enabled businesses, platform cooperatives are member-owned, cooperative organizations with members having full democratic control over the platform and value created. Thus, platform cooperatives aim to co-create and share value created with their members on a more equitable basis. Their primary dual goal is economic success combined with the social change, achieved through ethical business practice.

  In terms of scaling up, ICA-AP could:
  o Collaboratively **map out the vision of cooperativism** for gig and platform workers.
  o Outline holistic goals; identify districts, sectors, groups, and individuals for outreach; detailing a plan for developing relationships, information sessions, MoUs, building a community-based framework that draws on existing government and social movement initiatives.
  o Co-design models for platform cooperatives with producers 'on the ground'.

- In Bangladesh, Action Aid has been addressing decent work, particularly supported by the EU on the SRAMIC project from 2016 to 2020 which worked with the CSOs on the promotion and protection of worker's rights, and the Federation of Workers Union, to mainstream the right to assembly. They used that channel to advocate for decent work for the Readymade garment sector (not SME), leather and tannery sector (entirely SME). Currently, Action Aid is in a partnership with Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries through ECHO funded SUPER project that enables the EU to reach about 4500 SMEs that are members of this association. The evidence and experience can help to scale up the work and partnership in Bangladesh and at regional level in countries such as Nepal and Cambodia.

Based on your experience in your region(s), what Prosperity programmes (in the framework of the 5 Ps / SDGs) benefit the poorest segments of the population the most?

- **Cooperatives are uniquely placed to eradicate poverty and dignify people's lives, as human-centred businesses that exist to meet the needs of their members**. They subscribe to the seven cooperative principles that ensure open and voluntary membership, democratic control, autonomy and independence and concern for their community. Putting fairness, equality and social justice at the heart of the enterprise, cooperatives around the Asia-Pacific region are allowing people to work together to create sustainable enterprises that generate long-term jobs and prosperity. Through the power of the collective, cooperators can share risk, make decisions together about the cooperative's future, strengthen and hone their own skills and reinvest in their communities. In their contribution towards eradication of poverty, cooperatives create employment opportunities by offering direct wage employment to people, self-employment to members and indirect employment through spillovers of their income-generating activities.
- **Modest investment in jobs and skills which supports marginalised and vulnerable groups** can have considerable impact when it comes to their resilience to shocks. By having support, specifically to livelihoods, such groups are able to increase their income. This enables them to prepare and withstand shocks, but to also have a more involved role in their communities since they are regarded as more active contributors. They are able to contribute financially to community emergency funds, and are able to sustain themselves and their families. They are empowered to participate, and vocalise their needs within the community, towards local leaders, and authorities.
- **Inclusive approaches, particularly to Disaster Risk Reduction**, have shown to be successful in Nepal – with an emphasis on provision of cash assistance combined with socio-technical support. This support however needs to be moved beyond project-based donor funding, to an approach that allows for horizontal expansion by the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement in collaboration with the EU, and other donors. There is a role for the EU to support this connectivity, through funding, but also through the legitimacy as an advocate/ally to standard best practices, support to communities of practice, and engagement with government at a strategic level.
- In Afghanistan, being a country in perpetual conflict and a country with high levels of poverty and destitution, the 5 Ps will lead to putting people at the centre, lead to reconciliation between different groups and to kick start the nearly collapsed market for a sustainable development process beyond humanitarian interventions. Some of the most marginalised communities in Afghanistan are female returnees and IDPs and this approach will enable the inclusion of these marginalised communities.

In the context of discussions on connectivity initiatives with the EU and other donors, what are the most important aspects for your constituents? Are there any gaps in these discussions that should be addressed?

- ICA-AP can ensure its members and partners in the region are **aware of the EU's connectivity initiatives**; contribute to the attainment of targets set against relevant goals; engage with governments and stakeholders; and gain recognition for their work. The discussions can take a four-pronged approach towards this end in order to address all potential gaps – inform, engage, build and commit.

Migration and Forced Displacement

What are your thematic priorities in the field of migration and forced displacement in the Asia-Pacific region? [Can you identify complementarities with the RMIP on migration and forced displacement? Are any key topics missing?]

- **Migration and Displacement in Emergency Contexts**: Implementing strong and effective operational responses, in line with migration and displacement principles, policies, practices and commitments.
- to ensure strong **contextual analysis** of current and emerging migration and displacement trends in the region, including cross-border and internal displacement crises.
- Strong operational support before, during and after a migration and displacement crisis
- **Enhanced access to rights and essential services**, for all groups affected by displacement and migration, regardless of their legal status.
- **Protection and assistance to migrants in irregular situations,** of whom the Asia Pacific region contains the largest number in the world – an acutely vulnerable group with particular protection needs, often linked to restricted access to services and basic rights.
- **Protection of IDPs across all phases of displacement**, including safe and voluntary return, relocation or local integration with access to services in situations of protracted displacement
- **Further address durable solutions and longer-term programming** to the three major regional refugee crises (Syrian refugees in Iraq, Afghan refugees and Rohingyas), voluntary returns in safety and dignity, local integration, resettlement to another location or country.
- **Climate displacement**: Further build on NS (National Societies) expertise in the region[3]. Better understand triggers of movement linked to climate change, including secondary displacement and intersectionality with conflict, loss of livelihood and other triggers of movement.

