

## **Transcript**

### **Update on World Bank Environmental and Social Framework**

**October 11, 2022**

#### **Uwimana Basaninyenzi**

We're so grateful that you have joined us today for an update on the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework, also known as the ESF. This engagement is a long-standing commitment that we have with civil society partners, and other important stakeholders, that highlights some of the key implementation updates of the ESF during our Annual Meetings. We're pleased to have a very impressive line of speakers with us today, particularly our country representatives. I just want to take a few moments to briefly introduce them as well as our World Bank Management who are joining us today.

I am going to begin by introducing our Honorable Minister of Public Works, Housing, and Water Resources in Mozambique, Carlos Mesquita. I understand he'll be with us momentarily, but right now we just want to say, thank you. And welcome for joining, I see his colleagues with us today. We also have with us Dr. Alias Rameli, the Director General of PLANMalaysia with the Ministry of Housing and Local Governments in Malaysia. A very warm welcome to you, Director General, thank you so much for joining us today.

And from the World Bank today, we have our Vice President of Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS), Ed Mountfield, who will provide opening remarks for us. We also have with us Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough, Country Director of Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, and Seychelles. Thank you for joining us. Finally, we have Maninder Gill, who is our Director and Chief Environmental and Social Standards Officer, also at Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS). Thank you again. Really wonderful to have all of you with us.

As you can see, we have a full program in one hour, our speakers are going to be sharing their insights with you, and there will be a Q&A at the end, an opportunity to ask questions. So please stay with us through the duration of the event. You can ask your questions by placing that in the chat or raising your hand during the Q&A time. And we'll try to take them in chunks. I will now turn to Ed again, our Vice President for Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS) to provide our opening remarks.

#### **Ed Mountfield**

Well, thank you for the introduction, Uwi, and good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to everyone around the world and thank you for joining us. I'm very pleased to be here with you all to mark four years of implementing the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework, and to reflect with you on the distance traveled and the road ahead. We're grateful to have gone on this journey with many of you since the Framework was approved in 2018, but the world has changed significantly since then. So, it's always very valuable to have these chances to meet with you and to share perspectives.

This four-year mark comes at a time when we're witnessing catastrophic human consequences of overlapping crises, including the continued impacts of the pandemic, the climate emergency, high food and fuel prices, macroeconomic imbalances, and rising fragility and conflict. The challenges facing development are intensifying at a time when many countries are also struggling in other areas, including governance, rule of law, debt sustainability, and limited fiscal space and the poor are bearing the brunt of this crisis, especially women and girls.

The World Bank Group is taking fast, comprehensive action to support countries through these challenges, and help save lives, protect the poor and vulnerable, and achieve sustainable growth and rebuild in better ways. We, in our last Fiscal Year 2022, deployed a record 115 billion dollars in financing. We have also committed consecutive surges of financing, analytical support, and policy advice, first in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and now to address the food and energy crisis, the war in Ukraine, and its spillover effects.

In the last fiscal year, commitments from IDA, our fund for the poorest countries, totaled 37.7 billion dollars, of which 13.2 billion dollars were in grants. And the Africa region received 73 percent of the total commitments.

The ESF is well-suited to help us effectively respond to these crises through its ability to adapt to changing circumstances, to help manage environmental and social risks, and promote sustainability and inclusion. Engaging with all stakeholders and maintaining a special focus on the most vulnerable are central components of the ESF.

By supporting our client countries in their efforts to strengthen national environmental and social management systems, we are also able to contribute to positive development outcomes far beyond the project supported by the Bank in the respective countries, and create entry points for dialogue and follow-up action on vital areas of environmental and social systems strengthening at the national and local level. So, we'll shortly invite our distinguished guests to speak further on this, specifically on their experience developing capacity and strengthening national environmental and social management systems. But first, I'd like to take a moment just to highlight a few aspects of our work on the ESF.

First, I'm pleased to inform you that we've just issued a new Good Practice Note on Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH) in Human Development Operations, which covers projects in health, education, and social protection sectors. This Note helps build staff and borrower capacity and understanding, assessing and mitigating such risks effectively. This Good Practice Note complements the one we issued in October 2018 on addressing SEA/SH issues in projects with major civil works, and will better equip the Bank's staff in supporting our clients in tackling this critically important agenda. You can access this new Guidance Note on the Bank's external website and perhaps we can also post a link in the chat.

Second, following the risk-based proportionate approach that is a key feature of the ESF, we are increasingly encouraging our clients to be actively involved in the preparation of ESF instruments for low and moderate risk projects for themselves without consultants' support wherever possible. This can help build stronger capacity among clients to assess and address environmental and social issues both in projects supported by the World Bank, and those beyond that may be funded through other sources.

