

## Grow Asia Partners' Advisory Council Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting – 8 February 2023 13.30PM (UTC+8)

### Time and Place

The Grow Asia Partners Advisory Council Meeting was held on Wednesday, 8 February 2023, at 13:30 hrs, via Zoom.

Attendees	
Organization	Representative
AsiaDHRRA	Marlene Ramirez
ASEAN Secretariat	Pham Quang Minh
Australia DFAT	Fiona Lynn
CGIAR	Valerien Pedé
IDH	Huynh Tien Dung
IDRC	Edgard Rodriguez
IFAD	Reehana Raza
IFC	Marta Bogdanic
IISD	Nathalie Bernasconi
Japan Mission to ASEAN	Inada Yoshiaki
NTU	William Chen
Oxfam	Bernadette Victorio
Rainforest Alliance	Chandra Panjiwibowo
Save the Children	Mei-Ing Cheok
SDC	Christina Blank
Swisscontact	Prashant Rana
UK Embassy	Marc Thayre
Viet Nam MARD	Pham Thi Hong Hanh
WOCAN	Nisha Onta
Apologies	
Mercy Corps Indonesia	Ade Soekadis
WWF	Kristina Anguelova

Observers and Guests:	
IISD	Sean Woolfrey
CGIAR	Nafees Meah
CGIAR	Melinda Limlengco
Viet Nam MARD	Nguyen Anh Phong

Grow Asia Secretariat and Staff	
Beverley Postma	Grow Asia
Erin Sweeney	Grow Asia
Wei-Li Woo	Grow Asia
Reginald Lee	Grow Asia
Lucy Turner	Grow Asia
Fanny Perdu	Grow Asia
Chrissa Borja	Grow Asia
Amy Chua	Philippines (PPSA)
Insan Syafaat	Indonesia (PISAgro)
Sereyrith Ly	Cambodia (CPSA)
Nguyen Cam Thuy	Vietnam (PSAV)
John Simango	PNG (Grow PNG)

The meeting was co-chaired by Dr Pham Quang Minh, representing the ASEAN Secretariat; and Ms Marlene Ramirez, representing the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA).

### 1. Welcome and Quorum

The Co-chairs opened the meeting, introduced themselves, welcomed all members, and declared a quorum was present. Members were reminded that the Council was formerly known as the Grow Asia Civil Society Council, renamed at the last meeting on 17 October 2022.

### 2. Approval of agenda

The agenda was duly approved with no further amendment.

### 3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting

The Co-chair proposed that the meeting consider the Minutes of the Grow Asia Partners' Advisory Council, held on Monday, 17 October 2022.

**RESOLVED:** Upon motion duly proposed (Save the Children), seconded (Australia DFAT) and carried, the minutes of the 17 October 2022 were accepted as a true and correct record with no further amendment.

### 4. Executive Director's Report

Grow Asia Executive Director welcomed new Members to Grow Asia's Governance Councils.

- Partners' Advisory Council: Nanyang Technological University, Rainforest Alliance, WWF
- Business Council: Beanstalk AgTech, Syngenta

According to Grow Asia's [Constitution](#), Membership in both Councils are capped at 25. Members were invited to inform the Grow Asia Secretariat of organizations that may wish to be included.

Grow Asia has been formally appointed as one of four regional delivery hubs of the World Economic Forum's [Food Action Alliance](#). This recognition paves the way for Grow Asia to scale its partnership programs—from global commitments to regional policymaking, into country-level action and impact. It also offers a valuable pathway to support governments in the region as they implement their UN Food Systems Summit commitments on the development of national pathways to food security.

Grow Asia bid farewell to U Ye Htut, Country Director in Myanmar, and welcomed Ly Sereyrith, the new Managing Director in Cambodia. Grow Asia is continuing to scale up its regional Secretariat and welcomes recommendations for candidates or secondees from Members.

The [Grow Asia Forum 2022](#), held last 18 October 2022, gathered 171 senior leaders from 131 organizations across the region to discuss Asia's most pressing food system challenges and explore avenues for change. Grow Asia thanked its partners and sponsors who made the event possible. The next Grow Asia Forum will take place in September 2023. Members who wish to explore partnership options for this year's Forum were invited to reach out to the Secretariat.

The four multi-donor impact funds unveiled at the Grow Asia Forum have elicited strong interest from stakeholders. Grow Asia aims to raise a further US\$3 million of public and private blended investments in 2023. In particular, the Secretariat is seeking new investments and partners for GrowVentures, GrowHer, and GrowBeyond, targeting philanthropies and bilateral funds.

The team is finalizing project criteria for Impact Fund deployment, and identifying scalable technical assistance projects in Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Viet Nam. The Secretariat invited Members to share feedback on where the funds can meet the greatest need or deliver the greatest impact. In parallel, the Secretariat will continue to work on designing verifiable indicators and data collection systems to measure sustainable impact of new and existing programs for all Flagships.

