



China Association for  
NGO Cooperation



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

# Non-State Actors in Asian Development Cooperation: The Role of Non-governmental Organizations

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The Regent Hotel  
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## INTRODUCTION

Organized jointly by the Korea Development Institute (KDI) and The Asia Foundation (TAF), the “Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation” (AADC) dialogue series brings together development experts and government officials from the Asia region and beyond to share perspectives and to facilitate mutual learning between and among emerging Asian donors, recipient countries, and DAC members.

The dialogue series is now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year. In 2011 the series began with a focus on Asian approaches to development cooperation, a novel topic of discussion in a changing aid landscape. 2012, The AADC dialogues combined the theme of development cooperation with pro-poor inclusive growth. In 2013 dialogues in Seoul and Hoi An, highlighted climate change mitigation and adaptation. In 2014, the theme was Social Mobility in Asia, featuring dialogues in Sri Lanka and an author’s meeting in Seoul in November. In 2015, the dialogues focused on the future of South-South Cooperation in the region. The first dialogue, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (May 2015), featured the perspective of partner countries, while the second dialogue focused on provider perspectives.

In 2016, the AADC dialogues focus on the role of non-state actors in international development cooperation. This first conference in Beijing (April) explores the role of civil society in the international development while the second meeting in Delhi (August) will focus on the role of private sector. This report intends to cover the proceedings and outcomes of the Beijing meeting, featuring presentations and discussions by regional government officials, policy specialists and development experts.

## OBJECTIVES OF DIALOGUE SERIES

- To present and discuss Asian experience on the role and potential of non-state actors in development cooperation.
- To promote mutual interest, learning, understanding, and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between and amongst Asian countries and experts.
- To make specific policy contributions and recommendations from Asian actors on how Asian-led development cooperation can be better governed, managed, and delivered through partnerships and investments by non-state actors.
- To produce a publication compiling papers and key findings from the dialogues.

## OPENING CEREMONY

**Huang Haoming**, Vice Chairman and Executive Director, China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), and moderator for the opening session, welcomed all participants.

In his welcome address, **Xiao Fenghuai** from China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) expressed the Chinese government's interest to collaborate with Chinese NGOs in international development. He stated that NGOs have become an important force to international development and that the Chinese government is changing its approach to a foreign aid model which incorporates more roles for NGOs.

**Jaehoon Kim**, from the Korea Development Institute (KDI), added welcome remarks to participants and commented that NGOs play a crucial role in monitoring government activities in international development and gathering data to improve development effectiveness.

**Gordon Hein**, from the Asia Foundation, welcomed participants and expressed that NGOs getting more attention globally as vital development actors. He also emphasized that to reach the ambitious goals and targets of the SDGs contribution from diverse actors, government and non-government is required.



## HISTORY AND ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN ASIA

This session looked at how civil society's role in development cooperation has evolved in provider countries. What is the institutional framework for civil society activities? What is the legal status and relationship with government? What is the value of CSO engagement for provider governments?

Moderated by **Dylan Davis** Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Korea, the session featured:

**Jin-kyung Kim** Program Specialist, Civil Society Partnership Team,  
Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

**Yao Shuai** Assistant Researcher  
Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC)

**Angela Naumann** Acting Director, NGO Policy Section



In her presentation, “The Role and Impact of NGOs in Korea’s Development Cooperation”, **Jin-kyung Kim** reiterated the fact that NGOs have become important and independent actors in the field of international development, working beyond their traditional role of filling the gaps left by governmental organizations. In South Korea, she explained that NGOs first emerged during the Korean War in 1950-1953 by international relief organizations focusing on social welfare and local development within the country. It was only in 1990-2000s, that NGOs broadened their role from national to international development. In particular, the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation (2010) encouraged the Korean government to engage with development NGOs. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has been providing development assistance to NGOs since 1995. This presentation examined the trend of partnership between the KOICA and NGOs as well as the challenges KOICA faces. Notable challenges include the fact that there are many diverse partners which results in high transaction costs. She also mentioned the dilemma between CSOs autonomy and the need for KOICA’s conditions and guidelines. At the same time there are huge differences in capacity, accountability and transparency between the NGOs. Monitoring and evaluation is another area for improvement.