Third and most important, we continue to support our clients heavily during project implementation. I say most important because this is where issues and challenges most often arise, including inevitably some which may not have been fully anticipated. We do this through multiple channels, including hands-on support, monitoring and working closely with civil society and other stakeholders, and using innovative ICT tools to address constraints imposed by COVID-19 or in FCV (Fragility, Conflict, and Violence) settings. Many of you have provided invaluable support in these efforts to focus more on the implementation phase of projects. And I want to thank you for that invaluable partnership.

Also, as you know, the World Bank's Grievance Redress Service (GRS), another mechanism that enables us to support stronger implementation that offers an avenue for individuals and communities to submit complaints directly to the World Bank, if they believe that a World Bank-supported project has or is likely to have adverse impacts on them, their community, or their environment. And the GRS enhances the World Bank's responsiveness and accountability to project-affected communities by helping ensure that grievances are promptly reviewed and addressed. So, very very much emphasis on speed, and acting fast to tackle problems before they become too deep and entrenched.

So, in closing, I'd like to emphasize that we are keen to continue this dialogue with key stakeholders, including and especially you, our CSO partners, to ensure that we're successful in achieving our mission of alleviating poverty and boosting shared prosperity in a sustainable

manner. And I look forward to this discussion and once again, thank you for being with us and back to you, Uwi.

### **Uwimana Basaninyenzi**

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Ed, for your very thoughtful remarks, and for giving us the global context in which we're applying the ESF, as well as a high-level overview of some of the recent developments, including some of the practical ways in which we're building the capacity of staff in client countries. I have put in the chat, the Good Practice Note that you're referring to. So, you're welcome, all of you, to go ahead and dig into that.

I now turn to Maninder Gill, our Director and Chief Environmental and Social Standards Officer in OPCS to provide us with some key highlights and other important updates in the implementation of the ESF. Maninder, the floor is yours.

### **Maninder Gill**

Many thanks, Uwi, and very warm welcome to all of you. I'm going to be brief today because we'd rather listen to our clients from the front line and then have a discussion. But let me start by expressing our gratitude for the continuous dialogue we've had and all the exchanges, which has helped us become better development partners to our client countries. All of you have played a critical role in shaping the ESF and your voices are just as critical, or perhaps even more critical as we learn from its implementation over the past few years.

I also really want to welcome and thank our distinguished guests for sharing their country perspectives with us today, which is also a part of a learning, and trying to do better as we move forward. I just wanted to briefly describe on a couple of issues how we are supporting our clients or trying to support them better implementing the ESF.

As all of you know, we have already seen some very positive developments that show that the ESF is living up quite well to its potential of actively contributing to sustainable and inclusive development outcomes on the ground. As you also know, it comprehensively covers a much wider range of environmental and social issues, compared to the safeguard policies we had on our books earlier, including issues such as labor, non-discrimination, inclusion, greenhouse gases accounting, biodiversity, and a range of other issues, and especially with a much stronger focus on implementation and outcomes and on client capacity building.

We are currently taking stock of early lessons learned to further enhance the implementation of the ESF, so that we can get better as we

go along, and be more effective development partners to our clients and other stakeholders. Let me briefly touch upon two priorities that are coming through very clearly in our works so far. The first is as Ed was emphasizing, the need to focus more sharply on implementation on the ground. The COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for our clients and partners and for us to go to the field, even though field-based work is the most critical component of our work.

Now that the constraints imposed by COVID-19 have eased in some countries at least, we're turning all of our energy to providing hands-on support to clients during implementation, so that we can all collectively work towards stronger environmental and social outcomes on the ground. And that's where all our CSO partners played a critical role in the time when that we could not actually go to the field, and that role is now even more important as we redirect our energies to more field-based work. We are returning to regular schedule of supervision missions, promoting deeper stakeholder engagement on the ground, and supporting our clients in promptly responding to issues that may arise during implementation.

For example, given the importance of occupational health and safety issues, or OHS as we often call it, a team of regional and global Bank staff, about a dozen of them, is currently visiting a few countries in the East Africa region of the Bank, who support clients and Bank teams to identify, address and resolve issues and challenges related to occupational health and safety issues, which are becoming increasingly important and for which, you know, we can never afford to relax on their implementation. We are launching similar, thematic supervision mission in other regions as well to support our clients to the best of our abilities during implementation.

The first four years of applying the ESF have taught us that we as well as our clients need to maintain and strengthen focus on implementation since as Ed was also mentioning, it's not possible at project preparation stage in spite of the best of our intentions and work to anticipate and address all issues and impacts that may arise during implementation, so a nimble and an adaptive approach is what is needed and that's what we are tweaking our approach to emphasize that much more going forward.

