



The World Bank
Review and Update of World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies
Consultation Meeting with Guatemalan Government Representatives

The third meeting with government representatives in the Latin America and the Caribbean region took place on April 9th, 2013, in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Comments and questions from the participants included the following:

- The World Bank's social safeguards are key in ensuring projects are inclusive and participative. These safeguards have great potential to be beneficial to the citizenry. However, there are not enough resources to ensure their fulfillment and implementation, especially for Indigenous Peoples plans. This is a big challenge in Guatemala.
- The World Bank should provide support to governments to strengthen their institutional capacity in issues related to environmental and social sustainability. In Guatemala, institutions are weak and need technical assistance. The Bank's funding for institutional capacity building is key if we want to have greater social and environmental results and impact.
- Guatemala needs to establish a solid system of social and environmental safeguards to be able to implement the REDD+ requirements. It is important to establish an Environmental and Social National Committee and to identify synergies between the government and the Bank to strengthen the government's capabilities.
- The World Bank should include climate change in the new safeguard policies not only at the project design level but also in the implementation process. The issue of adaptation is very important in Guatemala, where for example climate change has affected the diet of coastal populations.
- The World Bank should take into account the gender and multicultural dimension of projects related to climate change as these types of projects tend to affect more the most vulnerable populations.
- The Indigenous Peoples Policy is a very important cross-sectoral policy that relates to all the other safeguard policies. However, there is a risk that its cross-sectoral / transversal nature leads to its invisibility and a lack of compliance. This risk of lack of compliance is also observed in the environmental safeguards.
- The Bank environmental safeguards are key in ensuring we mitigate potential negative effects of projects. It is important to plan for all environmental issues in the initial stages of the project to ensure good implementation.
- The procedures required to implement the safeguard policies are extremely complex and many times this leads to a duplication of efforts with a single agency preparing environmental and social assessments several times over.
- The World Bank should adopt a social development approach in its safeguards policies, especially in relation to disabilities. The Bank should consider the different types of vulnerabilities and have specific consultations with people with disabilities.

- The content of the World Bank environmental and social safeguards is important not only for Bank projects but also for all government programs.
- The safeguards policies should have a gender focus.
- The safeguard policies should include health and safety at work in their projects.
- Social and environmental sustainability is a very important issue in matters of competitiveness. To focus on the sustainability side could help to close some important gaps in Guatemala, especially in relation to women, rural populations and indigenous populations.
- The World Bank is seen as a leader on safeguards and it is a very influential actor – many other development actors follow the Bank’s safeguards.
- The safeguards should be applied not only to Investment Lending but to all types of operations financed by the Bank.
- Borrowers have difficulties in understanding how the policy is triggered and what the reasoning behind that terminology is. It would be important to clarify this.
- The social safeguards should include not only indigenous populations but also other vulnerable populations. Often times, non-indigenous rural populations live side by side with indigenous populations and they are in a similar or even greater situation of vulnerability. In addition to rural populations, the Bank should consider other vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities. It is known that climate change affects those vulnerable populations more severely.
- The Involuntary Resettlement policy should take into account also issues related to forced migration.
- The World Bank should provide technical assistance for capacity building on safeguard policies not just to national governments but to subnational ones as well, as they implement the projects. Also, the Bank should provide resources to improve monitoring of safeguard implementation. Government staff rotation is high and many times the staff that gets the training and designs the projects, is not in charge of their implementation.
- The Bank should include human rights as a transversal issue in every project and adopt international human rights norms.
- The Bank should analyse the policies that exist in every country and support them to fulfill their own policies instead of imposing its own set of policies.
- It is important to harmonize the Bank’s safeguard policies with the policies of other international development actors and with the policies used in other Bank investment mechanisms.
- The Bank should organize a workshop with the different government agencies involved in safeguards to exchange experiences and learn how the policies have been applied in different projects.
- Criteria reflecting local and cultural sensitivities should be part of the framework. In Guatemala, there is great cultural diversity and the safeguard policies should adapt to the different local sensitivities.
- The Bank should establish a safeguard compliance system that includes a mechanism to verify with the affected communities/beneficiaries if the safeguards have been fulfilled. The Bank could also use a neutral third party to ensure compliance.
- The implementing agencies need support from the Bank to produce guides on how to apply ILO Convention 169, to organize consultations with indigenous populations and to explain to what extent those consultations are legally binding.

- The Bank should do an awareness-raising campaign on the use of the safeguard policies with government and civil society. This campaign should be specially targeted to the implementing agencies.
- The Bank should do an evaluation on the implementation of safeguards in Guatemala. The Bank should also do a cost-benefit analysis of the implementation of safeguards (vs. non-compliance).
- The review and update of the Bank safeguard policies should include a revision of the monitoring and evaluation systems of the policies.
- Often times, there is a gap between national laws and the Bank safeguard policies; the Bank should help the government to bridge those gaps.