

## World Bank Policy on Access to Information

### Qs & As

What is the main difference between the Bank's new Access to Information policy and the previous Disclosure policy?

- The new Policy moves the Bank from an approach that spelled out what information is disclosed to one that allows the Bank to disclose any information in its possession that is not on a list of exceptions set out in the Policy.
- Under the new Policy, significantly more information on Bank operations and Board proceeding will be available.
- The new Policy permits public release of some documents (e.g., Country Assistance Strategy, Project Appraisal Document, Program Document) prior to discussion by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors.
- Certain restricted information will be eligible for declassification after either 5, 10, or 20 years.
- The new Policy establishes an appeals mechanism that provides public recourse should the Bank violate its own policy by improperly or unreasonably restricting access to information.

What can be disclosed under the new Policy?

- The Bank may disclose any information in its possession unless that information falls within one or more of 10 categories on a list of exceptions set out in the Policy.

What types of information are on the List of Exceptions?

- 1. Personal Information; 2. Communications of Executive Directors' Offices; 3. Proceedings of the Ethics Committee for Board Officials; 4. Information Subject to Attorney-Client Privilege; 5. Security and Safety Information; 6. Information under Separate Disclosure Regimes/Investigative Information; 7. Information Provided by Member Countries or Third Parties in Confidence; 8. Corporate Administrative Matters; 9. Deliberative Information; and 10. Financial Information.

Why does the policy restrict some types of information from disclosure?

- The Policy represents a balance between the Bank's interest in providing the maximum amount of information to the public and its obligations to protect the confidentiality of information pertaining to shareholders, clients, staff and other parties, and to protect the deliberative process. The restricted information on the list of exceptions reflect information whose disclosure could cause harm to well defined interests.

What is "Deliberative" information?

- This is information and communications generated as part of the deliberative process, which includes the process of considering issues and options before making a decision or taking action (e.g., draft reports, analyses of country credit ratings and risks). While the Bank discloses decisions, results and agreements that flow from its deliberative process, the Bank protects the integrity of the deliberative process by facilitating and safeguarding a free and candid exchange of ideas, both within the Bank and with partners and stakeholders.

Will deliberative information ever become public?

- After 20 years, deliberative information may be eligible for declassification and made publicly available, unless the deliberations reflect or relate to information that is restricted and not eligible for declassification, for example, personnel matters.

How will the Bank treat information given to it in confidence by clients or third parties?

- Information given in confidence by clients or third parties will be classified as restricted. The Bank requests clients/third parties to mark information provided in confidence as "provided in confidence" or "confidential."

Is the policy retroactive?

- The Policy applies to all information in the Bank's possession created or received in the course of conducting official business. The Policy provides timelines for declassifying and disclosing certain information created or received under previous versions of the Bank's disclosure policy.

How does the appeals process work?

- A requester can appeal a decision to deny access on two basis: (i) by making a prima facie case that the Bank has improperly or unreasonably restricted access to information that it would normally disclose ("first type of appeal"); or (ii) by making a public interest appeal to override an exception ("second type of appeal"). The two-level appeals mechanism consists of an Access to Information Committee, comprising representatives of Bank management, which will serve as a first level of appeal for the first type of appeal, and the final recourse for the second type of appeal; and an Appeals Board, consisting of three international experts, which will be the second level and final recourse for the first type of appeal.

How can the public access the information available under the Policy?

- Most World Bank information will be available on the Bank's external website as well as at more than 100 Public Information Centers around the world. Information not accessible on the Bank's web site can be sought by contacting a World Bank Public Information Center in a member country or the InfoShop in Washington, D.C., or by sending a request from the Access to Information web site: [www.worldbank.org/wbaccess](http://www.worldbank.org/wbaccess). The Bank will acknowledge receipt of a request within 5 working days and will normally provide the requested information or, depending on a complexity of the inquiry, the status of the request within 20 working days.

Was the policy discussed with member countries?

- Public consultations on the policy proposal were held in 2009 with various stakeholder groups in 33 countries as well as on the Bank's external website. The final Policy reflects the input of member countries, civil society organizations, academics, parliamentarians, media, the private sector, other international organizations and donor agencies.