The second relates to the critical importance of supporting the strengthening of client capacity. A key component of all of our work continues to be client capacity building and strengthening countries' own environmental and social management systems, which is also the primary focus of our discussion today. Each investment lending project the Bank supports includes specific activities to further strengthen the environmental and social capacity of client agencies, responsible for project preparation, implementation, and monitoring. We try to help make sure that the capacity of the agencies we work with is

stronger by the end of project implementation than it was at the start.

Just to give you one example in the DRC education project, which covers almost 1/3 of the geographical area of the country, the Bank team has been working with the Ministry of Education to help strengthen their approach and capacity to address risks of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH) in the education sector in DRC. And by helping set up a dedicated grievance redress mechanism on these aspects, this support is having a positive impact on the Ministry's effort to address these issues in areas beyond those covered by the Bank-supported project. And we consider that a really critical element of our efforts to support our clients.

We are thus focused on supporting systems as a whole, and not just for World Bank-financed projects, which are a fraction of the development projects and programs a country undertakes, but also across systems in countries as a whole. So, I'm really excited to hear from our honorable guests to share their firsthand experience on building and strengthening client systems for environmental and social management. Each of them brings a unique perspective and I'm really looking forward to their insights and the subsequent discussion. Back to you, Uwi, to take us to the rest of the program. Thanks.

#### **Uwimana Basaninyenzi**

Thank you so much, Maninder. It's really wonderful to hear the practical experience in countries and some of the progress that has been made. In the chat, I see some partners from Togo, from Nigeria, from Cameroon, and others. Thank you so much. And it's wonderful to have you all with us. We will have a question-and-answer session, right after the last part of our presentation. So please do hold on to those questions, feel free to put them in the chat and we'll collect those. So, thank you very much.

Now we're going to move to look at a specific region, a unique experience actually of the application of the ESF in Asia. And I'm going to turn to you, Director General Rameli, for the next question, and to bring you into the conversation. Malaysia does not receive World Bank investment financing at this time, yet, you are interested in strengthening your national environmental and social systems in an approach that is similar to the World Bank's ESF. Can you tell us what Malaysia's experience has been so far?

#### **Dr. Alias bin Rameli**

Thank you. Mr. Mountfield, Vice President of the World Bank, all distinguished speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen around the world. Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening from Kuala Lumpur. Thank you, Uwi, for such an interesting question to Malaysia. In Malaysia, environmental and social aspects are always being seen as separate entities in urban planning, despite they are interrelated and interconnected. However, much progress has been done to strengthen these aspects in both development planning documents and regulatory framework, as well as in socioeconomic and environmental policy directions by various parties.

Social aspect has started to gain attention in exercising development projects and urban land use planning since 1966, by formulating the First Malaysia Plan and the inclusion of socioeconomic surveys and formulation of a special chapter in the preparation of our development plans. In 1998, Federal Department of Town and Planning, or PLANMalaysia, started its first attempt to incorporate Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in the preparation of local plans by developing low-impact land use strategies based on outcomes from socioeconomic surveys.

In 2003, the National Social Policy set the requirement of SIA in the process of planning and monitoring of both physical projects and social development programs, and SIA was officially recognized as a tool to analyze the social cost-benefits, and certainly to achieve better social outcomes.

In 2017, the requirement of SIA was stipulated in the Town and Country Planning Act, which is required to be prepared for mega infrastructure and coastal reclamation projects. The approval of an SIA report with mitigation measures and management plans is required before the commencement of the project. And up to date, more than 100 projects (SIA reports) have been submitted and evaluated by my department. And although Malaysia's regulatory framework for social impact was considered comprehensive, a paradigm shift is essential towards self-regulation and better internalization of SIA by project proponents (either government or private sector) is needed.

And to address these challenges, PLANMalaysia has formulated multiple SIA manuals and guiding notes since 2012 to support project proponents and professionals working in this field, and these efforts aim to fill the current skill gaps among SIA practitioners, project proponents, and other stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, as well as CBAs (community-based organizations) in understanding and advocating the value of SIA.

However, we need to continue strengthening the capacities of government officials and professionals working in areas such as environmental, social, and governance subjects, by bringing international good experiences and lessons learned from other systems,

such as the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework, particularly in community development, Indigenous peoples, stakeholder engagement and labor topics. At the same time, it is important to build partnership with international organizations to face the current sustainability challenges, and stay relevant, and at the forefront of sustainable development, considering its benefits towards economic, social, and environmental outcome to the nation and the people of Malaysia.