## 5. Upcoming Events & Meetings

The [4th Global Conference of the One Planet Network's Sustainable Food Systems Programme](#) will take place in Ha Noi, Viet Nam from 24-27 April 2023. The conference will contribute to the 2023 Stocktaking Moment of the UN Food Systems Summit follow-up process in July 2023. Grow Asia is partnering with the Food Action Alliance to help build a strong agenda for South-South cooperation.

Grow Asia proposed to hold the next Council meeting as an in-person event on 1 June. This will be organized as a joint meeting of the two Advisory Councils.

The next Grow Asia Forum is proposed to be held on 11-12 September in either Bali or Singapore.

**RESOLVED:** The meeting duly considered and unanimously resolved to hold the next Council Meeting as a Joint Council Meeting on 1 June 2023, and the next Grow Asia Forum on 11-12 September 2023.

## 6. Update on the Flagships and Impact Funds

The Secretariat provided highlights from each of the four regional Flagships.

### GrowVentures – Agri-Food Innovation

The SEEDS Project is kicking off in Viet Nam with a focus on digitalization of agri-food value chains. The project will support the establishment of Viet Nam's Food Innovation Hub and will include human-centered design training to understand existing innovators' barriers to scale. Pilots planned in Viet Nam include rice, pepper, and coffee value chains. Concurrently, Grow Asia's popular Digital Learning Series will continue, with a focus on inclusive agri-finance for small and micro businesses in the agrifood value chain. Grow Asia welcomes interest from additional partners to match fund the Korean government's investment in the GrowVentures Impact Fund.

### GrowHer- – Women's Economic Empowerment

GrowHer:Kakao is the newest addition to the Flagship, with Grow Asia as the lead grantee on a project jointly financed by GIZ and Mars, and delivered by Save the Children, PISA Agro, and Grow Asia. The project will deliver training and capacity-building to 4,000 women farmers and SMEs in South Sulawesi, linking existing work in these communities on child protection, and climate smart agroforestry practices. Grow Asia thanks GIZ and Mars for their contributions, and to the partnership with Save the Children.

### GrowRight – Responsible Investing

Grow Asia successfully launched an accredited training program for an inaugural cohort of 50 learners as part of the ASEAN Academy on Responsible Investing. These mid-career learners represent businesses, government and NGOs who are involved in designing investments in ASEAN. Grow Asia unveiled the online e-learning platform, which will be hosted by the Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Participants will receive certificates of completion from NTU's Business School. Grow Asia thanks

Members who have sponsored team members to join the pilot cohort and will launch the scholarship for Cohort 2 in the coming months.

### **GrowBeyond – Climate Change Resilience and Adaption**

A sprint focused on climate finance for resilient food systems in Southeast Asia is being organized in collaboration with Bain, and the Milken Institute Asia Center. The sprint will build on the B20/G20 work and insights from the Digital Learning Series. Grow Asia will kick off with an awareness campaign for investors, pilot solutions through its Country Partnerships, and publish findings at this year's Grow Asia Forum later this year.

### **Feedback and discussion**

Members were invited to ask questions and share their feedback on the updates provided. Members welcomed the collaboration between Grow Asia and NTU on the ASEAN Academy. Members enquired about the processes around the new Impact Funds, and how they would be dispersed. The preferred delivery partners for the funds are the five country chapters of Grow Asia, and that work is underway on establishing the criteria for where the blended technical assistance is most needed to remove barriers to impact. Given this, there will be no open calls at this time for organizations or individuals to apply for funding directly from Grow Asia, as any requests would go through the country chapters as the primary beneficiaries.

Grow Asia was asked to provide more information on the work underway in Vietnam. Grow Asia is committed to supporting the One Planet event in Vietnam in collaboration with Food Action Alliance and are currently exploring opportunities to promote South-South cooperation during this event by partnering with AGRA and IICA.

Members also asked for reflections on the country chapters and their efforts to engage with smallholder farmers as well as becoming multi-stakeholder in their delivery models. Grow Asia summarized the challenges of reaching smallholder farmers at scale and stressed the need to identify best practice, for example bringing the voice of smallholder farmers to the Grow Asia Forum and striving for greater diversity and inclusivity. The country chapters are conducting multi-stakeholder dialogues with private sector partners and non-profits and have also been focused on engaging more farmers' organizations in these dialogues.

## **7. Other business**

The Council Co-chair, Dr Minh, provided an update on ASEAN priorities for 2023, including a declaration on food security, a statement on reduction of harmful chemicals in agricultural production, developing a strategy for emission reduction, and an action plan for the implementation of ASEAN guidelines on sustainable agriculture. The Grow Asia Secretariat re-confirmed support for ASEAN under the Chairmanship of Indonesia and invited Members to identify priorities for Public-Private partnerships in the region.

## **8. Close**

There being no other business, the Co-chairs thanked Members for their time and declared the meeting closed at 14:55 hrs.