**Yao Shuai** presented on “Chinese Civil Societies in Foreign Assistance: Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC)”. Chinese assistance to foreign countries is mainly led by the government and Chinese civil societies are still in their inception in terms of providing foreign aid. So far, China doesn’t have any policy specifically designed for civil societies nor does it open any foreign aid funds for them. Ms Yao highlighted the strength civil societies could bring in foreign assistance: thanks to their experience they can provide flexible and multi-form aid with expertise, serve as a bridge between China and aided countries which helps improve China’s image overseas, and increase public participation in foreign aid. She mentioned several NGOs and projects, including China Charity Federation(CCF), China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, and Chinese Young Volunteers’ Association, which have been doing humanitarian work, education, health, disaster relief, and medical relief. She anticipated a role for Chinese NGOs in the Belt and Road Initiative as well as the implementation of the SDGs. She concluded by giving few suggestions to Chinese civil societies such as making the best use of existing platforms, to exchange ideas with similar organizations in other countries to improve their structure and policy framework, and to meet with local communities to understand their needs better.

**Angela Naumann** spoke on “Australia’s engagement with NGOs in Development”. She mainly focused on the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT) policy framework for working with NGOs to support and achieve Australia’s development objectives. DFAT launched a new policy “Creating Shared Value through Partnership” in December 2015. After emphasizing that DFAT respects NGOs as independent civil society development actors, Ms Naumann addressed the principles guiding DFAT’s engagement with NGOs: NGO partners must be effective and share DFAT’s commitment to high standards of transparency and accountability in the management of the Australian aid program. Together they must promote Australia’s national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. She noted that Australian NGOs raise over AUD \$1 billion

from the Australian public every year. Finally, she described the strategic partnership between DFAT and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and their objectives.

**Q&A/Discussion:**

**Discussant: Shi Zhongcheng** (Managing Director, China Association for International Exchange of Personnel)

The wide-ranging discussion followed up on different issues experienced in Korea, Australia and China as civil society groups became engaged in development cooperation. One main theme was how various governments are beginning to partner with civil society/NGOs as part of their foreign aid plans. Ms. Naumann from Australia said that developing a clear policy framework for government work with NGOs was key. In the process, “it became clear that NGOs are incredibly relevant and have a clear role in helping government reach their objectives,” she said. In Korea, KOICA’s Kim said that meant partnering with business groups for more effective fundraising, while in China, the Ministry of Commerce has begun working with a company that sends its experts to evaluate China’s foreign aid projects, said Ms. Yao of CAITEC. There were additional issues regarding capacity building for NGOs, implementation challenges, as well as the perennial challenges of legal registration and funding. Yao noted that China had recently passed a new charity law, and that the People’s Republic of China’s Law on the Management of the Activities of Overseas NGOs within Mainland China was expected to be passed, giving clearer guidelines for NGO activities.

## SECTORAL ISSUES

In this session, panelists discussed sectoral or thematic approaches by Asian NGOs, presenting the strategy, implementation mechanisms, role and impact of program in partner countries. Moderated by **Sun Liping**(Secretary General, Beijing Sicheng Chaoyangmen Community Foundation) the session featured:

<b>Siriporn Wajjwalku</b>	Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science Thammasat University, Thailand
<b>Faruque Ahmed</b>	Executive Director, BRAC International
<b>Yan Shi</b>	Head of Department of Hope Primary School China Youth Development Foundation on Education
<b>Ji Lanlan</b>	Team Leader, China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA)



**Siriporn Wajjwalku** shared her insight on “NGOs and Aid Coordination: Thailand’s Experience”. As the emergence of new players in the world of donors is becoming obvious, the process of coordinating aid among them is critical. However, because NGOs are independent from the government, information flow, impact assessment and aid coordination are barely implemented. Dr Siriporn’s presentation aimed to explore the process of aid coordination implemented by Thai NGOs in neighboring countries. To demonstrate the special character and complication of aid coordination, she presented two case studies of Thai NGOs facing similar conditions such as funding, sustainability and progress. She gave the example of Mae Fae Laun Foundation which has projects in Myanmar, Indonesia, and Afghanistan, has a wide range of supporters and partners, and has been self-sustaining since 2014.