We believe there is no one-size-fits-all approach for SIA. While local knowledge is important, regional cooperation is also crucial. Thus, we are planning to work together with the World Bank to further strengthen our E&S system. And we plan to leverage and set the World Bank ESF as a benchmark for our E&S system and to align with our regulatory framework. We see the ESF sets an opportunity for Malaysia to review its past conventional ways of planning, by integrating both environmental and social sustainability in a holistic way.

Our participation in the International Symposium on Social Impact Assessment in East Asia and the Pacific on June 7, 2022, organized by the World Bank, has given us the opportunity to form partnership with stakeholders. For this reason, PLANMalaysia supports a joint training program with World Bank Malaysia to exchange experiences on E&S regulatory framework from both parties, and we are looking forward to the outcome of this training. Thus, PLANMalaysia will work together with the World Bank to organize a session in the upcoming IAIA23 Conference on the Implementation of SIA for Physical Development Projects.

And as a conclusion, through our experiences from SIA implementation in Malaysia, we recognize: Number 1, the importance of SIA as a tool to anticipate social risks and providing social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA) to support decision-making in project planning approval towards the best economic, social, and environmental outcomes in Malaysia. And Number 2, The World Bank's ESF as one of the best benchmarks for Malaysia to improve our existing E&S regulatory framework. And Number 3, the importance of continuous engagement with multiple entities and stakeholders, including project proponents, professional bodies, local communities and government agencies as well as with NGOs.

Malaysia's last message here is: a continuous improvement of the existing E&S regulatory framework, in particular SIA, will be our pledge to achieve social and environmental sustainability in line with the national agenda of Livable Malaysia. Ms. Moderator, Mr. Vice President, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention. Thank you.

**Uwimana Basaninyenzi**



Thank you so much. Excellent. Thank you, Director General Rameli. It was really wonderful to hear about the evolution of Malaysia's experience with the ESF and how it is influencing and strengthening your environmental and social systems. I understand that Honorable Minister Carlos Mesquita is running a little late so we are going to turn to Vice Minister Cecilia Chamutota, who will kindly step in for him for the next question to cover the experience of Mozambique.

Thank you so much for stepping in, Vice Minister, and we're really grateful to be able to hear and pull in the story of Mozambique and the use of ESF. So, my question to you is, what are some of the key environmental and social challenges that you have faced in development projects in Mozambique and how have you built environmental and social capacity to address them.

**Vice Minister Cecilia Chamutota**

Thank you. I'd like first to thank the organization of this meeting, and the World Bank for inviting us to share our experience in Mozambique in these issues. I also would like to bring our apologies because His Excellency, the Minister had an urgent call from the Office of the President, and he would not remain for the meeting. But we hope that during the meeting, he will be able to join us.

The Government of Mozambique through the Ministry of Public Works, Housing, and Water Resources with the support of the World Bank is implementing and managing a set of projects in the areas of roads and bridges, water supply and sanitation, water resources management, housing, and post-disaster reconstruction. These projects are developed by the multiple project implementation agencies and the Ministry. The current portfolio of projects funded by the World Bank in which the new environmental and social safeguards policies are being implemented amounts to the overall funding of about 1.6 billion dollars. They are about 9 projects in total.

Management of these projects requires a complex multidisciplinary approach and cross-cutting by the subject's involvement and the involvement of other ministries of the government entities. These projects as mentioned before are related to the water sector, water and sanitation, as well as roads and bridges, water resources management, and housing.

Mozambique is located in the southern region of Africa, and especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to its geographical location, and the Republic of Mozambique has signed several conventions and protocols on the environment and climate change, labor and gender issues, as well as United Nations conventions, Africa Union, and those in our region. Mozambique has also adopted the

Sustainable Development Goals, which contains goals and targets on environmental and social sustainability.

The implementation of public infrastructure projects is undertaken in compliance with environmental and social guidelines issued in the national laws and the World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework. We have identified some opportunities that come with the adoption of the World Bank's environmental and social safeguards policies, that have provided educational opportunity for project implementation entities and monitoring teams, as well as the construction workers and consultants and here.

We would like also to bring and to mention the benefits that we have with implementation of these policies on the communities that benefit from the projects that are being implemented by the Government of Mozambique in collaboration with the World Bank that they are now aware of their rights and duties in issues related to environmental management as well as gender-based violence, and risk mitigation and reduction measures.

The implementation of environmental and social safeguards represents an opportunity to organize national standards, which generally accepted international environmental and social standards and also the implementation of the environmental and social standards is an opportunity for closer cooperation between the public sector, the academia, and the private construction sector in the process of institutional capacity building, as a way to ensure the continuity and maintenance of high level of quality and thus its sustainability.