Examples:

- Action Aid supports the **focus on vulnerable communities** within the RMIP on **migration and forced displacement and the prioritization of social inclusion.**
- Action Aid is glad to see the **specific focus on the Rohingya refugee crisis** in the RMIP. Action Aid in Bangladesh is engaged with a range of UN agencies and development partners and supports the forcefully displaced Citizens of Myanmar, and leads the response programme present in all the camps in Ukhia in Cox's Bazaar. Action Aid also hosted the first CSO hearing during 2018 on the issue of force displacement and adopted the "Dhaka Declaration" at the International Conference on the Rohingya Refugee Crisis and pledged to uphold its clauses[4]. In 2020, Action Aid has developed the second Dhaka declaration.[5]
- ICA-AP thematic priority is to inform about **the work cooperatives are doing in the field of migration and forced displacement** in the Asia-Pacific region to members, governments, donors and stakeholders. We do so through meetings, presentations, position papers. Included in this are the follow-up to resolutions taken at the Cooperative Forum (held in conjunction with Regional Assembly), Cooperative Minister's Conference and other platforms.

Addressing the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on human mobility is a priority under the RMIP. What would be the best way the EU could address this topic in the Asia-Pacific region (geographic and thematic scope/focus, implementation modality, relevant stakeholders)? How can we join forces with CSO/LAs to tackle this challenge?

To address the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on human mobility in Asia-Pacific, the EU could:

- Support **better understanding of the triggers** of movement linked to climate change, including secondary displacement and intersectionality with conflict, loss of livelihood, and other triggers of movement.
- Support more research and **evidence-based** programming on migration and internal displacement due to climate change and its implications for affected populations and their host communities.

---

[3] *See case studies here: Responding to Disasters and Displacement in a Changing Climate: Case studies from Asia Pacific National Societies | IFRC*
[4] https://www.actionaidbd.org/post/default/one-year-mark-rohingya-exodus-and-article-14-dhaka-declaration
[5] https://www.actionaidbd.org/storage/app/media//second-dhaka-declaration-2020.pdf

- Address climate-induced migration through **climate justice** and including adaptation and mitigation strategies, disaster risk reduction, and agriculture (in particular agroecology, women's empowerment, and gender-responsive public services).
- Support CSOs/LAs in giving **platforms** for national-level CSOs to highlight these issues and highlight community member's voices at the global negotiation table.
- Provide support to CSOs engaging at the national level/with the local authorities and collaborating to review and update policies and piloting better alternatives engaging a range of stakeholders.
- Expand collaboration with social and human rights organizations that have interest and expertise on social issues.
- Connect cooperatives with governments, donor agencies, and civil society to implement environmental degradation, climate change, and human mobility-related SDGs.
- Focus on scaling up sustainable and **resilient agriculture development** to reverse land degradation in existing agricultural plots, which can reduce the need for farmers to open up new areas as a result of climate change and agricultural commodity trading in the Greater Mekong region.
- Formalise stronger **forest protection measures** through conservation agreements with local communities linked to performance-based payments for climate change mitigation.

Examples:

- Action Aid has undertaken research in an effort to deepen understanding of the challenges and identify solutions that can uphold human rights[6].
- WWF's interest in deforestation and conversion-free commodities mirrors the objective of the EU Deforestation-free Regulation. Scaling up of sustainable and resilient nature-positive agriculture development, linked to stronger forest protection measures, should include crops in the region that are currently not included in the EU DefReg, such as cassava, as this is becoming the single biggest driver of deforestation and degradation in countries such as Laos and Cambodia threatening the results of years of investments in conservation and national goals for forests and climate change.

The EU is putting forward a Team Europe Initiative in response to the Afghan regional displacement crisis. What role would CSO/LAs foresee in this?

The EU/TEI should aim to **protect returnees and IDPs.**

The role of CSOs/LAs in the EU's TEI in response to the Afghan regional displacement crisis includes:

- Facilitating the reintegration of returnees and IDPs
- Creating **sustainable livelihood options** for both the host and displaced
- Supporting **community dialogue** for conflict resolution
- Supporting programing seeking protracted/**durable solutions of local integration**, as part of the development-humanitarian nexus; include acknowledgment of climate-related factors of displacement so these can be also addressed.
- The Danish Red Cross and the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) have committed to bring in AP regional perspectives to the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement´s global work on migration, in particular with experiences from the Afghanistan context. ARCS has recently joined The Global Migration Task Force (GMTF), which is the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement technical reference group on migration, and has been instrumental in advancing a coherent, collective and strengthened movement approach to migration.
- **Building capacity** to support socially fair and just transition in response to the Afghan regional displacement crisis in all its aspects. This would involve incorporating **sustainability language** in our work, linking activities to relevant SDGs, and including information in their communication.
- Cooperatives can be involved in training staff and members and holding workshops. ICA-AP can provide the opportunity to interact with its research committees, cooperative colleges, and other institutions.

As regards the protracted displacement crisis of Rohingya refugees where should the EU put the priority in the next 4-5 years? What role would CSO/LAs foresee in this?

---

[6] Addressing Climate Induced Migration in Bangladesh, 2021: ActionAid, ICPDM, CANSA: https://www.actionaidbd.org/post/default/addressing-climate-change-induced-displacement-and-migration-Bangladesh

- The EU could focus on advancing a **broader advocacy role** in ensuring transparency, justice and accountability for safe, voluntary, informed and dignified repatriation of the Rohingya people scattered around the world, including Bangladesh, and foster support from the engaging countries on behalf of the ICJ ruling.
- Where possible, give a platform for CSOs and LAs to bring about the solutions and produce recommendations for advancing this agenda.
- **Livelihood, education, protection and WASH** programmes should be ongoing to support the Rohingya population stranded in the camps at the moment.
Nearly a million Rohingya refugees were forced to flee Myanmar into Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. The refugee camp area is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and there is an urgent need to **support adaptation measures** to improve their resilience against the impact of climate change and natural disasters.