



## **REPORT OF THE WORLD COMMISSION ON DAMS: WORLD BANK POSITION**

Large dams are important contributors to the development of many countries. They improve and expand power generation, irrigation, domestic and industrial water supplies, and provide security against droughts and protection from floods. At the same time, they often submerge substantial areas and change the pattern of river flows downstream, causing, in some cases, significant adverse impacts on the environment and local communities.

The Report of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) has substantially contributed to addressing the broad-ranging issues surrounding large dams. The process used by the WCD in preparation of the Report facilitated an unprecedented and highly productive dialogue between all parties. It has built consensus over the approach to many contentious issues that must be addressed if dams are to contribute to sustainable development.

The Report of the WCD promotes:

- five core values – equity, efficiency, participation, sustainability and accountability – for future decision-making on demands;
- a rights and risks approach for identifying stakeholders in negotiating development choices and agreements;
- seven strategic priorities – building public acceptance, assessing options, addressing existing dams, sustaining rivers and livelihoods, recognizing entitlements and sharing benefits, ensuring compliance and sharing rivers for peace, development and security; and
- a set of criteria for assessing compliance and 26 guidelines for review and approval of projects at five stages of decision-making.

The World Bank finds the Report a path breaking work, fully shares the core values and concurs with the need to promote the strategic priorities.

Consistent with the WCD recommendations, the World Bank will:

- support strategic planning processes by borrowers for decisions concerning water and energy to enhance the evaluation of options and alternatives, and will support borrowers in financing the priority investments emerging from such processes; and
- work with borrowers on new projects to map these against the Strategic Priorities articulated in the WCD Report and assess their applicability in the specific setting.

Furthermore, the World Bank will support those governments that want to continue to learn and improve practice – planning, technical, economic, environmental, and social – in construction and operation of dams. As part of this process, the World Bank has initiated a “Preliminary Action Plan” to strengthen its work in the water and energy sectors and to improve the evaluation, implementation, and operation of dams when they are the appropriate development option. The Preliminary Action Plan comprises activities in six complementary areas:

- working with borrowers to move “upstream”;
- continuing to stress institutional reform for more efficient use of water and energy;
- effectively implementing the World Bank’s existing “safeguard policies”;
- continuing to support borrowers in improving the performance of existing dams;
- developing a more proactive and development-oriented approach to international waters; and
- continuing to support innovative approaches for dealing with complex dam-related management and technical issues.

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