

How are stakeholders playing a critical role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? What are some good examples and case studies of stakeholder implementation?

To answer the question, I would like to share the example of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, or the APRCEM. The APRCEM is a CSO platform that enables, amplifies and ensures diverse voices of peoples and CSOs in Asia Pacific to participate in regional and global intergovernmental forums. Currently, we have 17 constituencies, 5 subregions, and a growing number of members and participating CSOs.

Every year, in the lead up to the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, APRCEM holds the Asia Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development, which brings together the broadest number of CSOs and people's groups to discuss urgent and emerging issues, deliberate and unite on advocacy messages, in order to ensure CSO and grassroots participation in the APFSD.

We have worked with UNESCAP to ensure that the space remains open, inclusive and flexible; that CSO-led initiatives are supported financially and through various means; that our independence is respected; and that CSO and peoples' voices are present and their demands acted upon in the APFSD.

The APRCEM was born out of the need to challenge worsening cases of human rights violations, shrinking space and silencing of critical voices; to shed light on uncomfortable truths such as neoliberalism, fundamentalism, patriarchy and modern slavery; to hold governments accountable on policies, projects and practices that cause environmental degradation and increase peoples' insecurity.

The APRCEM is about meaningful participation and better outcomes of these processes.

Attaining these objectives is not easy when in advocacy spaces there is weak realisation of language justice, an ever-widening digital divide, and lack of political will to uphold and support CSO and people-led spaces. It becomes even more difficult when the economic woes of local peoples are overlooked and not reflected in national governments' reports; when recommendations from the regional level are not provided sufficient time, energy and space at global spaces; and when follow-up actions and resolutions are not carried forward by states after APFSDs or HLPFs.

Working with migrants, my organisation has witnessed their problems of being treated as second-class citizens, being socially excluded, denied access to aid, service and justice, stripped of their rights to form or join associations, or hold public assemblies. Currently, crackdowns on undocumented migrants intensify, negative narratives on them prevail, and a myriad forms of trafficking – education trafficking, cybertrafficking and even legal trafficking – emerge.

Amidst all these, migrants arouse, organise and mobilise on the ground. They find creative means to resist, to speak up, and to put forward their demands. Let us match this vibrant energy as we advocate for meaningful and effective stakeholder participation here at the global level.

b) What do you recommend to strengthen the role of stakeholders in participation and implementation?

I would like to quote points from the Collective Statement that came out of the 2024 APPFSD:

- End all corporate-driven public private partnerships, and demand transparency and accountability from governments on impacts of these projects and ensure democratic decision-making inclusive of the right holders.
- Reverse the shrinking and closing space for CSOs as development actors and rights-holders.
- Promote the use of CSO or citizen-led data collection and monitoring, as a way to address the lack of transparency and accountability of other development actors.
- Closely consult and actively involve various sectors and their organisations in all efforts, including by establishing formal consultative mechanisms in decision-making processes related to international cooperation.
- Strengthen safe, meaningful, equitable and inclusive participation of marginalised sectors in decision-making processes and implementations contributing to the SDGs.

Whatever is decided in these halls impacts the lives of peoples from the farthest towns. When we go back home, the struggle continues.

Finally, a simple answer to this question: build and invest on the positive while acknowledging and correcting the negative. The persistent voices of communities have led some governments to apologise to indigenous peoples or to their former colonies, accord them their right to lead, own up to the atrocities of war and occupation, and begin reparations. It is a big step but we still have a long way to go. And hopefully more will follow.