



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

Consultation Meeting with Civil Society Organizations Johannesburg, February 19, 2013 SUMMARY

The consultation meeting with Civil Society was held on February 19, 2013. After a presentation by the World Bank Safeguards Review Team on the background, intended scope and process for the review, the floor was open for participants' input and comments.

OVERALL PROCESS

- It would be important to ensure representativeness of stakeholders in meetings so that you can hear many different voices.
- Important also to leverage effectively networks of nongovernmental organizations as they represent other groups in the country.
- A clarification is needed on how the seven emerging areas have been selected and on how you plan to have in-depth consultations on these topics.
- There is concern that two years for the review and the consultations may be too long. By the time the Bank comes around to policy formulation and implementation, the new policies could be outdated.
- The Bank may incur the risk of over-consulting.
- The Bank should share with Civil Society good practices of other institutions worldwide and engage in a dialogue on these good practices.
- The Bank should engage more with grassroots organizations.
- Why are you consulting with the government here? They are not necessarily representative of people. Governments are often complicit with the private sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Food security could be included as an emerging area.
- The concept of safeguards comes across as reactive, stale, and old-fashioned. It would be important to focus on the perception on the ground and reflect these experiences in the consultations. Need also to expand monitoring and evaluation. For example on the Eskom project, the monitoring and evaluation function are perceived to be weak. There have been issues with the local community, with water, but they were not identified early.

- The review should clarify the level and type of monitoring and evaluation oversight that the Bank would carry out.
- The Bank must respond to the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The Bank should consider a different safeguard. While the Bank acts globally it needs to take into account what happens locally. It is important to consider the enabling environment for citizens to operate – this must be the primary condition on which the Bank does lending.
- On country systems, some suggested to work with the National Development Plan. South Africa is one of the few countries that have such a plan.
- There was also skepticism about the National Development Plan and the recommendation to work with Chapter 9 Institutions (such as the South African National Human Rights Commission) because these institutions are supposed to provide an oversight function.
- The Bank should also look into Parliamentary oversight bodies. There is already a structure to link the Bank with the Parliament.
- There are good laws in South Africa but there are problems with compliance. On compliance and alignment with national law, there must be checks and balances at the national and international levels for the Bank to be effective. The Bank should support national agencies to comply with their own laws.
- Often actions we take result in violations of our laws. We make many people worse off, not better off. For example, game reserves are established by forcibly removing people and often people are worse off. It is difficult to determine the extent to which our laws are consistent with the minimum “do no harm” principles.
- There is not much mention of information dissemination. Civil society needs to be informed of Bank actions. While countries are sovereign and must establish laws, the Bank must ensure that the countries act fairly and their citizens are well informed.
- Going forward, the World Bank role is to ensure that country laws are functioning. The World Bank is not always aware whether communities are destroyed. The Bank must put people on the ground to monitor. Now that the country borrowed for the Eskom project, it will have to pay back its loan. We wanted renewables but the World Bank went forward. The Bank must commit to the welfare of the communities and ensure that Bank funded projects do not destroy our communities.
- How does the World Bank work with board members who represent countries that have not signed international conventions, like that for the disabled or for the rights of children?

In closing, the facilitator suggested that perhaps the CSOs can help the Bank change the image of safeguards as a "shield" (focus on protection of communities / Bank risk management) to safeguards as a "sword" (enunciation of international principles). The Eskom project established a physical Bank presence in South Africa. The project also defined the Bank's economic trajectory - the project allowed South Africa to pursue a renewables option.