

# Children's Voices on World Bank Safeguards

Peru: 16 and 17 August  
Yemen 3 and 4 September

India: 7 and 8 September

Uganda: 14 September

Cambodia: 14 and 15 September

Philippines: 5 October

2013

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BANK INFORMATION CENTER

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Produced with the support of:  
Oak Foundation  
The Bernard van Leer Foundation

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“Please take care of the children’s safety, welfare and education because children are the bamboo shoots.” Child Participant, Cambodia

## Executive Summary

The World Bank recognizes the importance of investing in children to alleviate poverty, yet many of its projects have significant, negative impacts on the lives of children. Instead of contributing to poverty reduction, these projects instead perpetuate the cycle of poverty by causing lifelong damage to the bodies and minds of the most vulnerable children.

The Bank Information Center is part of a growing campaign to include child rights measures in the World Bank operational policies, known as safeguards, which are currently under review at the Bank. The voices of children and youth have increasingly been recognized as making important contributions to sustainable development, yet these voices have not, as of yet, been included by the Bank in the consultations being held with governments, civil society, and private industry as part of the safeguards review.

To ensure that these important voices are included in the review process, the Bank Information Center carried out a series of consultations in countries where the Bank is active, including Peru, Yemen, India, Uganda, Cambodia, and the Philippines. The consultations resulted in serious and well considered recommendations from the children, including ways in which the World Bank safeguards could be revised to improve project outcomes for children and adolescents, as well as their families and communities.

Some of the key recommendations voiced in the consultations included:

- The environmental assessment policy should look not only at environmental impacts but at all of the impacts on people, separating out the impacts on adults and children;
- Violations of human rights, including the rights of children and persons with disabilities, should be prohibited;
- The resettlement policy should include requirements to protect the interests of children, particularly measures to ensure that access to education is not interrupted;
- The World Bank should focus on renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, and biogas, and should make protection of land, forests, and water a high priority;
- The World Bank should set policies to protect the working child;
- The World Bank should improve monitoring of project implementation and ensure government compliance with the rules and plans for the project; and
- The World Bank should consult with children before engaging in projects that will impact them and should consider their input seriously.

The consultations clearly demonstrated the capacity of children and adolescents to engage in conversations about how World Bank policies and projects can impact their lives, and the lives of other children around the world, and should serve as a model for the World Bank to engage with these important stakeholders in all of its consultative processes.





## Introduction

In July 2012 the World Bank formally initiated a review of its social and environmental Safeguard Policies, the policies designed to ensure that the Bank's investment lending does not have negative consequences for communities or the environment. As part of this review the World Bank has engaged in a consultative process to seek input from multiple stakeholders on potential changes to the safeguard policies. However, while the World Bank has held consultations with governments, civil society, and private industry, children and youth have not been included in any of these consultations.

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to express their views on matters that affect their lives with the "the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." In the words of UNICEF, this principle "affirms that



children are full-fledged persons who have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard and given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. It recognizes the potential of children to enrich decision-making processes, to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and actors of change." Since World Bank policies and projects have significant impacts on the lives of children, children should have the opportunity to participate in discussion of World Bank policy changes, at a level appropriate to their development.

As part of a campaign for the inclusion of child rights measures in the World Bank safeguards, the Bank Information Center carried out a series of seven consultations in six countries where the Bank is active. These consultations were held in partnership with local organizations in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East between 16 August and 5 October 2013. The goal of the consultations was to solicit the voices of children and adolescents on ways in which the World Bank safeguards, and other relevant operational practices, could be revised to improve

project outcomes for children and adolescents, as well as their families and communities.

Each consultation was preceded by an educational workshop on the World Bank, human rights, and the World Bank safeguards. The format of the workshops and the activities the participants engaged in varied somewhat across the six countries, although the core content remained the same across all sessions. Four of the workshops and consultations were completed over the course of one day and three took place across two days.



