The World Bank Group

A Dialogue on Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Washington, DC- April 24, 2014

- The World Bank Group held a dialogue on mainstreaming citizen engagement in World Bank Group (WBG) Operations, convened via videoconferencing with Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Washington DC.

- The meeting brought together participants from over 55 organizations representing academia, civil society, government, foundations, and the private sector (See list of participating organizations).

- Astrid Manroth (Advisor, Openness and Aid Effectiveness) outlined how the Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in WBG Operations was being approached.

- The discussion was facilitated by Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey, Founding Executive Director of the Institute for Democratic Governance, Accra, Ghana, and supported by Kofi Tsikata, Senior Communications Officer, and Kennedy Fosu, Communications Officer in Ghana; Sheriff Ismail, Communications Associate in Sierra Leone; and Michael Sahr, Communications Associate in Liberia.

- This summary highlights the main ideas from the rich discussion held and reflects many of the excellent examples shared on citizen engagement.

Main Issues Raised by Question

General

- Several examples were mentioned of successful citizen engagement in service delivery, such as community involvement in Ghana to address the lack of toilet facilities in schools—a key constraint in ensuring girls school attendance. In Sierra Leone, community leaders in the border district of Kambia were organized into community management teams at chiefdom and district levels, and then the CSO provided technical
support and linked the school management teams with the Ministry of Education for
government assistance.

- Participants agreed citizen engagement has led to results in the health sector.
- The Ghana EITI mechanism was mentioned as an example of successful citizen
  engagement in natural resource management in Ghana. Also how a CSO platform was
  instrumental in building a strong relationship with the Ministry of Energy.
- In the area of social inclusion, the Youth Employment Sector project in Sierra Leone
  created ownership and a high level of participation through community oversight
  committees, as well as increased sustainability of project outcomes.
- Citizen engagement and oversight can help improve governance. One example
  mentioned was Civil Society’s tracking of budgetary allotments to the Public Sector
  Investment Plan in Liberia, which led to better implementation. Legislative report cards
  in Liberia have helped with the quality of governance and monitoring of the country’s
  legislative governance, but this is an area for further engagement. In Sierra Leone, the
  public is now invited to participate in the preparation of the national budget, and civil
  society is also involved in tracking government expenditure.
- In Ghana, farmers provided inputs for inclusion in the national budget through focus
  group discussions with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture officials at the district level.
- Access to information is critical. Awareness-building is a starting point for the citizen
  engagement process, and can help communities know about their roles and
  responsibilities in the development process, or addressing common challenges facing
  members of the community. Providing citizens with research on the relevant issues helps
  citizens speak from an informed position.
- Citizen engagement should focus on ensuring meaningful participation and avoid certain
  political interests. There are some examples where citizens have reacted against
  perceived political manipulation in a water project and bed net distribution project in
  Sierra Leone. In Liberia, the years of conflict created peace-related interest groups which
  remained engaged after the end of the civil crisis, and presently continue to be engaged
  in the governance process and serve as independent monitors. However, it was noted
  how proliferation of interest groups is also affecting the quality of the debate and
  coordination in Liberia.
- Beneficiaries need to understand the needs the project will address. Involving them in
  project design is important to make sure it caters to their needs.
- In order to stay engaged, citizens need to feel their inputs are valued and translate into
  real outcomes.
- Sustainability is threatened by weaknesses in institutional structures for participation.
  Capacity of CSOs also needs strengthening to engage in these platforms. Social
  accountability is difficult to sustain when there is high level of impunity among public
  officials.
• Consultative dialogue meetings provide opportunities for citizen participation and involvement in all aspects of the community life.

• Creating a platform for all parties to engage can create a structure to channel the grievances of poor citizens.

• The use of ICT platforms, linked to mobile technology, is a useful way to collect citizen feedback and close the feedback loop.

• There is need to build the capacity of public officials to engage.

Research/Methodology

• Citizen engagement by the World Bank at the national level needs more attention and strengthening.

• The World Bank could do more analysis of context factors, such as the level of CSO involvement.

• The World Bank should look at past experiences. Citizen engagement at the country level needs more attention.

• Helping document local experiences in participation would be helpful.

• The World Bank could provide more information on activities from the outset to implementation and sustain engagement throughout. Participants said there was no easily accessible, central information clearing house about projects; their location, implementation status, PDOs, design. The Open Data Aid initiative may address this gap.

Definitions

• There should be agreement on the definition of citizen engagement between international financial institutions.

Process

• The guiding questions for the consultations on Citizen Engagement do not seem to fit into the suggested framework that was made in the presentation.

Please contact citizenengagement@worldbankgroup.org with any questions or comments.

Participating Organizations:

1) Liberia Media Center
2) Center for Media Studies & Peacebuilding
3) Youth Exploring Solutions
4) Development Educations Network (DEN-L)
5) Making Enterprises
6) Action Aid Sierra Leone
7) Campaign for Good Governance
8) NACSA
9) National revenue Authority
10) Development and Economic Journalists Association (DEJA)
11) Green Scenery
12) Christian Aid, Sierra Leone
13) TINK Salone
14) Institute for Governance Reform
15) Center for Accountability and the Rule of Law
16) Ashei University
17) Peasant Farmers Association \Ghana Statistical Service
18) CHRAI
19) GTA
20) Channel Two
21) GYAM
22) GTV
23) VERUA
24) Express Savings and Loan Consolidated
25) Participatory Development Associates
26) CARE- Ghana
27) Oxfam
28) Ghana Chamber of Commerce
29) GNA
30) IDEG
31) HCCE
32) HAG
33) KPMG
34) GYIC
35) CAFAF
36) ISD
37) GTV
38) Totally Youth
39) Passionate Africa
40) LIVE FM
41) Investus
42) CDD- Ghana
43) Verua- Ghana
44) GBC Radio
45) Alert Ghana Foundation
46) Inform Ghana
47) Blogging Ghana
48) Institute of Local Government Studies
49) Economy Times
50) GACC
51) SPI
52) Oil & Gas Platform/AEC
53) National Catholic Secretariat
54) University of Ghana