



Review and Update of the World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies

Consultation Meeting with Children's Delegation

World Bank, Washington, DC
October 30, 2013

On October 30, 2013, a delegation of young people from a number of countries accompanied by representatives from the Bank Information Center (BIC), researchers and two members of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) came to the World Bank Headquarters to share their perspective on children's rights and safeguards. In the months prior to this meeting, BIC led consultations with teenagers in Peru, Yemen, India, Cambodia, Uganda and Philippines.

Comments from the participants included the following:

The Bank Information Center

- Children and adolescents should be included in the Bank's consultation process on the Safeguard Policies and their voices and interests taken into account in order to improve development outcomes and reduce poverty.
- Current World Bank policies lack specific protections for children. The needs of children are different from other vulnerable groups such as Indigenous Peoples, women, the elderly, and minorities. The Bank is urged to look at the specific ways in which a project has negative impacts on children. Moreover, it should recognize that deprivation in childhood has long lasting effects on communities, and countries.
- The World Bank should consider how it can improve the quality of the Environmental Impact Assessment, as it relates to project impacts on children. It should also consider how its other policies can address the needs of children.

Members of the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child

- The Committee on the Rights of the Child acknowledged the importance of the review of the Safeguard Policies and appreciated contributing to the ongoing consultation process.
- Two main issues need to be addressed regarding child's rights in order to improve the existing policies: (1) how to assess projects in regard to children's development and well-being; and (2) how to apply safeguard policies, taking into consideration children's voices and views.
- The assessment process could be improved through the use of child impact assessment. For example, in Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom, government has undertaken child impact assessments at the local, municipal level. Child labor is not the only issue; many other economic and management decisions have an impact on children, including deprivation of basic services, education, water and health, and exposure to goods and activities that are detrimental to development.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified instrument on Human Rights. The Bank is recommended to comply with it when planning and implementing its projects and when contracting with borrowers to ensure that all child rights related issues are in place.

- The Bank is recommended to consult the website of the UN's Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, where the CRC posts recommendations specific to projects. The information gathered there is from consultations with children, children's reports, and NGOs.
- In particular, the Bank should review the CRC's "General Comments" on thematic issues on the website, more precisely "Comment 16," since it addresses the issue of State obligations with regard to business and the impact of business operations on children's rights, which can have positive as well as very negative impacts. The private sector would welcome a framework from governments that are signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the child on how to respect children's rights.
- The more constraints are put on lending or economic activities in countries, the more the competitiveness of smaller economies is compromised. If the Bank wishes to help level the playing field for states to improve their competitiveness, then working on building capacity for child impact assessment would be one of the ways. The more that children's development is protected, the better the chances of achieving development outcomes and poverty reduction goals.
- A set of principles and measures developed by CRC states that member countries of the World Bank and other international institutions have the obligation to ensure that decisions are taken with consideration for the UN Convention of Child Rights.

Harvard School of Public Health

- A number of impact assessments from different institutions and countries have item check lists that are easy to use in order to assess basic impacts on the health and well-being of children from a variety of perspectives. The World Bank could develop a similar approach through its own departments, for example the Human Development Network. The challenge lies more in the implementation of the assessment than its development.
- Small and Medium Enterprises bidding for government contracts do not wish to increase expenses by adding child assessment procedures. Leadership needs to be convinced that children's issues go beyond child labor and extend to other concerns, including access to water, health, education, and the safety of children on construction sites. Willingness to conduct such an assessment comes from awareness of the social obligation to take responsibility for children who might be affected by projects.
- Investing in children is for the long term. Currently, the needs of children are not specifically outlined in the Safeguard Policies. If the impacts on children are not specified, then the Bank will not reach its end goal of ending extreme poverty.
- What is missing currently in the safeguards is the "alignment of the head, heart and hands;" in other words, there is a misalignment between what the Bank is trying to accomplish and what it states in its policies.

Children from Cambodia, Peru, Yemen, India, Uganda, and the Philippines shared their views in the meeting as follows:

Cambodia

- All World Bank projects have either direct or indirect impacts on children. The environmental and social assessment is a crucial process that draws attention to these impacts and helps shape the policies. The World Bank should take responsibility in conducting the assessment before the project is implemented to ensure that it will not affect children.
- The government does not comply with the Bank Policy on Involuntary Resettlement in the Boeung Kak Lake area and uses violence to evacuate individuals, more precisely children.

- The Bank should monitor the implementation process throughout the whole project cycle to ensure the government does not violate children's rights.

Yemen

- The World Bank should be well aware of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its principles. Children suffer from the projects that are implemented by the Bank without taking their views into consideration or consulting them. The Bank should take children's views into consideration when implementing different projects.
- It is recommended to conduct the Environmental and Social Assessment by following three steps: (1) Conduct the Environmental and Social Assessment prior to the project's implementation; monitor the project during its implementation; evaluate the project after it has been implemented; (2) Take into account different aspects, including environmental, economic, cultural, etc. for any projects being implemented, in any country; (3) Assign a dedicated committee in charge of conducting the assessment.

Peru

- In the Peruvian Amazon, children's basic needs, such as clean water and electricity, are not met. The Bank should use its projects to solve these problems.
- Child labor should be looked at realistically; there should be a right to lawful child employment to help end child exploitation, because children will continue to work out of necessity. Working from a young age is considered as an opportunity for many young children to grow and retain human dignity. Children should be allowed to work based on their own capabilities while securing their basic rights to education and health. "We want the World Bank to realize the different realities of the world and the rights of child workers. We want recognition of our right to participation and taking our views into consideration and above all to continue the fight against poverty and exploitation, for the improvement of our conditions and the respect of all our rights. We want the recognition of children as the people with rights, with the same capabilities and more importantly to recognize us as child laborers with dignity."
- Childhood should be violence-free.

Uganda

- Personal experience with involuntary resettlement was shared. On behalf of the children of Naminya, the Bank was requested to provide access to education and build facilities that are child friendly.