## Individual consultation details

BIC carried out a total of seven consultations with approximately 150 children and adolescents around the world. These consultations took place in Yemen, India, Uganda, Cambodia, the Philippines, and two separate locations in Peru.

On August 16, BIC held a consultation in Peru with INFANT, an organization that supports and facilitates the efforts of children to promote and defend their human rights. The participants represented several different children and adolescent rights movements and came from many different regions of the country including Ucayali, Loreto, Tumbes, Piura, Huancavelica, Junín, Ayacucho, Ica, Apurímac, San Martín and Lima. There were 25 children and adolescents who ranged in age from 9 to 17 participating in the consultation.



The second consultation in Peru took place on August 17 in partnership with Kusi Warma, an organization which has promoted the formation of a group of boys, girls, and adolescents called the District Council of Boys, Girls, and Adolescents (CODINNA) in the district of Ventanilla. CODINNA is a council that comes together to carry out actions favoring children's

participation in the municipality and its members primarily represent school organizations that promote defense of the rights of children in academic contexts. 21 members of CODINNA, 13 girls and 8 boys, all under the age of 18, participated in the consultation.

The next consultation was held in Sana'a Yemen on September third and fourth in cooperation with Democracy School, an organization that works at creating environments in which children are able to exercise their rights and increase their level of participation in the community. This consultation included approximately 25 children and adolescents from several different regions of the country where the World Bank is active, many of whom are members of Yemen's "Children's Parliament".

On September 7 and 8, 25 children between the ages of 14 and 17 convened in Sundargarh district, Odisha, India for a consultation. This consultation was held in partnership with DISHA, an Indian civil society group that supports children's committees in tribal



communities that enable children to advocate for the realization of their own rights. All of the participants in the consultation came from this network.

In Uganda, the consultation was carried out in Naminya resettlement village, a community made up of residents who had been displaced to make way for the World Bank and African Development Bank funded Bujagali dam. This consultation was conducted by BIC's researcher in Uganda, Phiona Nampungu, on September 14, 2013 and included approximately 25 children between the ages of 4 and 17. All participants came from families who had been resettled in Naminya due to the construction of the Bujagali dam.



Simultaneously with the Uganda consultation, a two day workshop and consultation was held in partnership with the NGO Coalition for the Convention on the rights of the Child, Cambodia. The 17 participants in this consultation came from three separate child rights networks that are part of the NGO Coalition and from multiple provinces across the country. Four children whose families were evicted from their homes in Phnom Penh as part of large scale development projects also joined the consultation.

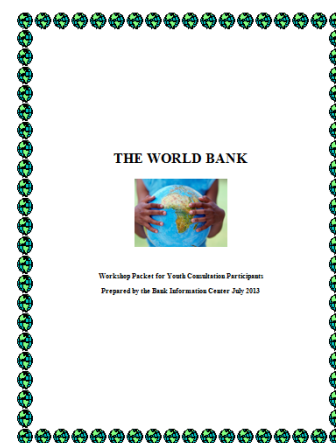


The final consultation was held with 20 children and youth in Manila, Philippines on October 5. This consultation was conducted in partnership with the Center for Advocacy, Learning and Livelihood Foundation of the Blind, a member of the Philippine Coalition on the UN CRPD and one of BIC's disability rights campaigns most active partners. All of the participants came from metro Manila and two thirds were children and youth with disabilities.

### Workshop Format<sup>ii</sup>

Prior to beginning the consultation on World Bank safeguards, the participants were engaged in workshops on the World Bank and its existing safeguards to provide them with information necessary for meaningful participation in the consultation. The workshops began with basic information on the World Bank and focused on answering the following questions:

- What is the World Bank Group?
- Who runs the World Bank Group?
- How Does the World Bank Work?
- Why is the World Bank Important?





