

World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies

Consultations in Berlin November 12, 2014

Additional questions received from participants

With hindsight - 30+ years' experience with WB guidelines' implementation - how will the new Policies & Guidelines resolve 12 key issues observed in the past:

1. What if - large Projects, especially resettlement, entail long term impacts and mitigation needs? We know that government commitments may be good only as long as an elected government lasts. When Government changes, so do commitments (example: Itaparica/Brazil). **Will there be up-front requirements for separate management and untouchable ("escrow") multiyear budgets to finance and secure full implementation of mitigation measures over period of 10-20 years?**
2. What if - **large projects are wolves in sheep skin**: first, a low impact project, only to be followed some years later by larger, much higher impact phases (examples are many in hydropower development; similarly in road and railroad infrastructure)?
3. What if – **a safeguard project simply outsizes the World Bank's supervision competence** (Three Gorges/China would have been a case in point, with more than 2 million resettlers)?
4. What if - a borrower fails to stick to commitments (entirely or in part): The WB has rarely suspended disbursements? What other **"sticking" penalties/remedies are available?**
5. What if – a borrower has failed to comply under loans in the recent past, while making fresh "policy conform commitments" to obtain fresh loans? **Will there be a credibility & country-compliance criterion?**

6. What if - a borrower has **recently weakened national environmental and social safeguards** (as is currently the case in Brazil)?
7. What if - poor and/or minority groups have no money – cannot afford - access to justice: **will there be provisions to finance their legal defense? How will adherence to human rights be made more stringent?**
8. What if – one can expect (in certain cases) that government **contractors are corrupted into writing benign expert reviews - contracted Environmental & Social Impact Assessments** - often not explicitly lying, but diligently omitting relevant uncomfortable truths? Especially in countries where Government is a dominant contractor this is an issue.

And

9. Will the obligation remain to **compare – very early on – alternative sites and designs** in terms of their comparative environmental and social impacts?
10. **Can there be WB funding for independent timely M&E** (not waiting for belated ex-post or inspection panel evaluations)?
11. **Can NGOs participate in assuring environmental & social safeguard & checks & balances?** And can they receive the necessary independent funding?

And finally:

If efficiency and speed are a concern, why not go back to **Adaptable Lending – Learning and Innovation Loans** - a modality approved by WB Board in Mid-1990s?