

Minutes

TFESSD bi-annual consultations between the World Bank, Finland, and Norway

May 22, 2008 9:30 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.

House of the Estates, Helsinki, Finland

Participants:

(from the World Bank): Steen Lau Jorgensen, Muthukumara Mani, Raiden Dillard, Carine Clert, Rasmus Heltberg, Myrtle Diachok, Vera Wilhelm, Habiba Gitay, Nenuca Robles

(from Finland): Pekka Hukka, Anita Kelles, Elina Leväniemi, Ari Huhtala, Ronald Wiman, Mika Koivisto

(from Norway): Henrik Harboe, Desmond McNeill, Dan Banik, Marianne Berg Haaland, Tanja Winther, Liv-Unni Hersvik.

Opening remarks

Pekka Hukka opened the meeting by welcoming the participants; noting the success of the public seminar focused on adaptation to climate change that had taken place the day before. He also clarified that Finland would further study the evaluation report before deciding on a future course for the trust fund.

Annual Report

The Reference Group (RG) noted that the 2008 Annual Report for TFESSD (which had been circulated prior to the meeting) while overall of good quality lacked attention to the context and challenges facing the trust fund Bank-wide. While challenges to individual activities were sometimes, but insufficiently, described in the window chapters, issues at the program-level were omitted. This omission was important given that the purpose of the trust fund is to help strengthen aspects of World Bank work which (by implication) are not easy to deal with, including cross-sectoral work and social and political issues. The donors therefore requested a progress update on these issues at the program level to better understand how TFESSD addresses them. This description should discuss the Bank's context, organizational challenges, constraints facing staff, and other issues helpful for the donors to understand how the trust fund could better support ESSD agendas and the staff working on them. It is especially important to report more on what has *not* gone well.

The limits and constraints facing the Bank when attempting to undertake more program-level analysis were discussed. The Bank noted that a trust fund report cannot be expected to provide detailed political and institutional analysis of the Bank nor report on issues that fall outside its funded activities. It was also noted that the dispersion of activities across many different themes does not facilitate strategic reporting.

In future Annual Reports, key features to cover would include linking of individual activities and clusters of activities with wider global developments. At the program level, the report should have sections on objectives and background of the trust fund. It should also discuss major developments related to sustainable development at the World Bank over the year. A summary of key achievements (as in this year's report) is helpful. Window chapters would discuss key constraints in relation to advancing the themes each window is seeking to address, and also pick a

key theme for more detailed reporting. RG inputs should be sought when selecting key themes for more detailed thematic reporting, and in preparing the Report more generally. However, to give the RG and donors a complete picture of issues and constraints, a combination of written and oral communication may be best suited.

The Window Managers presented the main achievements and challenges they perceive. Major achievements of TFESSD funded activities include the environment upstream analytical work; pushing the REDD (reduced emissions from deforestation in developing countries) agenda; adaptation to climate change in agriculture; poverty monitoring and analysis; measuring empowerment; impact evaluation; social inclusion; social accountability; and demand for good governance.

Key Bank constraints in implementing the activities include task management issues (for example retirement, long-term sick leave, or staff moves leading to changes in task management). Other constraints involve activities being seen as low priority by country directors; occasional weak or incomplete reporting by task managers; people issues in working cross-sectorally; and weak dissemination in some cases. But many constraints fall outside the control of the Bank and relate to the client countries: changes in country priorities during implementation; security issues; weak country capacity; restrictive country practices on disclosure; and a structure of government ministries that is not conducive to working cross-sectorally. Finally, the Bank also noted that themes of the Call have not been stable over time and this has made it hard to sustain efforts in some areas (e.g. social policy).

Reflections on the FY09 Call; blue sky; and disability earmark

It was agreed that the process followed this year had worked well. It differed from some previous years in not having financial allocations (percentages) by themes and windows. The focus on a single theme (adaptation to climate change) had produced fewer proposals, especially from SP and POV, but the proposals received were nevertheless of high quality.