After answering these questions, the discussion shifted to the issue of human rights, and the rights of children in particular. As most of the consultations were done

with children who had previously engaged with BIC's child rights partners, the majority of the children already had a good understanding of their rights. The participants had a chance to discuss in groups what human rights issues they saw as particularly important and/or which human rights they saw as most at risk in their communities. Each group selected a representative to present their findings to the larger assembly. The human rights concerns highlighted by the participants varied a great deal, but some of those brought up frequently included:



- Violence against children by family members, members of the community, and government authorities
- Environmental degradation that impinges on children's health and future
- Discrimination against children with disabilities and children from marginalized communities
- Lack of access to quality education
- Insufficient nutrition and health care
- Exploitation of children and child labor
- Early marriage and recruitment of child soldiers

In the third and final portion of the workshops, the two areas of discussion, human rights and the World Bank, were connected. In this the participants discussed ways in which World Bank projects might promote children's realization of their rights and ways in which such projects might have negative impacts that threaten their rights. The conversation moved to the issue of the World Bank safeguards as the mechanism through which negative impacts of Bank projects could be prevented or mitigated. This

Two children participating in the Cambodian consultations whose families had been evicted from their land in Beoung Kak Lake (BKL) stated that the World Bank should:

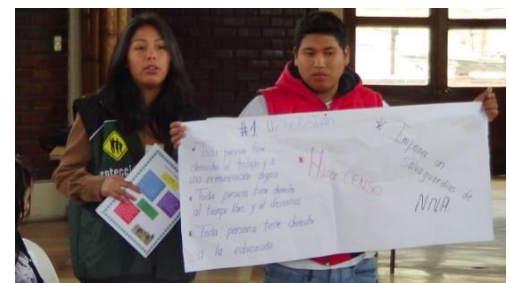
"please monitor closely the Cambodian government. You can't sit quietly while there are human rights violations with World Bank funds. Find a solution for BKL especially to release land issue activists who are suffering injustice".

"not ignore the problem of children from BKL. Everyday children in BKL are not having enough to eat or getting access to education. World Bank please look at the current situation of people in BKL now and please be vocal about it. They beat me even though I am a child! I lost all chance of education".

included discussion of the existing safeguards as well as the ongoing safeguards review to enable participants to understand the context in which their recommendations would be received.

### Case studies

Transitioning from the workshop to the consultation the participants divided into groups to consider four case studies of problematic World Bank projects. Each of these projects had negative impacts on children for very different reasons and provided concrete examples of the types of projects where safeguards were needed. Each small group took responsibility for examining one of the four projects, considering the possible harms caused by the project, the ways in which this harm could have been prevented, and the types of policies the Bank



could implement in the future to prevent this type of harm. The four case studies, with some thoughts from the participants, were:



**Rural Enterprise Support Project, Uzbekistan-** This is a loan to the Uzbek agriculture sector, a sector currently dominated by cotton production which is underpinned by a system of state sponsored forced adult and child labor. The World Bank asserts that the project is designed not to finance but rather to diversify the sector, but the social assessment carried out prior to project approval does not look at the issue of forced labor and the Bank took no measures to avoid contributing to state sponsored forced labor.

After reading this case study, the groups recommended that the Bank improve its assessment processes including by incorporating a focus on



children in the assessment and by sending Bank teams to understand the “real” situation on the ground. Groups also recommended

that the Bank prohibit employment of children below 18 in “hard labor” and require that all children and adults be paid a productive wage for all work done. Specific to this case, some of the groups suggested that the Bank not make loans to Uzbekistan if it is engaged in forced child labor while others suggested that the Bank shift its loans in Uzbekistan away from agriculture toward supporting education efforts.

**Conditional Cash Transfer Program, Philippines-** In this project, the World Bank loaned money to the Philippine government to be paid to families if certain conditions were met. These conditions included sending children to school 85% of the time, using health care services, and participating in family development sessions. As health centers are often not accessible for persons with disabilities and appropriate educational opportunities for children with disabilities were not always available, many families that included children with disabilities, were prevented from receiving funds under the program.