It can be seen that we face many challenges in this process of implementing the policies, and the challenges, they are related to shortage of human resources, related to specific fields of environmental and social safeguards to the extent of the requirements of the World Bank's environmental and social guidelines. Most of the existing specialists in the country are recruited to work in international agencies and searching better condition, creating a deficit for the national institutions. The need to harmonize national laws with the requirements of the environmental and social standards of the World Bank and other development partners is also one of the challenges that we have identified.

And also institutional capacity building for the Ministry, government implementation agencies, as well as contractors, consultants, and project beneficiary communities. The implementation of projects in the public work sector involving transversal issues connected to other ministries, has been added to challenges in the success of these projects and brings different dynamics from different sectors to this implementation as well as the implementation of projects in rural and remote communities where the social and cultural values and norms

differ from what is emerging from the environmental and social safeguards that we are trying to implement in this community.

So, in general, we may say that the implementation of the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework is shown in Mozambique that is important to strengthen the capacity of one institution, is also important to strengthen the relationship between project implementation agencies and local communities, so that they may understand the scope of the social and environmental safeguards measures.

It is also important to develop a sense of ownership of projects by the whole government, as I mentioned before, different organizations of the government work in the same project, so there is a need for all of us to have this sense of ownership. There is also a need to integrate the cost arising from environmental and social safeguards in the total cost financed by the partner to a specific project.

And I'd like to mention as an example, a process that is being implemented in Mozambique. That is the IFRDP project, which is the Integrated Feeder Road Development Project, that began the implementation without using the new policies of the World Bank, but during the implementation of the project, we changed it to the new policies, and it is feasible how the project is contributing to the inclusion of the beneficiary communities in the success of the implementation of these safeguards.

I'd like here to mention that for this transformation, for this change, it was needed to create a project implementation unit as well as doing some changes at contract levels, to mention specific action plans for the mitigation of gender-based violence and sexual harassment and exploitation of minors, including contractual accountability measures, functional and accessible complaints resolution mechanism for workers and communities, as well as codes of conduct related to gender-based violence, sexual harassment and exploitation of minors.

It has been a challenge, but the results that we are having with the implementation of the policies, they show that it is a challenge that has got good results to share. Thank you very much.

### **Uwimana Basaninyenzi**

Thank you so much, Vice Minister. Very very fascinating to hear about the experience of Mozambique, the challenges, the opportunities, and some of the results that have already been achieved. Thank you so much for that.

We are going to stay with Mozambique and we're going to look at it now from the World Bank's perspective. And I'm going to invite our Country Director Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough to join us. And just give us a few moments before we open up the Q&A to share with us the World Bank's perspective on what the application of the CSF has been.

I'm also going to just encourage you to continue to have your questions and we already have two people and you're welcome to, after Ida speaks, you're welcome to either chime in, or I can read it, whatever your preferences are. I'll encourage others to continue to ask their questions. Thank you once again. Ida, I am going to, without further ado, turn it over to you.

### **Idah Pswarayi-Riddihough**

So, thank you very much for the opportunity and thank you very much to the Vice Minister. I must admit that I can make this really short, because she's already spoken about quite a lot of the stuff that we've been working together on.

Let me just emphasize one of the discussions we've had quite a lot with the government, which is, why does it matter to have the ESF, right? And we both acknowledge the importance of strengthening the borrower systems. And I think you heard the Minister saying this a lot. But most importantly, not duplicating the system of the government, but strengthening that within the context of the government, promoting capacity, institutional building, but more importantly, also to amplify the positive development initiatives, and in particular, focusing on really difficult issues such as gender-based violence, something that the Vice Minister also talked about.

Now in the context of the IFRDP, that the Minister spoke about, I call this really the opportunity of turning adversity into an opportunity and I'll just underline just a few things that are coming out of that project and how we plan to move forward. So, the first thing is really, we do need to build institutional capacity. Government ownership of the issues and the solutions is very critical. You cannot fix this from the outside.

But it's also so important when you have a minister such as Minister Mesquita, and his team who are really committed, and they support change. And when the action plan was created to fix the issues that had led to the suspension of the project, the Minister himself put together a group of high-level advisors, including one ex-minister, who really knew how the institution worked to make sure that there was no slippage in the implementation and the supervision took place in real time. That really made a big difference.

The other thing is that we realized the importance of using technology. So that, you know what's going on in the field, and you can bypass this lag period, which tends to be a real issue between something happening and knowing about it. Promoting the development and establishment of environmental and social management systems really has been a key to ensuring that we have the right procedures, the protocols, the reporting templates, and we also crowded in the best international practices. I think we heard the Minister from Malaysia also talking about the importance of international best practices.

