

Quality, Knowledge, and Innovation for
Inclusive and Sustainable Development

ADB Sustainable Development Timeline



ADB

Asian Development Bank

The ADB Sustainable Development Timeline

Sustainable development, as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It embraces two key notions:

- the concept of needs, in particular those of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given.
- the idea of limits to the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

The pursuit of sustainable development is a balancing act: it requires the implementation of policies, strategies, programs, and projects that treat environment and development as a single issue; it also demands changes in the mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors of stakeholders.

The Asian Development Bank promotes sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. Many milestones have marked the journey. This timeline* catalogs major sector and thematic landmarks in ADB's operations since 1966.

* The timeline is not an exhaustive treatment of key events.

1960s

66

- ADB is established. It aims to foster economic growth and cooperation in Asia-Pacific and contribute to the acceleration of the process of economic development of developing member countries, collectively and individually.

67

- The first Asian agricultural survey is launched to guide ADB's subsequent operations in agriculture and rural development.
- The first technical assistance grant is extended, to Indonesia, to support food grain production.
- ADB approves its first loan, to Sri Lanka, for the modernization of tea factories.

68

- ADB adopts the Special Fund Rules and Regulations, which provide for an Agricultural Special Fund, a Multi-Purpose Special Fund, a Technical Assistance Special Fund, and other funds deemed necessary.

69

- The Southeast Asia transport survey delineates a framework for ADB's operations in the transport sector.
- An economic study gives Southeast Asian countries common knowledge on which to base national and regional economic policies and planning in the 1970s.
- ADB approves its first energy sector loan for an electricity supply project in Malaysia.
- Indonesia receives the first concessional loan for the completion of the Tajum irrigation project.

1970s

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- Representatives of developing member countries deliberate on policy implications from the first Asian agricultural survey's findings and recommendations at a seminar.
- ADB approves its first education sector loan for a college expansion project in Singapore.

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- A Southeast Asia transport survey recommends a massive investment program covering 118 infrastructure projects, 9 institutional development projects, and 14 vehicular projects over a 20-year period.
- ADB approves the first of 5 subsequent increases in its authorized capital stock and subscriptions to date.

72

- A study of the coconut industry identifies bankable projects and possible areas for multinational cooperation.
- ADB begins to act on concerns about environmental pollution. The Metropolitan Water Intake Project, formulated in the wake of river pollution in Seoul, is approved in the Republic of Korea. A comprehensive Environmental and Water Supply Study of Laguna de Bay in the Philippines is conducted.
- Technical assistance grants emphasize institution building and training of local personnel.

73

- The Agricultural Special Fund is closed since ADB's operations already reflect agriculture's importance, eliminating the need for a special financing mechanism.
- A workshop on irrigation water management is conducted, seeking to maximize the benefits from 13 ADB-assisted irrigation projects.

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- ADB contributes to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's Asian industrial survey for regional cooperation.
- The Asian Development Fund is set up to provide concessional lending to the poorest developing member countries.

75

- ADB approves the first of 10 replenishments of the Asian Development Fund to date.

76

- ADB celebrates 10 years of operations. Its projects now incorporate both social and economic considerations.
- ADB launches the second Asian agricultural survey to update the results of the first and ascertain directions for ADB's operations.

77

- Initiatives are framed to foster bilateral and multilateral cooperation among developing member countries, e.g., treaty between India and Bangladesh on the sharing of the waters of the River Ganges; 8 South Pacific countries explore the possibility of establishing a regional fishing line.

78

- ADB examines its experience in fisheries and prepares guidelines for involvement, highlighting small-scale fisheries, coastal and offshore fisheries, and resource assessments.
- ADB evaluates the role of forestry and forest industries in socioeconomic development.
- ADB approves its first health sector loan to Hong Kong, China.

79

- A 20% increase in agriculture and rural development lending is targeted for the next three years; guidelines for ADB's operations in the sector are set.
- A paper discusses systematic incorporation of environmental considerations in ADB's operations.

1980s

80

- ADB makes policy recommendations for operations in agriculture in the South Pacific.
- A regional energy survey generates information on the situation in developing member countries, sets policy directions for ADB's operations, and formulates a program of assistance.
- ADB's President signs the Declaration of Environmental Policies and Procedures Relating to Economic Development, committing ADB to supporting the principles and recommendations for action of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment.

81

- ADB's first environmental specialist is appointed.
- ADB assesses the environmental impacts of 75 projects in 17 developing member countries.
- ADB begins to build environmental institutions in developing member countries and develop the capacity of staff in environmental planning and management.
- The International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade is instituted.