In response to this case study the

groups recommended that the Bank help a country to improve its schools and health care facilities, making sure that these are accessible for persons with disabilities. Some also suggested that the World Bank adopt a principle of nondiscrimination.

**Medupi Power Plant, South Africa-** This is a loan to Eskom made in 2010 to build a coal-fired powered plant. The project is aimed at addressing South Africa’s energy shortage, potentially increasing power access for the poor. However, there are serious concerns about the impacts of the project on air and water quality, issues that particularly threaten the health of developing children. Additionally, the construction of further coal burning power plants contributes to global climate change, a problem that will have severe impacts on today’s children, as well as tomorrow’s.

With respect to this project, many participants suggested that the Bank move away from reliance on coal and focus on renewable energies. They also suggested that where the Bank does support polluting industries, measures be taken to prevent these projects from having negative health impacts on children and communities.

**Bujagali Dam, Uganda-** With support from the World Bank and the African Development Bank the Ugandan government built a 200 megawatt dam near Bujagali falls on the Nile River. The project was aimed at increasing energy capacity in the region but also led to large scale displacement of families. The resettlement site lacked access to appropriate educational services for all resettled children, had health facilities that were staffed only intermittently, and did not offer livelihood opportunities sufficient to allow parents to provide adequately for their children.



Many of the participants were particularly interested in the issue of involuntary resettlement and insisted that the World Bank must provide additional support to resettled communities. Some groups suggested that this should include making sure that education, health care, water, and sanitation facilities are ready before families were resettled. Groups also suggested that



additional compensation and greater help finding jobs or growing crops in the new location was needed.



### **Consultation Process**

After sharing thoughts on the case studies in the full groups, the focus shifted completely to the children and adolescents, with participants taking the lead in developing recommendations for the World Bank, both in terms of positive projects the Bank could initiate and with respect to ways in which the safeguards could incorporate a focus on children. During the Lima, Sana'a, and Manila consultations personnel from the World Bank's country teams joined this part of the session.

The children had the opportunity to divide again into small groups to design Bank projects that they believed could help alleviate existing problems in their community. In several of the consultations this was preceded by a large group discussion to identify together which problems the groups would focus on addressing, while in other consultations, each group decided independently which problem to work on.

The recommendations for Bank funded projects included:

- Building a health clinic that would focus on alleviating malnutrition

- Working with the national government to revise the national curriculum
- Working with the national government to create an improved program for the training of teachers
- Building a small power plant in a town that lacked consistent access to electricity
- Assisting local tribal groups to prevent deforestation in their communities
- Improving water and sanitation facilities within the schools

Finally, the participants were given posters and asked to write up, either individually or in pairs, their recommendations for ways in which the World Bank could improve its policies to prevent projects from negatively impacting children, adolescents, families and

communities. The children then had a chance to decorate these posters before they were taken back to DC to be shared with the World Bank's safeguard drafting team.



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<sup>i</sup> UNICEF Fact Sheet: The Right to Participate, available at: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Right-to-Participation.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> To download a copy of materials used during the workshops, as described throughout this report, please visit <http://www.bicusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/World-Bank-and-Safeguards-Childrens-Workshop.pdf>

## **Recommendations by Issue Area**

### **Assessment Process**

- The Bank should improve its assessment process prior to beginning project implementation.
- The assessment should look not only at environmental impacts but at all of the impacts on people, and in particular, the specific impacts on children as well as on women.
- The impacts on adults and children should be examined separately.
- Before giving the loans the World Bank should send appraisal teams to get firsthand information from the communities. This impact must be done carefully with sufficient attention paid to the “real situation on the ground”.
- The Bank should verify the situation in the area of the proposed development project to ensure it does not negatively affect the population but rather generates benefits for all parties.