**Faruque Ahmed** discussed BRAC’s journey in fighting poverty around the world. Established in 1972 in Bangladesh, BRAC since reached to about 120 million people of the total population. With the experience of working in post liberation war of Bangladesh, the organization started working internationally in 2002 and reached to 11 countries around the world. Mr. Ahmed explained that while choosing an intervention in a country, BRAC prioritizes proven solutions with potential for scale and contextualization. Across the international operating countries, they have reached about 19 million people mainly in Microfinance programs, Education, Youth, Agriculture and Healthcare. He further noted that, working in fragile countries and vulnerable situations, BRAC has faced numerous challenges, such as cultural barriers, securing long term funding and security. He then concluded that BRAC’s work visibility outside Bangladesh is still very limited and more work and commitment needs to be done to be introduced to the global audience.

**Yan Shi explain that China Youth Development Foundation** started in 1999. In 2000 they started with a few small projects and exchanges with Malaysia. World youth football competitions was a main activity. With Project Hope Africa run in March 2011, the Foundation received a donation of 10M USD from Chinese companies through their international corporate social responsibility. Through this they established 23 hope schools and vocational schools. In Africa the Foundation tries to duplicate the school model in China and the model of charity in China. However,he pointed out that it was also important to customize schools in light of local conditions. The program is a way for Chinese companies to live up to their social responsibilities, complimentary to business globalization. One of the challenges the Foundation faces is criticism at home from people who want them to fund programs in China, not Africa.

**Ji Lanlan** presented on “The Internationalization of China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation”. Founded in 1989, CFPA is a nationwide poverty-reduction NGO that raised a total 17.75 billion RMB in poverty alleviation funds and material and benefited more than 4 million people by the end of 2015. Since 2005, CFPA carried out projects in both humanitarian and development aid in 14 countries and regions. Their actions vary from international disaster emergency relief, sustainable public welfare and education. Ms Ji explained that the organization gradually evolved from “indoor internationalization” (without going abroad) to establishing local offices in Myanmar and Nepal in 2015, which symbolizes that CFPA has officially become an international NGO. She then presented two long-term projects they launched in Sudan and Ethiopia.

## **Q&A/ Discussion**

The exchange continued on the impacts that the NGOs could bring. The discussion was focused on how the alternatives initiated by NGOs could be mainstreamed into policy outcomes. The transitions from local NGOs to international NGOs were discussed as well as capacity gap during this transition. Faruque Ahmed shared BRAC's experience in influencing the government program, and its growth story from a small government-financed microfinance organization to a well-respected international NGO. He noted that "long term international donors asked BRAC to go abroad". Perceived as cheap and effective programs partner, BRAC is faced with many challenges, such as integrity, innovation, and effectiveness. Siriporn responded that Thailand NGOs go overseas is a result of the Thai government's initiatives to support neighboring countries after Asian Financial Crisis. She noted that different NGOs have different strengths and destinations, and will therefore take different approaches when they go abroad.

## POLICY DIALOGUE

In this fourth session, the panelists discussed how CSOs in Asian provider countries are helping and/or trying to shape their countries developing cooperation policy nationally and internationally. What are the key issues, mechanisms, and structures for engagement with government and/or international organizations? What are the opportunities and challenges? How do CSOs advocate for accountability and good governance? Moderated by **Long Jingwen**(Vice Chairman, China Association of Women Entrepreneurs)the session featured:

