



## How the Bank Supports Civil Society

The World Bank is increasingly supporting civil society through greater information sharing, skills training, and grant funding.

The Bank is actively providing civil society with more information on its activities through some 65 Public Information Centers worldwide, as well as sponsoring technical capacity-building seminars and workshops. The Bank also is offering new information technologies, such as video conferencing facilities and Internet portals, to improve policy engagements and strengthen civil society communication capabilities.

The Bank is also steadily increasing its grant support of CSOs through country-based social funds or through several global funding mechanisms.

- In the last 15 years, the Bank has financed social funds and other small-grants programs in over 60 countries at an estimated value of some \$4 billion. These funds are managed by national or local government agencies and provide grants to CSOs for rebuilding war-torn communities, providing social services, and promoting community development.
- The Bank also manages several funding mechanisms that provide grants directly to CSOs in a variety of areas, such as environmental protection, small-scale enterprise, information technology, and innovative grassroots practices. These mechanisms are often co-funded and co-managed with other donor agencies.

## How to Contact the World Bank

- For information on the World Bank's civil society engagement policies, staff, funding programs, and documents, go to the web site: [www.worldbank.org/civilsociety](http://www.worldbank.org/civilsociety).
- To subscribe to the monthly *Civil Society Engagement eNewsletter* and receive regular information on Bank civil society activities, send an e-mail to: [civilsociety@worldbank.org](mailto:civilsociety@worldbank.org).

### Additional Contact Information



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## Engaging Civil Society

### The World Bank

"In all its forms, civil society is probably the largest single factor in development. If not in its monetary contribution, then certainly in its human contribution and its experience and history."

James D. Wolfensohn  
President, World Bank



THE WORLD BANK

The World Bank has learned through two decades of interaction that civil society plays an important role in helping to amplify the voices of the poorest people in decisions that affect their lives, improve development effectiveness and sustainability, and hold governments and policymakers publicly accountable.

### WHY the World Bank Engages Civil Society

The emergence and growth of civil society over the past two decades has been one of the most significant trends in international development. Civil society organizations (CSOs) have not only emerged as important actors in the global policy debate on development, but also have become important channels for delivery of social services and implementation of innovative development programs.

The World Bank first began to interact with civil society in the 1970s through dialogue with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on environmental concerns. Today the World Bank consults and collaborates with thousands of CSOs throughout the world, such as community-based organizations, indigenous peoples organizations, NGOs, labor unions, faith-based groups, and foundations.

World Bank experience has shown that the participation of CSOs in government development projects and programs can enhance their operational performance by contributing local knowledge, providing technical expertise, and leveraging social capital. Further, CSOs can bring innovative ideas



and solutions, as well as participatory approaches, to solving local problems.

Reflecting this greater appreciation for the role of civil society in development, projected CSO involvement in Bank-funded projects has risen steadily over the past decade, from 21 percent of the total number of projects in fiscal year 1990 to an estimated 70 percent in fiscal year 2002.

### HOW the World Bank Engages Civil Society

The World Bank engages CSOs in three ways.

- First, it *facilitates* dialogue and partnership between civil society and governments by providing resources, training, and technical support, often playing a convening role. That type of engagement can be best seen in the process of formulation of the country poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs)
- Second, the Bank holds *dialogue* and *consults* with CSOs on issues, policies, and programs by listening to their perspectives and inviting suggestions. These interactions vary from consultations on global policies, such as social safeguards and adjustment lending, to discussions on local Bank-financed projects.



- Third, the Bank *partners* directly with CSOs through contracting technical assistance and training services, funding civil society initiatives, and managing joint programs. There are many examples of active partnerships in the areas of forest conservation, AIDS vaccines, rural poverty, micro-credit, and Internet development.

### Civil Society Engagement STAFF

In order to carry out this growing level of engagement, the World Bank adopted in 2002 a new team approach that involves more than 120 civil society engagement staff working across the institution. The *Civil Society Team* provides institutional coordination by formulating Bank-wide strategy, providing advice to senior management, and reaching out to CSOs at the global level.

The *Civil Society Group* brings together civil society specialists who work at Bank headquarters in Washington in various geographic regions, thematic networks, and with a variety of constituencies, such as labor unions, indigenous peoples, and foundations.

At the country level, there are *Civil Society Country Staff* working in some 70 offices worldwide. While their specific work programs vary according to the country, they generally carry out social analysis, liaise with civil society, manage outreach programs, and work to involve CSOs in Bank-financed projects.