83

- ADB considers its role in agriculture and rural development and reaffirms priorities, e.g., accelerating and sustaining agricultural production and growth, optimizing land use and environmental protection.

84

- A review of environmental management at ADB recommends clearer policy guidelines and operational procedures.
- Environment specialists draft comprehensive environment and natural resources profiles for selected developing member countries.
- A study on food demand and supply and related strategies is completed.

85

- ADB approves a policy on the role of women in development.

86

- Policy guidelines and operational procedures for the environment are reviewed, concentrating on identifying potentially significant environmental impacts and adopting measures to avoid them.

87

- ADB studies the role of women in rural industries.
- ADB's operations in the urban development and housing sector are analyzed.
- ADB approves a policy framework for cooperation with nongovernment organizations.
- An environment unit is created.

88

- ADB adopts a policy on education focusing on primary, non-formal, and environmental education.
- A task force on poverty alleviation is convened to formulate guidelines for ADB action.

89

- A policy framework for speedy rehabilitation assistance to developing member countries after natural disasters is designed.
- The Environment Unit is upgraded to a division.
- The Primary Education (Girls) sector loan to Pakistan is approved, the first loan in which women are targeted exclusively as beneficiaries.
- A panel report charts the role of ADB in the 1990s. It identifies social infrastructure, living standards of the poorest groups, and protection of the environment as new priorities.

1990s

90

- The Environment Division is upgraded to the Office of the Environment.
- ADB acts on the World Declaration for Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs with increased financial resources.

91

- Guidelines for social analysis of development projects are formulated.
- ADB's strategy for health and population is reviewed to cover primary health care, community-level health services, and awareness-raising.

92

- A social dimensions unit is established to integrate cross-cutting social issues in ADB's operations.
- ADB approves its first information technology strategy.
- ADB attends the Earth Summit.
- The medium-term strategic framework, 1992–1995 identifies environmental protection, population planning, economic growth, and women in development as part of ADB's developmental role.

93

- A least-cost greenhouse gas abatement study produces nationally-derived greenhouse gas inventories in 12 countries.
- Guidelines for incorporation of social dimensions in ADB's operations are endorsed.

94

- A policy on population is adopted that highlights the relationship between population growth and economic development.
- The policy on the role of women in development is updated.

95

- A policy on forestry is passed that balances production and conservation and encourages participatory approaches.
- ADB approves an involuntary resettlement policy to ensure that resettlement is dealt with from the earliest stages of the project cycle.
- A governance policy introduces the concept of sound development management.
- ADB approves an inspection function policy.
- ADB's strategy for private sector operations highlights sustainable investments in infrastructure and the financial sector.
- ADB discerns environmental considerations for program lending.
- The medium-term strategic framework, 1995–1998 promotes economic growth, poverty reduction, human development, the status of women, and the environment.
- ADB approves its policy initiatives in the energy sector.

96

- ADB reviews its program lending policy, whereby sector analysis becomes a precondition for the modality and poverty, social, environmental, and mitigation measures are emphasized.
- The first loan for renewable energy, to India, is approved.

97

- ADB formulates a policy on fisheries that highlights sustainability, equity, and efficiency.
- The ADB Institute is inaugurated.
- A study of changes and challenges in Asia discusses its long-term development prospects.
- A study to measure environmental quality in Asia develops indices for monitoring environmental changes.
- ADB is formally admitted as observer to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

98

- A policy on anticorruption is passed to reduce the burden that systematic and widespread corruption exacts on governments and economies in the region.
- The policy on cooperation with nongovernment organizations is updated, identifying three broad areas of cooperation: loans and technical assistance, programming and country-level work, and policy development work.
- The policy on the role of women in development is replaced by a gender and development policy that adopts mainstreaming as a key strategy.
- An indigenous peoples policy is approved to ensure that indigenous peoples participate in and benefit equally from ADB's operations.
- The third Asian agricultural survey is launched to identify critical emerging challenges for rural Asia and formulate policy recommendations and strategic priorities to address them.

99

- ADB declares poverty reduction to be its overarching goal and announces a poverty reduction strategy anchored in pro-poor sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development, and good governance.
- ADB adopts a health sector policy to affirm that health is vital to development, productivity, social inclusion, and gender equity.
- ADB formulates an urban sector strategy.
- The Asian Currency Crisis Support Facility is established to bolster affected countries.

2000s

00

- A microfinance development strategy is prepared to expand access to credit.

- A review of the policy on energy is completed.
- A medium-term agenda and action plan to promote good governance is approved.
- ADB and Japan establish the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction to support, among others, promising sustainable development initiatives.
- ADB formulates a private sector development strategy to promote economic growth supportive of poverty reduction.