**Julia Newton-Howes** CEO, CARE Australia

**Kaustuv K. Bandyopadhyay** Director, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India

**Katsuji Imata** Executive Director, NPO Center Japan



**Julia Newton-Howes'** presentation on "Influencing Government: The Experience of Australian NGOs Working in International Development" focused on how Australian NGOs working in International Development seek to influence the Australian Government's policies and practices to be pro-poor, environmentally sustainable and inclusive of minority interests. Working at a community level, NGOs can bring different perspectives compared to bilateral and multilateral agencies. Their technical expertise and specialist capabilities is also a source of influence. The ACFID, as the peak body for NGOs working in International development, offers an important



forum for discussing and campaigning; thus giving NGOs a greater chance of being successful. Julia Newton-Howes further explained that the use of data, conference paper, meetings to persuade politicians or collaboration through seminars are some of the ways NGOs attempt to influence the government. However, the use of public campaigning on issues is a more confrontational way and NGOs are conscious of the risks it could cause regarding government funding. Hence, many commentators argue that NGOs should not receive any government funds so they can remain critical and independent.

**Kaustuv K. Bandyopadhyay** spoke on “Engaging Civil Society organizations in India’s Development Cooperation”. Despite having a wide variety of expertise and decades of engagement in international development cooperation, the involvement of Indian CSOs in Indian development cooperation is negligible. He noted that although the government is willing to engage with CSOs, the modalities supported by a favorable policy is yet to be in place. Mr. Bandyopadhyay then mentioned some of the challenges Indian CSOs face: the reluctance of the government to recognize their contributions, the restrictive legal and policy frameworks, and the lack of any funding window to support CSO’s initiatives. To conclude, he pointed that several positive changes were taking place. For the first time, the Government of India and CSOs jointly organized a workshop during the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015 and the declaration from the 3<sup>rd</sup> India-Africa summit officially mentioned the possibility of a future partnership with Indian CSOs.

**Katsuji Imata** opened by mentioning the overall decline of Japanese ODA. In a world of global public goods he said that we are all developing countries now. He discussed the shifting political landscape and how development norms are changing. Financing is not the sole power in development and the funding and interest in development is becoming more diverse and multifaceted. He questioned what is the value proposition by government. He then discussed the Japan Platform which was established in 2000 and provided a channel for funding for NGOs. He observed that Japanese NGOs not so strong on policy and advocacy work. This is partly due to a lack of proper understanding by the public that NGOs should play a strong policy role. However he noted that advocacy workshops are increasing in Japan. One role for NGOs is to work on guidelines for standards and monitor compliance of these standards. Through this they would be working as official channels to hold the government accountable. He noted a recent shift in Japan. Previously NGO advocacy was seen as a nuisance but these days there are more listening ears.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

Discussant: Jia Xijin, Associate Professor, Tsinghua University

Professor JiaXijin started the discussion with questions on the trend and incentives behind CSO-state relationships in Australia, India and Japan. The discussions were focused on how CSOs and government can work constructively with each other. Participants concurred that aid policy, as a part of foreign policy, is heavily driven by domestic agenda. Julia responded that due to political and institutional changes, NGOs’ advocacy role is less valued by the government and it becomes significantly more challenging to work with government. Julia stressed that governments and NGOs need to work constructively together. Kaustuv noted India’s tensions with its neighbors

become an excuse to hide its foreign policy. The Indian NGOs has been trying to influence the government and advocate for a more transparent and effective development policy, which is very important. Imata responded that Japanese NGOs have little involvement in advocacy work and little understanding in the international environment, which is a result of historical memories, lack of financial support and weak human resources, and lack of sophisticated law. Imata also noted that there are cases where NGOs successfully changed government policies and even international norms and standards. Imata said INGOs always work with local NGOs in partner countries when they advocate for policy change in a foreign country.

## PARTNER COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES ON CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

In this session, panelists shared the views of partner countries which receive assistance and cooperation from NGOs, Asian or western. They provided perspective on how these NGOs are perceived in their country, their role, contribution and recommendations for improved engagement. Moderated by **Zeng Steven Lei** (Country Director, Mercy Corps China) the session featured:

**DilBhusan** Founder, Interface Nepal

**Pansy Tun Thein** Director, Local Resource Center, Myanmar



**DilBhusan** presented on “Partner Country Perspectives on Civil Society Engagement: Nepal”. In the last 20 years, Nepal faced many challenging events that affected the overall development of the country such as the decade long armed conflict, constitutional changes and the earthquake of April 2015. Mr.Bhusan highlighted the role played by development assistance, non-state actors and the media especially during the most recent earthquake. After discussing the challenges non-state actors encounter in the area of sustainability, coordination, governance and accountability; he emphasized on the need for greater engagement of the non-state actors particularly in the post- earthquake reconstruction and the implementation of the new constitution.

