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Dear World Bank,

On behalf of Reframe It, Inc. I'd like to submit the following comments on your economic and social framework setting standards for sustainable development.

The aspiration of stakeholder engagement is a worthwhile one. But we think that the World Bank should go further in supporting its decision-making by learning what citizens would support if they understood the tradeoffs involved.

I'll begin to explain with a story. Three years ago, at the San Francisco Living Innovation Zones initiative workshop, I had a conversation with San Francisco's chief risk officer. He said that the international associations of risk management professionals have determined in recent years that risk management that doesn't balance the tradeoffs between positive risk (or upside potential) and negative risk (or downside potential) is not scientifically grounded and authentic full risk management. He told me that he got San Francisco to update their risk policy. The prior risk approach had guided risk management to focus on avoiding harm. The new approach allowed San Francisco to undertake modest-risk projects that can pass minimal criteria and have real upside gains disproportionate to their downside risk. The risk officer said this change had already allowed San Francisco to optimize policies for public benefit to a greater extent than before because under the old methodology they weren't even considering the tradeoffs.

My core argument in this brief memo in reaction to your draft policy options is that it would be good if the World Bank could handle tradeoffs in a democratic, scientific, and secure way. Tradeoffs are not handled in an appropriate structure in the existing methodology. Reframe It would recommend a that you employ a process that would allow you to gauge of what the people would prefer if they understood their options; such a process would help the world bank take the right upside risks in balance with downside risks. We propose a deliberative, empirical, rigorous approach to global risk-balancing by the World Bank.

The proposed economic and social framework document describes a great deal about risks that are taken by World Bank projects, about mitigating those risks with elite stakeholders and NGOs representing citizens, and about communicating why those risks were taken after-the-fact.

We think it's important to learn the lessons of Deliberative Polling with regards to how the World Bank thinks about citizen-supported decision-making. Deliberative Polling has been used dozens of times in policy making around the world in 22 countries (see www.reframeit.com or cdd.stanford.edu). We've proven that it is possible in different parts of the world to select a random sample of citizens, have them engage in dialogue for a weekend, and get surveyed before and after their deliberations. The numbers of participants are large enough to be statistically meaningful, both for the evaluation of representativeness and for the significance of opinion changes. The process has now been successfully employed in Africa (Uganda and Ghana and soon, Tanzania).It reveals what the people would think if they were exposed to

balanced information which they had a chance to discuss in small moderated groups and if they had the chance to ask questions of experts in plenary sessions. This process lets citizens balance the kinds of negative risks alluded to in the Economic and Social Framework and it lets them balance these against the upside potential of different initiatives. We need scientifically-selected random microcosms of citizens to have menus of policy alternatives with scenarios to anticipate the outcome that would be achieved with each. This would allow development choices to be supported by what people would think after they understood the issues. Instead of just consulting stakeholders, the Bank should consult the people who must live with the policies—but via a process that is both representative and informative.

The document alludes to surveys as a tool for measuring risk. We think that there is a better opportunity to mitigate risk by leveraging surveys before and after deliberative treatments. Such processes can also engage the creativity of the public to refine policy alternatives before they are finalized. Random samples of the public leap past some of the problems that occur when NGOs do not have uniform quality. Instead of measuring what the people would think if they were thinking by consulting proxies of the people, we measure what a random sample of the people think after they've thought about the issues. We combine this close-ended process with an open ended annotation process conducted digitally. This combined process won the McKinsey/Harvard Business Review Management 2.0 Challenge. Deliberative polls can also be the basis of collective action and anticipate the collective impact work of a group of stakeholders who come into alignment through the dialogue process.

Such processes would allow World Bank projects to be designed, developed and supported over time with informed citizen consent.

This method is superior to both traditional surveys and to elite-driven top-down projects in which civil society groups, NGOs and government are the only proxies for citizenry that are consulted with high-quality opportunities to think through these issues. The document also alludes to other traditional methodologies like focus groups to gather data. But focus groups are too small to be representative and don't guide such a process in a way that is secured against the many biases and forms of manipulation that may arise.

The existing document might have been the plausible way to conduct this work in the past. But modern social science has advanced and could help the World Bank do much better.

The track record globally of Deliberative Polling shows that a scientifically representative sample of any society can be brought together under high-quality conditions for deliberation. Moreover, this kind of close-ended process can be supplemented by processes that are secure against manipulation and yet leverage the collective creativity of society to improve draft proposals before they become set in stone.

The consultations required by his framework come too late in the process to embrace citizen creativity to optimize tradeoffs that project designers today may not even be aware of. Likewise, surveys after a project to measure impact may not allow citizens to gain the level of insight that they reach in a Deliberative Poll, and reflect top-of-the-head and often extremely shallow views. When Americans were surveyed about the now famous Public Affairs Act of 1975, 44% of them said they were for it or against. This was true even though the Public Affairs Act of 1975 did not exist and was made up for the experiment.

Both for selecting projects, and for evaluating them, we would recommend a consideration of how deliberative empirical approaches such as ours could better achieve the aspirations of the policies you've released here—of the ways in which they would facilitate balancing fiscally viable options with prioritizing them based on a deliberative measurement of what would be socially optimal.

We would recommend a scientific, Deliberative Polling approach to these challenges in the future. We suggest an integration of balancing risk tradeoffs—of both upside and downside risks --into all your analysis of risk. We would also suggest follow-on processes take into account not just multi-stakeholder input but multi-stakeholder action, collective action, coordinated action, or collective impact where appropriate. This reduces duplication of effort.

The Strive program in Cincinnati on education is an interesting mode for the World Bank to think about how getting to alignment on goals and tradeoffs can contribute to what they called "Collective Impact". It allows government, public-private partnerships, companies and non-profits to achieve collaborative outcomes while working towards separate coordinated portions of the overall challenge. Getting a variety of stakeholders into sufficient alignment for collective action is also something our deliberative approach can help support.

Sincerely,

Bobby Fishkin and Reframe It Team