01

- A water policy is formulated that recognizes Asia-Pacific's need to implement integrated, cross-sectoral approaches to water management and development.
- A social protection strategy is approved that specifies coverage, targeting of vulnerable population groups, sustainability, and good governance as considerations for project design.
- ADB's long-term strategic framework, 2001–2015 identifies sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development, and governance as core areas of interventions.
- A regional and sustainable development department is created to help align policies with poverty reduction and undertake knowledge management.
- A center to work with nongovernment organizations is established.

02

- The policy on education is updated to prioritize universal primary enrollment, equitable access for girls and boys, and helping unemployed youth.
- An environment policy is approved that recognizes environmental sustainability to be a prerequisite for pro-poor economic growth and efforts to reduce poverty.
- A renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate change program is initiated.
- An environment and social safeguards division is created.

03

- The Gender and Development Cooperation Fund is set up with initial contributions from the governments of Canada, Denmark, and Norway. Australia and Ireland join later.
- A clean development mechanism facility is created to mobilize resource and technology flows for greenhouse gas mitigation projects.
- A new strategy on information and communication technology is adopted.
- An accountability mechanism replaces ADB's inspection function to boost transparency and enhance development outcomes.
- ADB becomes the first multilateral development bank to meet international standards on environmental, occupational health, and safety management systems.
- A policy is formulated to enhance ADB's role in combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

04

- A knowledge management framework is formulated to foster a knowledge-supportive environment, promote results orientation and continuous improvement, and enhance operational relevance.
- A disaster and emergency assistance policy is approved, encompassing prevention of, preparation for, and mitigation of disasters.
- ADB joins the partnership to promote the Millennium Development Goals in Asia-Pacific.
- ADB enhances its poverty reduction strategy to deepen country analysis.
- ADB's new project classification system tracks projects in terms of thematic focus and emphasis on poverty reduction.

05

- An HIV/AIDS strategic directions paper is approved. Supporting its implementation is a technical assistance grant to develop and implement more effective and evidence-based responses to the AIDS epidemic at country and regional levels.
- An energy efficiency initiative is launched to underpin investments in clean energy.
- A unit for regional economic integration is created.

- ADB approves its public communications policy.
- ADB establishes the multidonor Asian Tsunami Fund to support rehabilitation and recovery in India, Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- ADB pledges support for the rehabilitation of earthquake-devastated Pakistan, starting with the establishment of the Pakistan Emergency Fund.

06

- The anticorruption policy is updated to require all parties carrying out ADB-assisted activities to adhere to the highest financial and ethical standards.
- The urban sector strategy is updated to emphasize country-based practical guidance.
- A carbon market initiative is launched to promote investments in greenhouse gas mitigation.
- ADB commits to core labor standards.
- The second governance and anticorruption action plan is approved.
- A strategy to guide regional cooperation and integration work is prepared.
- ADB establishes a water financing partnership facility to deliver investments, reforms, and capacity development in the water sector.

07

- A clean energy financing partnership facility channels investments for greenhouse gas mitigation.
- A gender and development plan of action for 2008–2010 is approved.

08

- Strategy 2020, ADB's new long-term strategic framework, highlights inclusive growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.
- Clean energy investments hit \$1.68 billion, exceeding the original target of \$1 billion per year.
- An action plan to promote ADB's disaster and emergency assistance policy is drawn.
- ADB formulates an operational plan to improve health outcomes and access under Strategy 2020.
- A region-wide strategic study on education and skills is completed.
- ADB sets up the Climate Change Fund to scale up mitigation, adaptation, forest conservation, and land use management among developing member countries.

09

- A unit for climate change program coordination is set up.
- ADB approves an operational plan for sustainable food security in Asia-Pacific.
- A safeguard policy statement is articulated to strengthen protections already in place for the environment, involuntary settlement, and indigenous peoples.
- A new energy policy is approved.

2010s

10

- ADB endorses an action plan to simultaneously address climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- A sustainable transport initiative operational plan is prepared to align ADB's operations with Strategy 2020.
- An education sector operations plan is formulated.
- A water operations framework, 2011–2020 is designed.
- ADB registers with the U.S. Green Building Council to obtain gold certification in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.
- ADB establishes a credit guarantee and investment facility to promote financial stability and boost long-term investment.

About the Regional and Sustainable Development Department

The Regional and Sustainable Development Department is the focal point of sector and thematic work in ADB. It provides corporate coherence in policies and strategies in priority areas; develops initiatives and business practices and mainstreams them into ADB's operations; and promotes knowledge generation, capture, and sharing.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB's vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries substantially reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region's many successes, it remains home to two-thirds of the world's poor: 1.8 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day, with 903 million struggling on less than \$1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

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