### **Child and Community Participation**

- The World Bank should consult with the local people wherever they intend to engage in projects and genuinely listen to the problems and concerns of the people.
- These consultations should include government, community members, and children and will help the Bank avoid potential conflicts, which would have negative impacts on the people.
- The World Bank should consult with children before engaging in projects that will impact them and should consider their input seriously.
- These consultations should include the voices of all children regardless of age, gender, or disability.
- The World Bank should create global advisory councils of children and adolescents to better take into account their voices.
- Representatives from the World Bank should meet with child and adolescent leaders in a community where the Bank seeks to fund a project, and their views should be taken into account before the Bank makes the loan.



### **Human Rights**

- Most important, the World Bank should ensure that both Human and Children’s Rights are included in their safeguards because sustainable development is impossible without respecting human rights.
- Violations of human rights should be prohibited and the revised safeguards should require that if the rights of women, children, or persons with disabilities are violated the project should be stopped.
- The Bank should include provisions regarding gender equality in all decision-making.
- The new safeguards should address the rights of people with disabilities including ensuring that all projects are accessible for persons with disabilities.

### **Children's Rights**

- The World Bank should take into account the rights of boys, girls and adolescents and begin to work with them to solve their problems.
- The World Bank should ensure that in the new safeguards, particular protections for children are included and their interests and needs made a high priority.
- Pay particular care and attention to that impacts that projects have on children with disabilities and individuals who are marginalized.
- Include the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially non-discrimination, in the execution of World Bank projects.
- Care should be taken to ensure that children in areas where projects are developed should not face any impediments to their education due to World Bank supported activities.
- Education should be inclusive and brought closer to the community where learners reside.
- Special protections for children with disabilities should be included in the safeguards.
- A director responsible for upholding both children and human rights in the different World Bank funded projects should be selected or appointed.

### **Involuntary Resettlement**

- The resettlement policy should include measures designed to protect the interests of children.
- Specifically, there must be steps taken to ensure that children's education is not interrupted due to resettlement. Children should have access to quality schools near their new homes.
- The policy must provide all people with access to adequate shelter with proper sanitation facilities.
- There must be sufficient health care facilities in the new location and the people must be provided with means for acquiring adequate nutrition.
- The World Bank should consult with communities to try to make all resettlement voluntary and, at the very least, prevent the use of violence in evictions so that all displacement happens peacefully.
- The people's safety must also be protected both during displacement and after they are resettled in the new location.
- The World Bank should ensure that borrowing countries provide help to resettled families for more than two years and should engage in monitoring visits to resettlement sites for at least 10 years.
- Older children requested that the new safeguards provide for ways that children who are almost 18 at the time they are resettled will be helped to make a smooth transition into adulthood.



### **Environment**

- Ensure that green areas are not adversely affected by projects. The land, forest, and waterways should be protected in all development activities.
- Development does not need to be done only through coal to generate electricity. The World Bank should focus on renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, biogas, water, etc.
- The World Bank should not promote polluting industries. When industrial projects occur measures should be taken to confine smog and other pollutants to maintain air quality.
- Organic farming should be promoted by the Bank and chemical fertilizers should not be used.

- The Bank should not engage in projects that lead to deforestation. In areas that have already lost forests, new trees should be planted.
- The World Bank should consider the fact that large scale industrial projects often create negative side effects and hence alternative development methods should be explored.
- Within the new safeguards, the World Bank should ensure that issues to do with climate change are anticipated and responded to before funding a project.

### **Labor**

- The World Bank should set policies to protect the working child.
- Children below the age of 18 years should never be engaged in the worst forms of child labor.
- Create production workshops or institutes for baking, crafts, clothing, etc. where children can work in safe conditions. The workshops should be designed such that they can ultimately be self-sustaining.
- All work for both children and adults should be compensated at a proper wage.
- Employment opportunities must be available to all regardless of disability.