Another thing that we realized, because there's another big project that's coming behind this, is use different procurement methods and really to attract those contractors who are serious, but more importantly, they're willing to learn from their mistakes and they are willing to do good by the beneficiary communities. You just cannot replace that relationship between the government and the communities. It is critical.

The main thing is, we decide, okay, so how do you start to build capacity in the context of the project, the projects that are already implementing that are coming up or those that are coming downstream and then a whole of government approach because these issues are not just in the ministry but also in the government as a whole and so, the first thing is, we're building a center of excellence with the government, focusing on the most critical skills first, environmental and social safeguards, procurement and financial management, monitoring and evaluation and occupational health.

And then, we are going to build this into a whole of government capacity building, joining hands with training entities, universities to make sure that we catch the young early and when they eventually go into the government service, they have what it takes to be able to actually deliver.

Let me end by just one mentioning, one particular challenge that we are seeing today. And where I think we need to continue to put as much effort as possible. It's on the issues of health and safety. These are new areas to really look into, from the perspective of the skills on the ground and I think this is where we need to continue to build the capacity, so that the government, when they carry out their sustained borrower capacity building program, actually have the required information. So, I'll stop there. I will not repeat the excellent speeches by the Vice Minister and the Minister from Malaysia, thank you.

**Uwimana Basaninyenzi**

Excellent, thank you so much, Idah. That was really, really compelling now. Wonderful. I caught note of turning adversity into opportunity and I think that's a really great model for so many other countries to sort of model in terms of the application of the ESF. We now turn to our question-and-answer session and thank you so much for your patience and for staying with us through the course of the hour. We have twelve or so minutes for the Q&A. And I've seen a few in the chat and I would like to take a couple at a time. So, perhaps what I will do at this moment is, see, if anybody would like to chime in and give the question in person, or unmute themselves.

I have Chris Owalla, Director of the Community Initiative Action Group in Kenya. Would you like to ask your question about Kenya? If not, I'd be more than happy to read it out. You had mentioned in your comments that a lot of World Bank projects in Kenya, in your view, are not doing proper public participation in a more organized way. And if it's possible, if we could have, perhaps Maninder can speak to us a little bit more about some of the Bank's efforts in that area and experience and sort of clarifying if there's any action that's needed on that particular comment. Chris, you're more than welcome to come into the chat to clarify that a little bit more.

Sehou from Cameroon. So basically, your question is: African civil society must be taken into account at the local level concerning the problems linked to sustainable local development by the World Bank. And basically, what you wanted to know is, what are the different possible funding opportunities that your institution offers to African civil society organizations. We are looking for potential funding for our environmental project called Green Poulakou, which consists of planting trees in towns and villages, recycling plastic waste and household solid waste, and transforming them into biodegradable products in order to fight against urban pollution and deforestation in Cameroon. So that's another question that we have.

And then finally, we'll do one more question from Kate Gallagher. Kate, your question is, how does the World Bank build client capacity to conduct safe and meaningful stakeholder engagement in countries where the government restricts civil society's ability to operate and may be involved or complicit in reprisals against people for voicing critical views?

So, thank you so much. So those are the three questions that we will go ahead and begin with. Maninder, I'll start with you, and Ed, if you want to add anything more, please feel free to do so.

### **Maninder Gill**

Thanks, Uwi, and thanks to the participants for such excellent questions. So, I'll take the one which is about the quality of

stakeholder engagement with a reference to Kenya, and also link it to the one that Kate asked about the issue of safe engagement without the fear of reprisals.

So, one of the main features of the ESF, why we felt it was such a promising framework, is the requirement which is captured in the ESS 10 on stakeholder engagement and consultations, the requirement to have a stakeholder engagement plan in each and every investment project that the Bank supports. And as you may know our earlier set of policies had some sporadic, piecemeal requirements for consultations in 2 or 3 of the 10 safeguard policies, but not a uniform requirement. So, we believe that it is such an underlying and, in many ways, the most important aspect of the ESF, because it enables all voices to be heard, to come forward, and to influence project design and implementation.

To give each to this provision and this standard, each and every project not only prepares a draft, not only prepares the stakeholder engagement plan, but it is required to disclose and disseminate a draft before it is finalized, so that colleagues such as, you know, our friends in Kenya can say, if they find that it does not include appropriate or adequate mechanisms, or means, or platforms to reach and to get the voices of all stakeholders in, that can be mentioned by them in their comments and we often hear those comments that the plan is good, but it does not take into account the fact that many people are living in remote areas. So that they don't have access to technology, or they may need to travel two days to come to a place where you are organizing meetings.

