

ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONAL DIRECTIONS 2013–2020

Promoting Transitions to Green
Growth in Asia and the Pacific

Asian Development Bank



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Abbreviations

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
CoP	–	community of practice
DMC	–	developing member country
GEF	–	Global Environment Facility
GHG	–	greenhouse gas
NGO	–	nongovernment organization
REDD	–	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RSDD	–	Regional and Sustainable Development Department

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Executive Summary

In Strategy 2020, its long-term strategic framework for 2008–2020, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) identifies three strategic agendas for Asia and the Pacific: inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration. These are crucial for achieving poverty reduction and improving quality of life. Strategy 2020 further identifies five core areas for interventions: (i) infrastructure, (ii) environment, (iii) regional cooperation and integration, (iv) finance sector development, and (v) education.

With environment as one of the five core areas of operations and environmental sustainability as a strategic agenda, these dimensions and areas of work are increasingly integrated across ADB operations and form an important part of ADB's assistance programs. In Strategy 2020, emphasis is placed on climate change, livable cities, and a range of complementary and supportive actions to improve environmental governance, policies, knowledge, and management capacity.

In the context of Strategy 2020 and in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), ADB prepared this report, *Environment Operational Directions, 2013–2020*, to provide a coherent overview of ADB environment operations and to articulate how it will step up efforts to help the region achieve a transition to environmentally sustainable growth or green growth. Building on ADB sector and thematic plans, this paper provides a brief review of recent ADB experience in environment operations, and identifies effective approaches for the development of “greener” country partnership strategies, investment projects, and associated knowledge and technical assistance activities.

To promote the transition to green growth, and address the causes and consequences of climate change, four mutually supportive environment operational directions have been identified:

- (i) **Promoting a shift to sustainable infrastructure.** Help developing member countries build infrastructure that contributes to environmentally sustainable and low-carbon development, as well as to increased resilience to climate change and other threats.
- (ii) **Investing in natural capital.** Help reverse the ongoing decline of natural capital to ensure that environmental goods and services can sustain future economic growth and well-being, build climate resilience, and contribute to carbon sequestration.
- (iii) **Strengthening environmental governance and management capacity.** Build sound environmental governance and management capacity for improved environmental and natural resource management including the strengthening of country systems and capacities for environmental safeguards.
- (iv) **Responding to the climate change imperative.** Promote climate change response actions—both adaptation and mitigation—that will cut across the other three directions and be fully integrated within each.

The paper is aligned with key elements of relevant ADB sector and thematic operational plans, particularly for sectors where environmental sustainability is a priority. These include the Sustainable

Transport Initiative Operational Plan, the Urban Operational Plan, the Water Operational Plan, the Energy Policy, and the Sustainable Food Security Plan, as well as the Climate Change Strategic Priorities.

With respect to implementation, the paper identifies six supporting modalities: (i) mainstreaming environment into ADB operations, (ii) promoting regional cooperation, (iii) building and maintaining strategic partnerships, (iv) developing and sharing knowledge solutions, (v) implementation arrangements, and (vi) mobilizing and channeling resources.

ADB's annual development effectiveness review will report on the progress of the environment operational directions, specifically with regard to the environment-relevant indicators in the ADB results framework.



Promoting Green Growth in Asia and the Pacific

Promoting Green Growth: Overall Approach

While economies in Asia and the Pacific continue to grow, the natural environment is under increasing pressure. Major ecosystems are under threat. Loss of biodiversity is massive as life support systems on land and in the oceans are being degraded. The region is the fastest growing source of new greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the world; several countries are among the most vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Cities in Asia are growing at an unprecedented pace, with 44 million added to city populations every year. The resulting congestion, waste, pollution, and associated health impacts remain key challenges in sustaining urban development.

Expanding demand for natural resources, accompanied by unsustainable and inefficient resource use patterns, has led to converging economic, resource, and environmental challenges. Global and regional concerns about food, energy, and water security are increasing. Food supply, in particular, is being affected by a number of factors, including climate change; rising material and labor costs; competing demands for freshwater; and loss of farmland for housing, industry, and increasingly, biofuel crop production.

The emerging consensus in the scientific community is that because of climate change and other pressures, the world's ecosystems will experience major shifts in their stability and integrity—perhaps in a few generations.¹ Accordingly, critical thresholds or “tipping points” may be approaching, beyond which the environment could enter a new state where significant changes would become accelerated, unpredictable, and irreversible. Several reports also warn of the imminent risks of crossing the thresholds of planetary boundaries.²

In addition, the gap between the demand for natural resources and the environment's ability to replenish those resources, or its biocapacity, is widening. In Asia and the Pacific, this gap has

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