### **Implementation, Supervision and Monitoring**

- The World Bank must fund projects at levels sufficient to not only pay for the project but also to ensure that the project does not have negative consequences.
- The World Bank should improve monitoring of project implementation and ensure the government complies with the rules and plan for the project.
- The Bank should ensure that funds are used properly for the purpose they were given.
- The World Bank must take responsibility for human rights violations perpetrated by governments on Bank funded projects.
- The Bank should visit the places where people have been resettled and where projects are ongoing to ensure that rehabilitation plans have been carried out properly.
- When the Bank funds projects in rural areas, it should make public service centers available for complaints and suggestions.

### **Funding Priorities**

- The Bank should invest in productive activities for the benefit of children and adolescents.
- In considering education projects the focus needs to be on education quality, going beyond just education access. This includes teacher training, curriculum development, classroom size, and appropriate education services for children with disabilities.
- Inclusive societies must be promoted and the Bank should invest in youth in rural areas, including youth with disabilities, to promote the growth of leaders among children and adolescents.
- Focus on key projects such as providing health services in hospitals and improving water and sanitation systems.
- Projects should address the needs of particularly marginalized groups of children, including minorities, those with disabilities and those who have been recruited as child soldiers.





### **Recommendations by Country**

Some themes discussed above were universally expressed by the children in all seven consultations. These included the need for the World Bank to:

- Take into account the views of children and adolescents in designing and implementing projects;
- Include protections for children and child rights in the safeguards; and
- Prioritize child development and investments in children.

However, in many cases, the participants in different countries had quite varied concerns and recommendations. Recommendations for changes to safeguard policies, and their implementation, highlighted in particular contexts included:



- Peru:** Improve assessments to ensure that projects will benefit everyone  
Invest in education, particularly in rural areas  
Create specific policies to protect working children and increase their access to safe employment
- Yemen:** Create specific policies to protect working children  
Provide access to education for all children, including girls and children with disabilities  
Institute regular reporting from the Bank to affected communities
- India:** Include a focus on children in the assessment process  
Improve environmental protections including by moving away from the use of nonrenewable energy sources and preventing deforestation  
Address increased alcoholism and associated violence resulting from industrialization  
Focus on education quality
- Uganda:** Improve involuntary resettlement policies to guarantee access to education, shelter, health care, water, and adequate nutrition  
Monitor the government's implementation of a project including through long term monitoring visits to the resettlement sites  
Respect human rights and children's rights  
Consider the likely impacts of a project on climate change
- Cambodia:** Include a focus on children in the assessment process  
Protect human rights, women's rights and children's rights in Bank policies  
Monitor the actions of the government receiving World Bank funds  
Improve involuntary resettlement policies to guarantee access to education, shelter, health care, water, and adequate nutrition  
Ensure that all displacement happens peacefully
- Philippines:** Ensure that accessibility for persons with disabilities is considered in designing Bank projects  
Include children with disabilities in decision making  
Promote acceptance of persons with disabilities within society

## Conclusion

Throughout the seven consultations the children and adolescents remained engaged and interested, participating actively in all activities. They provided serious and well considered recommendations, showing both their understanding of issues related to World Bank projects as well as their unique insights into the needs and interests of children. The majority of these recommendations are both relevant to the ongoing safeguards review and the types of policies that the World Bank could realistically require through its safeguards policies. We thus believe that recommendations such as a requirements to guarantee access to education, nutrition, sanitation and water in the involuntary resettlement policy, a requirement that impact assessments consider the impact of projects on children, prohibitions on the worst forms of child labor, and protections for human rights and child rights should be included in the revised World Bank Safeguard Policies.

Additionally, this consultative process demonstrated the capacity of children and adolescents to engage in conversations about how World Bank policies and projects can affect their lives, and the lives of other children around the world. It is thus our hope that, in future consultative processes, the World Bank will itself consider soliciting the views of children and adolescents by including them in age appropriate consultations.

