

Grow Asia Partners' Advisory Council Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting - 17 October 2022 11.00AM (UTC+8)

Time and Place

The Grow Asia Partners Advisory Council Meeting was held on Monday, 17 October 2022, at 11:00 hrs, at the Lotus Room, Shangri-La Singapore, 22 Orange Grove Road, Singapore 258350.

Attendees	
Organization	Representative
AsiaDHRRA	Marlene Ramirez
Australia DFAT	Fiona Lynn
IDH	Fitrian Ardiansyah
IFAD	Liam Chicca
IPSARD	Nguyen Anh Phong
IRRI	Valerien Pede
Oxfam	Bernadette Victorio
Save the Children	Mei-Ing Cheok
Switzerland Embassy	Joël Henri Brunner
UK FCDO	Pete Howson
Viet Nam MARD	Pham Thi Hong Hanh
WWF	Kristina Anguelova
Observers and Guests:	
AGRA	Agnes Kalibata
CASA	Alvaro Valverde
Food Action Alliance	Adam Gerstenmier
SAFIN	Michael von During
SNV	Tran Thu Ha

Apologies	
Organization	Representative
ASEAN Secretariat	Pham Quang Minh
IDRC	Anindya Chatterjee
IFC	Marta Bogdanic
Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund	Naoki Minamiguchi
Mercy Corps Indonesia	Ade Soekadis
Swisscontact	Prashant Rana
WOCAN	Nisha Onta

Grow Asia Secretariat and Country Partnership Staff:

Regional Secretariat		Country Partnerships	
Grow Asia	Beverley Postma	Philippines (PPSA)	Amy Chua
Grow Asia	Pranav Sethaputra	Indonesia (PISAgro)	Insan Syafaat
Grow Asia	Erin Sweeney	Cambodia (CPSA)	Sarin Tey
Grow Asia	Wei-Li Woo	Vietnam (PSAV)	Nguyen Cam Thuy
Grow Asia	Reginald Lee		

The meeting was chaired by Grow Asia Executive Director, Beverley Postma

1. Welcome and Quorum

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed all members, and declared a quorum was present.

2. Approval of agenda

The agenda was duly approved with no further amendment.

3. Grow Asia Programs and Impact Funds for 2022-2025

Grow Asia Executive Director presented highlights and milestones since the establishment of Grow Asia in 2015. She summarised the progress made since the last Governance meetings in February 2022 and provided an update on Grow Asia's strategic plan and Country programs.

Members were informed of the closure of Grow Asia's Myanmar office in September due to the deteriorating political stability in the country. They were reassured that the 35+ partners in Myanmar will continue to be engaged and supported as part of the Grow Asia network.

[Grow Asia's Annual Report 2022 Video](#) was unveiled, announcing the launch of four multi-donor impact funds totaling USD 20.2m to accelerate sustainable agricultural transformation in Southeast Asia. The impact funds will target the "hidden middle"—MSMEs that typically fall below the radar for investors and financial institutions.

The signing of a Collaboration Agreement between Grow Asia and [AGRA](#) was also announced with the intention to drive South-South Cooperation between Asia and Africa.

4. Proposal to change the name and composition of Grow Asia's Civil Society Council

Members received an overview of Grow Asia's governance structure of Grow Asia and agreed that the current name of the "Civil Society Council" does not adequately describe the role and composition of members, which now includes governments, donors, development agencies, and farmers organizations. New naming options tabled included "Partners Council," "Partners Advisory Council" and "International Development Council."

The need for two separate Councils was also discussed and members agreed on balance that it was valuable for Grow Asia to continue to convene a separate Business Council but that opportunities should be designed to allow the two councils to meet together more often.

RESOLVED: The meeting duly considered and unanimously resolved to change the name of the Civil Society Council to the Partners' Advisory Council.

5. Election of Co-Chairs of the Grow Asia Partners Advisory Council

In accordance with Grow Asia's Constitution, nominations for two Co-Chairs were solicited from members of the Partners' Advisory Council, one from the public sector, and one an NGO/non-profit entity. Following a discussion, the following nominees agreed to stand and ballot papers were distributed to all voting members:

Public Sector: ASEAN Secretariat

NGO/Non-Profit: AsiaDHRRA, and Mercy Corps

RESOLVED: AsiaDHRRA was duly elected as the NGO/non-profit Co-chair by a majority vote. The ASEAN Secretariat was elected *in absentia* as the Public Sector Co-chair.

6. Establishment of the Grow Asia Board

The Executive Director reported that discussions with Grow Asia members and partners have highlighted the necessity for a strengthened Governance model that will ultimately have oversight for the management of Grow Asia's growing impact funds.

It is envisaged that a formal Board will be established with high level oversight for the strategic direction of Grow Asia and the supervision of the regional Secretariat. The two advisory Councils will continue to monitor Grow Asia's Flagships and Impact Funds and provide guidance on program priorities and impact performance, while the Board will meet twice per year and oversee the multi-stakeholder governance function of the Councils and the Secretariat.

The Board will comprise:

- An Independent Chairperson;
- Four C-Suite leaders elected by the Business Council;
- Four senior officials or non-profit leaders elected by the Partners Advisory Council;
- Up to four expert members nominated by the Company Directors of Grow Asia

RESOLVED: The meeting duly considered and unanimously approved the proposed structure of the Grow Asia Board. The Secretariat noted Members' suggestions including defining the profile of Board Members and how the Country Partnerships can be represented in the governance structure without creating any conflicts of interest.

7. G20/B20 Consultation on Unlocking Inclusive Finance

As Indonesia prepares to host the G20 Summit in November, the Executive Director provided a report on Grow Asia's official role as a Knowledge Partner to the B20 Taskforce for Trade and Investment. Grow Asia has teamed up with Deloitte's Centre for the Edge to host a series of roundtables and prepare an investor report on how governments and businesses can work together to unlock and accelerate financial inclusion for MSMEs. Members identified opportunities such as strengthening the capacities of farmer organizations to absorb funds and investments; promoting inclusive employment opportunities; and understanding the drivers of finance flows (for example, targeted interest rate subsidies). It was agreed that further work should be developed under Flagship 1, as Grow Asia explores the role of innovative finance and digital payments for MSMEs.

8. Members' priorities for multi-stakeholder engagement

The Chair invited Members to share their priorities for the year ahead. Key themes that emerged included taking a systems approach, and leveraging existing initiatives and partnerships to understand where finance and technical support is flowing in the overall sector. There were also calls to make interventions more inclusive by targeting women, youth, indigenous peoples and peoples with disabilities; and by strengthening farmer organizations through the scale up of digital agriculture and digital literacy.

9. Upcoming events & meetings

The Chair outlined upcoming events and meetings, including the Grow Asia Forum on 18 February, the B20 Summit in Bali from 12-14 November; the next meeting of the Grow Asia Councils in February 2023.

Members considered the dates and format for the next meeting of the Partners' Advisory Council and agreed that it should be held in February 2023. The Secretariat will coordinate a date, time and agenda for the meeting in consultation with the new Co-Chairs.

10. Close

There being no other business, the Chair thanked members for their time and declared the meeting closed at 12:50 hrs.