The first so-called 'blue sky' (strategic outside of the Call) proposal had been submitted for consideration prior to the meeting and comments from the RG had been received. The proposal focused on Human Security in Africa and had been developed jointly by the Social Development Department, Social Protection Department, staff from the Africa Region, and the TFESSD Secretariat. It was agreed that this is an important and interesting topic but the submitted proposal needs further work. A substantially revised proposal will be submitted for approval later. The donors noted that they would welcome future 'blue sky' proposals that link research to policy in innovative and cross-sectoral ways on strategically important topics where the Bank is looking to deepen its engagement. This will allow the trust fund to pursue new ideas that do not merit a full theme in the annual Call.

Next steps: The Bank will revise and resubmit the "blue sky" proposal for approval.

The donors expressed satisfaction with the process for the disability earmark. The submission of a full proposal detailing how the grant would be spent was appreciated, and the meeting expressed support for the Bank's work on disability.

Priorities for FY10

Prior to the meeting, the Bank had sent ideas for possible themes for the FY10 Call (food security and vulnerability; climate change impacts and adaptation; and possibly youth employment and empowerment). The meeting welcomed the Bank sending its ideas as a way to firm up the themes earlier than in the past and expediting the process leading up to the Call. The meeting also

expressed satisfaction with the ideas proposed by the Bank, noting that the work on climate change would build on momentum from the FY09 Call; that youth issues are important; but that food security and vulnerability perhaps would have to be narrowed. The absence of funding for work on long-term aspects of food security was noted.

Next steps: The donors will revert with a signal on their preferred themes by June 20 after which the Bank will prepare a proposal for the text of the Call for further discussion.

Follow-up to Evaluation Report, including knowledge management and results monitoring

In response to the recommendations of the Evaluation Report, the Bank proposed more resources for the trust fund Secretariat to expand work on program-level reporting, outreach, dissemination, and knowledge management. The Bank proposed one additional part-time position in the Secretariat at Grade F (Specialist). The proposed position would focus primarily on administration, reporting, and communication. This would free up the existing advisor/Sr. Technical Specialist to expand program-level reporting, outreach, dissemination, quality enhancement, and knowledge management.

The donors were not immediately positive to this proposal which they felt required a stronger motivation. They confirmed that they are interested in getting more out of their investment in TFESSD and acknowledged that would entail some costs; however, total administrative overheads should be kept at a reasonable level and any expansion should result in clear value-added. Thematic reviews in the form of relatively quick assessments of outcomes and influence of clusters of activities were proposed as a way forward. Undertaking such reviews would probably require country visits to assess the opinions of external stakeholders. The proposal as it currently stands does not justify the increased costs, but the donors were willing to consider a more fully developed proposal.

The donors and RG expressed interest in more outreach to Nordic constituents - such as events with task managers, expanded dissemination, etc. It was agreed that there is scope for greater collaboration between the RG and the Bank on such outreach/dissemination as well as early quality control/quality enhancement. The RG suggested to remain engaged, for example, with three of the FY09 approved activities (proposals #17, #18, #38 – indigenous people; SDV climate change programmatic; and Africa climate change programmatic). The scope for using video linking technology was noted, as was the interest in engaging in selected developing countries where Norway and Finland have bilateral programs.

The donors noted that they need to provide a formal response to their management on how they intend to follow up on the recommendations of the evaluations. As input to this process, the Bank offered to send its comments on the key recommendations; this would include a rejection of the recommendation to have more narrow operational objectives in favor of remaining broad and flexible. The Bank will also make a proposal on how to measure and strengthen cross-sectoral work.

Follow-up:

- The Bank will send a formal proposal to expand the secretariat, linked to the recommendations of the evaluation.
- The Bank will send written comments on some key recommendations.
- The Secretariat and windows will work further on ideas for thematic reviews / rapid assessments.

Other issues

The social development co-terminous advisor left for another position, so this job will be re-advertised and donors are welcome to propose candidates. The TORs for this position will be forwarded to the donors.

Steen Lau Jorgensen said farewell after eight years involvement with TFESSD in different capacities. He expressed appreciation for the advice and support given, for example on the social development strategy. He also noted that it was important to continue the tradition of constructive critique based on mutual trust.