**Pansy Tun Thein** discussed “Myanmar Perspectives on Civil Society Engagement.” Now that Myanmar has become more powerful economically and politically, SSC and triangular cooperation will become very important tools for the development of the country. There are

currently many opportunities for NGOs and official development assistance (ODA) to engage with Myanmar. After mentioning different Asian NGOs present in Myanmar such as Japan, Korea, China, India and Thailand, Ms Pansy explained that although International NGOs are appreciated for their contribution to the development of communities, there is a general lack of trust and transparency among them. She advised Asian NGOs working in Myanmar to be more transparent, accountable and to consult with Myanmar CSOs as they have lots of experience with local communities. She also highlighted the importance of not forgetting those who may be affected by development projects and who deserve a shared benefit and prosperity. She encouraged Asian NGOs to join the INGO forum in Myanmar.

### **Q&A/Discussion**

Discussion:

Leading the discussion, Ms. She from Amity Foundation raised the issue of different challenges that impact NGOs working in countries other than their own countries, with Nepal and Myanmar, from religion to governmental instability. She said her China-based group had participated in the Nepal earthquake relief and rehabilitation efforts but she made the point that NGOs working in another country should engage with local communities before disaster strikes. Ms. Thein observed that in Myanmar, NGOs often work with religious leaders on development projects because of their closeness and influence with local communities. Instability in Nepal has little effect on day-to-day NGO operations, Mr. Dil noted. In part because the government is in constant chaos, Nepal's estimated 40,000 NGOs have stepped in to provide more consistent services for its citizens. There was also discussion about whether there was a difference in approaches between international and local NGOs working in Asian countries and if that contributed to tensions between them. Ms. Thein stated frankly that the INGO forum in Myanmar is not particularly welcoming to Asian NGOs, although she felt the two sides had much to learn and share with each other.

## **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: COORDINATION, COLLABORATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

In this session, panelists discussed how Asian civil society collaborates with external actors. What is the role and value added for the various parties? What are some ways to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of provider country CSOs in development cooperation? What tools, learning, and opportunities can Asian civil society access from other international actors? Moderated by **Anthea Mulakala** (Director, International Development Cooperation, The Asia Foundation) the session featured:

<b>Kyung-shin Lee</b>	Program Director Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC)
<b>Hannah Ryder</b>	Head of Policy and Partnerships United Nations Development Program (UNDP), China
<b>Zhou Yan</b>	Deputy Country Representative Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), China Office
<b>Shantanu Mitra</b>	Senior Economic Advisor Department for International Development (DFID), China



