

The World Bank and Public World Announce
E: Discussion on “Making Services Work for Poor People”
April 14 – May 30, 2003

During a 7-week period from April 14, 2003 through May 30, 2003, the World Bank and Public World will co-host a moderated electronic discussion (hereafter e:discussion) on the topic of the forthcoming *World Development Report 2004: “Making Services Work for Poor People”*. The e:discussion is an opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders from government, business, and civil society to exchange views about the content and main ideas of the draft report.

Those interested in participating in the e-discussion should register at the following address:
<http://econ.worldbank.org/wdr>.

Purpose of e:discussion

The e:discussion has two roles: First, a *consultative* role, to provide input and comment on the draft WDR, and beyond the WDR itself, to contribute to Bank thinking about the subject of delivery of education, health, water and sanitation services to poor communities, and provide a further opportunity for participants to express their concerns and opinions. Second, a *practical* role, to contribute to the improvement in the design and implementation of related policies and programs in the future.

The goals of the e-discussion include, but are not limited to:

- To promote understanding among national and local governments, civil society organizations and private businesses about the challenges involved in making services work for poor people, and about the WDR's analysis of these challenges and its proposals for meeting them more effectively;
- To enable national and local governments and civil society to express their views about the WDR and make available their knowledge and experience of the subject, and especially of innovative ideas and solutions about the challenge of making services work for poor people;
- To begin the processes of testing the practicality of the WDR's proposals and mobilizing and developing the economic, political and social resources required to promote approaches to making services work for poor people to be met in effective, efficient and participatory ways.

Timing and format

The e-discussion will run for six weeks, from April 14 (Monday of first week) to May 30 (Friday of seventh week), and its concluding report will be drafted and posted during the following week.

Each of the seven weeks will have its own theme, and consequentially, the feedback for each week will be focused around that theme. However, it will be possible each week to also post contributions relating to the themes of previous weeks, comments of a more general nature, or contributions focused on particular issues that do not fit neatly into the week-by-week thematic structure. In this way, it is intended to find an optimal balance between promoting a structured development in the discussion while retaining sufficient flexibility to allow contributors to engage with the process on their own terms.

Weekly themes

Week 1: Overview of “Making Services Work for Poor People”

The first week of the e-discussion will be a general discussion on the WDR topic of “Making Services Work for Poor People” and on the framework of the draft report, based on the overview chapter. This week

will also promote identification of the key issues of interest to the e-discussion participants, and suggestions on the most effective use of the e-discussion medium during the ensuing six weeks. This will be an important step in establishing a foundation for a richer exchange of ideas.

Week 2: What accounts for success and failure in serving poor people, and what are the obstacles to overcoming failures and building on successes?

This week's discussion will focus on the WDR's underlying theme - services are failing to serve poor people adequately. Some of the questions that will be considered are: Does the report provide a balanced picture of the extent to which these services are failing to serve poor people? Does the report accurately diagnose the reasons for failure? Does it adequately explore the reasons for success? Does the report pay sufficient attention to the role of these services in stimulating economic growth?

Week 3: Is the draft report imbued with the values, informed by the principles and aiming for the goals that are required to make services work for poor people?

The report's point of departure is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the role of particular services in achieving them. Some of the questions that will be considered are: Is this the proper point of departure? Is the focus on health and nutrition services, education services and water and sanitation services justified? Does the report satisfactorily capture the roles of these services in achieving the MDGs?

Week 4: What changes are required that would lead policy makers to produce policies that are more beneficial to poor people?

One of the obstacles to making services work for poor people as diagnosed by the report is that policy makers are not reflecting the interests of the poor satisfactorily in their policy design. Some of the questions that will be considered are: Does the report accurately diagnose this problem? What factors are inadequately addressed in this regard? Do you agree with the solutions to this problem recommended by the report? What solutions would you suggest that are not addressed adequately in the report?

Week 5: What changes are required in the relationships between policy makers and service providers that would lead to the latter meeting the needs of poor people more effectively?

The thrust of the report's argument in this respect is that service providers often do not provide the right services and that, insofar as they do, they often fail to do so properly. Some of the questions that will be considered are: Does the report accurately identify the causes of public sector failures? Does the report accurately identify the causes of private sector failures? Is the report's treatment of the experience of organizationally separating policy making from service provision justified by the lessons of experience? Are there other approaches to improving incentives and accountability that are neglected but which experience suggests deserve more attention from policy makers?

Week 6: What changes are required to enable poor people to exercise more influence over the decisions and behavior of service providers so that their needs are more fully and effectively met?

The report calls for a more participatory approach to the provision of services aimed at poor people. Some of the questions that will be considered are: Who speaks authentically for poor people? How should public sector providers be organized to enable poor people to influence their decisions more beneficially? Do non-profit community-based providers have advantages over both public and for-profit providers in terms of responding more effectively to the needs and aspirations of poor people? How can the profit-oriented interests of private sector providers be reconciled with the needs of poor people? What is the significance of the differences between the three sectors – public, non-profit, private – in terms of responsiveness to poor people?

Week 7: Does the WDR rise to the challenge it sets itself? How can donors, governments and other actors rise to its challenge?

The effectiveness of the report, its underlying theme and policy recommendations are topics of debate in this final week of the discussion. Some of the questions that will be considered are: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the WDR reform agenda, both in general and in relation to each specific service? What changes are required in the policies and practice of donors and governments to realize the agenda's strengths and overcome its weaknesses?

Basic rules

In order to protect the Bank and other participants from the consequences of publishing libelous material, abusive language or tone, and for other purposes associated with maximizing the value of the discussion, rules will be established governing how content is exchanged through the e-discussion. These rules will be consistent with the World Bank Institute's Development Forum, and will be posted on the e-discussion page.

Languages

The operative draft of the WDR will be available in English only, but **translations of the overview chapter** will be made available in Russian, Arabic, French, Spanish and Portuguese. The discussion will also facilitate contributions in all of these languages, and will post English translations of non-English contributions (but not the other way around).

At the conclusion of the e:discussion, a report of the discussion as a whole will be posted in English, which will also be followed as soon as practicable thereafter by translations of that report into the other languages.

For more information, please send an email to: world_dev_report@worldbank.org with subject "e:discussion"