And then, those plans are adjusted to make sure that meaningful consultations can be held. We would be very interested in a follow-up conversation to find out about any specific cases, where this may not have happened in a satisfactory manner. And in the spirit of learning, we will be very keen to know more about such situations, and to help ensure that we can address these going forward, and do a better job in supporting our clients of conducting proper stakeholder engagement.

One super important element of that is also safety, the ability to speak up and make voices heard, and for those to be taken into account in how projects are designed and implemented. And if for some reason, those issues are not taken into account or not taken on board, then there is closing up the loop which people go back to stakeholders and explain reasons why they may not have been taken on board. So, if engagement can't be safe and secure, it's not really meaningful stakeholder engagement.

So, what we are doing is that, first of all, the requirement for a stakeholder engagement plan is regardless of the context of the extent of to which, you know, one could say there is openness or not in civic

space. This is a uniform requirement for all projects the World Bank supports, and in all of its member countries. So, that's one.

We also have a special provision built in which emphasizes the need for safe, secure stakeholder engagement. And in fact, there are specific paragraphs that are not only included, but also widely disseminated. And during engagement, we lead in with those statements, or we have clients lead in with those statements that this is supposed to be safe, secure, space without any fear of retaliation or reprisals but by making it a requirement in the stakeholder engagement plan, and having our clients fully bind to that, and fully champion to that, that's the way in which we are trying to ensure that.

And Kate, you would also remember part of the work that you and other colleagues have done. We used to have it selectively in places where we felt there was some risk of there being some potential pressure, or retaliation, or it was flagged as an issue, but learning from the lessons that all of you, the work that all of you have done, we are making it a standard requirement in projects going forward that, even in context where it may not be a risk of such kind of hesitation or pressure, we should still have this out of excessive precaution and lead in, by clarifying in all engagements that this is without any prejudice, without any pressure, without any hesitation. People should be able to express their views.

And once again, we do have cases once in a while where there are allegations of reprisals, and we do have a very clear policy on that. And I'll turn to Ed in a minute, because he's been a big champion of making sure that we do everything we can to make sure that we are supporting our clients in creating those reprisals-free, risk-free, retaliation-free, safe environments. But we do have cases once in a while, and those are taken up promptly and we work with our clients and with the stakeholders who bring these allegations forward to help resolve those to the best of our abilities. So, with this, perhaps I can turn briefly to you, Ed. Thank you.

### **Ed Mountfield**

Thanks, Maninder, and thanks everyone for the comments and questions. I think Maninder has addressed a lot of points. Well, I think as Maninder says, it's a requirement to have stakeholder engagement plans in our projects, and please give us further details on any issues in Kenya, so we can follow up. Not every suggestion can be taken on board, but there should be feedback as Maninder says, and we want to look into that and learn more.

I think, on the question about whether we're providing funding to African civil society, so we don't generally make direct grants to civil society organizations as the World Bank, but our governments



often work with civil society partners, using World Bank financing, and we encourage this wherever appropriate. So, we use civil society organizations as third-party monitors. We also use them, from time to time, as service delivery partners. And it's very much depending on the circumstances of the project and the country. But of course, civil society more broadly is always a very key partner for us, including in monitoring the compliance with the environmental and social framework and alerting us when things go wrong.

In terms of the risk of reprisal, this is obviously a key concern. We make very clear to our borrowers that reprisal is not tolerated and at every circumstance where we receive reports of reprisal, we engage with the authorities to address this concern. I should also say that in our Grievance Redress Service (GRS), but also in the Inspection Panel, great pains are taken when we receive complaints and allegations to work with the complainants to ensure appropriate protection of their anonymity where necessary, and to make sure that we are very careful, not to put them in a position where there could be any reprisal in vulnerable circumstances. That is also something we pay a lot of attention to. Back to you, Uwi.

#### **Uwimana Basaninyenzi**

Great, fantastic. In the few minutes left in the program, I want to acknowledge that Honorable Minister Carlos Mesquita has now joined us. Thank you so much. We really appreciate it, and we know how busy you are that you were called away and your timing is actually perfect. Because the last question that we have is directed to Mozambique. So, if I may, Honorable Minister, I will go ahead and post that to you before we ask Ed to close this out.

The last question we have for the day is that, first of all, just thanking the Government of Mozambique for joining us today, and Vice Minister, for her words and the support. What the question is, how do you envision sort of addressing some of the soaring inequalities that we're seeing as we recover particularly from COVID-19, we've been witnessing how austerity measures are deepening inequalities as they widen the gap between the rich and the poorest, how do you support sort of local CSOs to play a role in that particular process. So that's the question that came to us from Romao Xavier. Thank you so much, and Honorable Minister, I'll turn it over to you.

