

Summary Feedback from Civil Society Roundtable Discussion on the World Bank Group's Role in Trade Washington DC, April 23, 2010

General Remarks

- The World Bank Group's trade strategy recognizes the complexities of trade, and the need to focus on a more nuanced approach to trade that is tailored according to the specific interests and capacities of local countries. It acknowledges that opening markets may not automatically lead to sustainable economic growth unless it is supplemented with development assistance, and instruments that foster competitiveness of developing country producers, decreased transaction costs, and sustainable and diversified exports.
- The World Bank Group trade strategy embraces a bottom-up approach. The five elements of the approach have the potential to respond to the needs of developing countries. A broad definition of trade consultation, beyond the simplification of customs procedures, is particularly appreciated as the paper puts emphasis on regional trade facilitation, and investments in trade and transport infrastructure.
- Appreciate strategy approach's emphasis on innovation and diversification of exports.
- Trade strategy cannot be separate from growth and development. We need to build capacity, especially in developing countries.
- It is in the best interest of the WB to be in a close partnership with regional development banks.

Recommendations for WBG trade strategy approach:

- A stronger reference to the ongoing WTO process.
- Allocate more resources on the elaboration of tangible policy recommendations for development-friendly, bilateral trade agreements.
- WBG should consider a larger work plan on a new model for North-South Free Trade Agreements that would promote regional integration and markets.
- The WBG should consider expanding its monetary initiatives and/or continue to support private initiatives monitoring rising protectionism.
- Establish projects similar to the Global Trade Alert, a web-based initiative that provides real-time information on state measures taken during the ongoing global downturn that are likely to affect foreign commerce.
- Add a sixth element on regional integration as an overarching element of the strategy. This element may elaborate on activities to support public and private enterprises working for economic integration in the developing world.
- Make more publicly accessible the WBG's response to evaluations of its work on trade.
- Bank should focus more on select areas of trade and not try to do everything.

- Bank needs to address concerns about its use of its research before it talks about taking a strong role in research.
- Bank should make a priority improving infrastructure in developing countries.
- There's a lot of buzz about transport/regional corridors. What is the Bank's role in this? How can it partner with the private sector?
- I'm worried by what I see as a watering down of the policy questions. Would like the WBG to give more consideration to standards, public and private. Both play important role in trade.
- Would like to see the climate changes issue addressed.
- There doesn't seem to be much discussion about how to increase regional/intra-African trade.
- Would be good for WBG to consider lending on a regional basis.
- I applaud a demand driven approach to trade, but how do you do that? We need to see people from developing countries talking about what it is they want from the trading system. I'm not sure we've arrived there yet.
- We need to keep in mind that there are a lot of barriers with North-South trade. Developing countries are still trading with the North.
- Trade competitiveness cannot exist without trade financing, trade logistics and facilitation.

A CSO's response to some questions:

2. **How should the World Bank Group allocate its activities between work at the global level and work at the country level?** This has to be at the country level.
4. **Compared to other provider of Aid for Trade, where does the World Bank Group have the greatest strengths in supporting countries on trade issues?** The WBG is the greatest intellectual and research and data institution.
6. **How can World Bank address regional integration challenges?** There's no other way than at country level. The Sub-Sahara region is made up of individual countries with individual needs, with individual personalities, with individual priorities. With individual socio-economic strata. Therefore, we cannot address as one big pile and draw elegant charts showing sub-Sahara as small piece of the pie. They're starving to death. They have great opportunities for trade. We have to be bilateral traders and help them develop their capacities so they can export and we can buy exports.