

# World Bank– Civil Society Engagement

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Review of Fiscal  
Years 2007 to 2009

Executive Summary



THE WORLD BANK





# Executive Summary

Several trends became more apparent during the last three years in terms of broader Bank–civil society relations. Civil society engagement in Bank operations is evolving from being *institutionally based* to being more *issue oriented*. Most civil society organizations (CSOs) interacting with the Bank seem to be shifting their advocacy stance from a *do-no-harm* to a *do-good* approach that seeks to influence the Bank to further adopt socially just and environmentally sustainable development approaches. Engagement with specific constituencies, such as indigenous peoples, labor unions, parliamentarians, persons with disabilities, and youth, also continued during this period, with a shift toward mainstreaming this work within Bank operations.

Bank–civil society policy dialogue at the global level continued to both expand and become more consolidated over the period under review. This expansion was reflected in the growing number of CSOs attending the Annual and Spring Meetings and the expansion of policy sessions during the Civil Society Policy Forum. In a bid to ensure greater participation by CSO representatives from developing countries at the meetings, the Bank and the International Monetary Fund instituted the Civil Society Sponsorship Program and began inviting civil society chief executive officers to attend the meetings. President Zoellick also convened a series of policy roundtables with civil society leaders on the food and financial crises, which were characterized by a frank, substantive, and constructive exchange of views.

Dialogue occurred on several important policy areas that were emerging during the last three years, including urban water, odious debt, and health policy. Important global policy review consultations also took place on issues such as governance, climate change, and information disclosure. Consultations on the governance and anticorruption (GAC) strategy involved more than 3,200 representatives from government, parliaments, civil society, media, private sector, and other stakeholders in 48 countries, and was considered one of the most

extensive and substantive stakeholder policy consultations to date. At the country level, dialogue and consultations also continued to expand in country assistance strategies (92 percent of full Country Assistance Strategies [CASs] approved), and poverty reduction strategy papers (84 percent of full Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers [PRSPs] approved).

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) also intensified its dialogue and relations with civil society over the past three years. Dialogue with civil society occurred on topics such as the IFC's Annual Reports and performance standards. IFC also expanded its civil society engagement work to the country level by hiring a civil society specialist in the Brazil Office. The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency's (MIGA) engagement with civil society has largely focused on consultations about proposed new global policies on social and environmental sustainability and disclosure of information, as well as on individual projects.

The Inspection Panel (IP) for the World Bank and the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO) for IFC and MIGA are independent recourse mechanisms for affected people by projects supported by the World Bank Group. Both the Panel and CAO maintained close contact with the complainants, affected communities, and local CSOs. During the last three years, the IP received 12 requests for inspection, and the CAO received 45 complaints. Members and staffs of these institutions participated regularly in outreach events geared to CSOs.

World Bank commitment to broaden and deepen civil society engagement has also led to scaling up civic engagement and social accountability. New opportunities for partnerships at the global level emerged at the corporate and sectoral levels with the adoption of the GAC program and initiatives such as the Climate Investment Funds. Civil society involvement in Bank-financed operations continued to be on an upward trend during fiscal years 2007–09 with 75 percent of International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)



Reception with CSOs during the 2008 Spring Meetings in Washington, DC (April 2008)

and IDA loans reporting civil society engagement. Participation in the Bank's development policy lending is also on an upward trend. International and local NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) have been key partners in the Bank's efforts to respond to the global food crisis at

the country level. Under the World Bank's \$2 billion Global Food Crisis Response Program, international or local CBOs are supporting project implementation in 13 countries.

Bank funding of civil society development efforts through various funding mechanisms (such as the Civil Society Fund and Development Marketplace) continued strong during this period. The Extractive Industries Transparency Fund partnered with an international CSO to fund strategic revenue transparency initiatives in 15 countries. Working with NGOs is a prime feature of the Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program for Africa, which has funded nearly 49,000 grassroots CSOs. Successful examples of Bank-funded, government-civil society, operational collaboration at the country level include the Northeast Rural Poverty Reduction Project in Brazil and the Kecamatan Development Project in Indonesia.

As the World Bank Group's unit for knowledge sharing, the World Bank Institute organized and delivered a number of training and capacity-building programs with a strong civil society component over the last three years. Most of the programs were geared to generating grassroots demand for better accountability, transparency, and governance at the local level. The Development Communications Division continued to improve the capability of governments to communicate and engage more effectively with civil society on reform programs and projects. The Bank has extended electronic outreach on the Internet through the development of a multilingual Web program, including the Civil Society Web page, which continues to expand its international readership. The Civil Society Team collaborated with World Learning to offer training to the Bank staff on how to engage civil society and to CSOs on Bank Group structure, policies, and projects.

The Bank continued to intensify its relations with civil society at the regional and country levels. At the regional level, the new Vice President for Africa facilitated policy dialogue between CSOs and regional intergovernmental bodies; the Vice President in East Asia hosted a regional workshop with CSOs to discuss Bank regional strategies; and, in Eastern Europe, the Bank worked with donor agencies to promote the consolidation of civil society. In the United States, the Civil Society Team (CST) continued to work closely with advocacy-based CSOs while launching a series of technical workshops with InterAction to exchange information and lessons on local-level service provision.

In Europe, the Bank continued to have ongoing policy dialogue with leading civil society networks and CSOs in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and many other countries. The programmatic partnership with Coordination Sud in France was renewed, and the Bank is supporting the establishment of the International NGO Forum, an initiative representing over 100 national NGO platforms from some 80 countries. In Japan, the Bank organized a series of high-level policy dialogues with Japanese CSOs on climate change, Africa, and disabilities.

Engagement with specific constituencies, such as labor unions, parliamentarians, persons with disabilities, and youth, also continued during this period, with a shift toward mainstreaming this work within Bank operations. This was apparent in the renewed efforts to integrate disability, youth, social inclusion, and gender perspectives in Bank research and projects. A Youth@Annual Meetings program was held during the 2008 Annual Meetings, culminating in a draft "work plan" to guide future collaboration. A week-long series of meetings with the trade unions on the heels of the food and financial crises underscored the importance of working closely together in tackling global challenges. The Bank is supporting the Global Partnership for Disability and Development Secretariat and working to build awareness of the groundbreaking UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Although the Bank and CSOs have developed more effective instruments and venues for policy exchanges, the challenge continues to find ways to streamline and scale up institutional partnerships and funding mechanisms. To address existing constraints and to assess the quality of Bank-civil society relations, the CST is currently undertaking a

review to produce a strategic priorities paper. The new review process has involved an initial internal and external consultative process for the drafting of the strategy paper. On the basis of this initial feed-

back, a Strategic Priorities Paper has been drafted that will provide what is hoped to be a useful roadmap for working to both intensify and scale up Bank–civil society relations in the coming years.



High School students performing the *Poverty Requiem* during Annual Meetings in Washington, DC (October 2007)





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