Carlos Alberto Fortes Mesquita

Thank you very much. Good afternoon and good morning, everybody. First of all, my apologies for being late. I'm glad that I've been able to join you in these final minutes and thank you also for the World Bank

to organize this roundtable visual conversation about these very important issues, which indeed our preparation has been so far that I'm pretty sure that my team has been able to deliver to you the right comments and answers to many questions that it has been no longer the way during these discussions.

To go to the question that it has been mentioned, right now to me, I'd like to say that COVID-19 indeed was, and it still is an experience for all of us. We should see it like a coin with two sides. One side, which was the bedside. We saw the consequences about the disease. So one, but the other side was the opportunities that we have been able to land from all these difficulties in order to keep the economy moving forward and create conditions from everywhere.

I will not refer to rich people to poor people, for me, COVID-19 brought a very clear idea that doesn't matter how much money you have in your pocket, or it doesn't have it because at the end of the day, everyone on these categories, we lie in hospital, looking for oxygen, the problem is the same, no matter if you are rich or poor. Because everyone will be fighting for oxygen. That's it, as simple as that.

But indeed, we have been able to take different measures to keep the economy moving forward and to give some hope by giving opportunities to the micro and small enterprises to be established and giving them an opportunity to be part of the process on the economic chain that needs to recover the economy of the country, and as well as looking for the regional economy, where Mozambique, because of its geographical position, has a great role to play, also to provide competitive markets for the countries around Mozambique.

In that context, I should also appreciate the role that the World Bank is playing in all the projects that we are developing together, because we bring the ideas to the table, we discussed opportunities, we discussed where the beneficiaries have to be as far as the special development of the country's concern to give the opportunity or equal opportunity, if I may say so, all along the country, and probably also giving a little bit more possibilities in terms of financing, in terms of building capacity, knowledge and the resources for the ones that got the abilities but they don't have means to do it.

So, within this project, we give these sorts of conditions. If I may go, for instance, for the road projects, which is one of the issues within this ministry. We always try to give opportunity along the country where the road has been constructed by bringing to the project people that are living in these exact zones, instead of bringing from other zones, and in the detriment of the ones that you should give them a possibility. That sort of cooperation, collaboration that we have with the World Bank is very much appreciated by the government. And I think we should continue it that way, listen to each other and

then make the most correct decision to give the possibilities to everyone in the country.

The other thing is also on the housing projects. We are developing right now a project in north of the country. Also, the main denominator of this project is to bring equality. It will never be like that in a great sense of the sentence, but we are trying to build the best we can, and provide these opportunities to everyone. That's what we are doing as a government. And we appreciate very much all the support from our partners, and especially in this case, the World Bank. Thank you.

### **Uwimana Basaninyenzi**

Thank you so much. Excellent. Thank you so much, Honorable Minister. Really fascinating to hear about the experience of Mozambique addressing inequalities. Very difficult, challenging yet. You know, absolutely possible, as you pointed out. We've come to the end of the program. Thank you so much for everybody's participation. Thank you for the active chat that we have.

I will turn to Ed to give us closing remarks very soon. But before I do so, I do want to point out that Maninder has put his email address in the chat. If you have any specific projects that we were not able to fully discuss today, or if you have any questions about, please feel free to reach out to him, reach out to me. My name is Uwi Basaninyenzi, and it's been a pleasure to moderate the panel with you and I work closely with Maninder and happy to engage with you on any additional questions you may have. Thank you once again, everybody, for joining. Without further ado, I'll hand it over to Ed.

### **Ed Mountfield**

Well, thanks, Uwi, and really a warm thank you to everyone for being here and for participating in this insightful and frank discussion. Exchanges like these and concrete examples and feedback from the ground really help us to better understand each other's views, and to learn about some of the issues that we are collectively dealing within our projects and find more and better ways to work together.

So I'd like to thank each of our distinguished guests. Thank you, Honorable Minister, Vice Minister, and Direct General, and of course, Ida, our Country Director in Mozambique for taking time to join us and for sharing your invaluable insights and perspectives with us and thank you to our invaluable civil society partners for continuing to elevate the importance of these critical issues and helping ensure

that development interventions don't leave behind the poorest and most vulnerable people and communities.

Our regular and ongoing interactions with our clients, our partners and stakeholders have helped us become a better development partner and we will continue to rely on your continued engagement to help us further improve our work and so if there's a need as well as to protect the increasingly fragile environment that we live in. So, thanks once again to everyone for joining us today.