#### Roundtable Discussion:

The conversation began with a discussion about the main challenges and constraints for Chinese and other NGOs going overseas for development cooperation, with TAF CR Jinoting that key factors include lack of a regulatory framework, funding mechanisms, and most importantly, a lack of capacity, while the UNDP's Ryder said that NGOs need to decide what role they want to play: either service delivery or advocacy/accountability. Capacity building is important in helping NGOs understand what their strengths are and where they can be most effective. Amity's She noted that NGOs should learn how to collaborate and coordinate better, saying that Chinese NGOs who wanted to help in the Nepal quake needed to find effective local partners. However, that knowledge is only gained through building up relationships on the ground. KCOC's Lee said her organization helps with capacity building on both the individual level (via training workshops etc) and at the organizational level (so that NGOs don't lose skills when employees/leaders leaves). Another issue was what skills local NGOs can learn from INGOs and how to make that accessible to a wider group. JICA's DCR Zhou noted that her organization has facilitated cooperation between grassroots and INGOs through technical exchanges, experience-sharing forums, etc., while DFID's Mitra said his organization works more with overall NGO governance and accountability issues (though in countries outside of China). A key issue raised was how to encourage collaboration between Asian civil society groups and INGOs in a country, as well as participation in international forums and global partnerships. Ji responded that many Asian civil society groups have had the benefit of outside funding and resources to help with capacity building and growth, which in turn has produced active NGOs within a country who are now at a stage where they want to go out and share those experiences with other countries. TAF for example is working with Chinese NGOS to build up their abilities and skills to respond to humanitarian disasters outside of China, in effect to become 'international' in their own right. Ryder said UNDP has also focused on capacity building where coordination and collaboration are encouraged, but a common obstacle is when local NGOs perceive the project as being driven by donors. NGOs need to understand that collaboration is key because 1) networking is useful 2) mutual learning occurs 3) it widens capacity for innovation. KCOC said Asian NGOs need to be encouraged to think and network more broadly so they can be part of the conversation on a regional and international level.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Moderated by **Kyung-sook Lee** (Program Director, The Asia Foundation, Korea), the session featured:

**Taejong Kim** Managing Director, KDI School of Public Policy & Management

**Gordon Hein** Senior Vice President, The Asia Foundation

**Huang Haoming** Vice Chairman & Executive Director,  
China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO)



Taejong Kim and Gordon Hein concluded the meeting with the observation that this had been one of the most stimulating and successful AADC events. This was largely because we were able to learn extensively about China's experience, and also because as the aid landscape is changing the issue of NGOs in development cooperation is timely. Taejong Kim looked forward to NGOs forming alliances across Asia. Gordon Hein stressed the importance of NGOs relationship with their governments. Huang Haoming described the seismic shift in the NGO landscape in China, as Chinese NGOs extend their programs beyond China's borders. He urged more participation in development cooperation from diverse non state actors, such as the private sector. His point was well received and introduces the next dialogue on private sector collaboration in Asian development cooperation to be held in India in August.

## WELCOME DINNER



The keynote speaker at the dinner was Deng Guosheng from Tsinghua University. Dr Deng presented recent research in the trends in the overseas philanthropy of Chinese Foundations. He explained how using survey methodology his team explored the state of engagement of Chinese foundation in overseas charity and what factors influence Chinese foundations going overseas. The findings revealed that Chinese foundations started raising funds from abroad for their activities at home, and then transitioned to working abroad. The overseas work is now expanding and increasing. He concluded noting that in the past, Chinese foundations merely received overseas donations. However, in recent years, one-third of the 500 most active foundations in China had donated overseas. The amount of overseas donations made by the Chinese foundations is growing, far exceeding the growth in GDP, and Chinese foundations have officially become a new force in the international donor market. The frequency of exchanges between Chinese foundations and overseas NGOs is the most important factor impacting whether foundations make overseas donations. So, building a cooperative network between Chinese NGOs and NGOs in other Asian countries is timely and important.

## FIELD VISIT

Participants visited the Beijing Hong Dandan Educational and Cultural Exchange Center (HDD) is located in a traditional courtyard in the heart of Beijing. The organization provides barrier-free cultural products and services to the visually impaired by creating an inclusive and supportive environment for the visually impaired through audio guide technologies. HDD works with more than 3,000 volunteers and more than 100,000 people with visual impairment have benefited from HDD's work. The organization initiated projects to narrate movies and produce specialized audio books for the blind to broaden their knowledge and enrich their lives. HDD also organizes cultural and recreational activities such as Drama Studio and Happy Fitness to enhance their self-confidence and inspire others. With support from JICA, Japan's Braille Library worked with HDD to provide technical support on Narrate for Visually Impaired People Program. Braille Library built capacity for Hong Dandan staff on Narration and production of DAISY audio books to improve technical quality of the audiobooks. HDD's understandings on project management and service provision to the blind were also developed through the partnership. It is a good of example of Japan-China NGO Cooperation in addressing issues of disability and accessibility in Asia.



## PARTICIPANTS

### ▣ SPEAKERS ▣

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