

Rapporteur's Report: World Bank's IDA21 CSO Consultation in Dhaka
June 10, 2024

The consultation was moderated by Mr. Mosharraf Zaidi, CEO and Founder of Tabadlab in Pakistan, with the support of Ms. Mehrin Mahbub, Senior External Affairs Officer of the World Bank in Dhaka.

Introductory Remarks

Initial remarks were made by Abdoulaye Seck, the World Bank's Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan. He asserted the importance of receiving IDA's support for borrowers at this moment, given the challenges being faced worldwide, particularly on ground in World Bank operations.

Successive remarks were made by Mr. Muhammad Rezaul Karim, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and intervening as a borrower representative. He stressed the importance of CSOs as a part of the broader coalition of IDA partners. Crucially, he encouraged CSOs to advocate for donor countries to step up their roles with this replenishment to fulfill the needs of the donor countries.

Presentations from World Bank Colleagues

Vice President for Operations Policy and Country Services, Ed Mountfield, briefed participants on the Bank's way forward as a "Better Bank". He revealed a variety of reforms the Bank was taking, including an all-new scorecard and a crisis preparedness and response toolkit. With regard to financing, the Bank has enhanced its capacity, through newer approaches to co-financing, the mobilization of guarantees, and other tools.

Mr. Enrique Blanco Armas, Manager for International Development Association (IDA) Strategy and Operations, elaborated on the upcoming IDA21 strategy and approach to participants. He stressed particularly on the Bank's new five focus areas, as well as its lenses to approach the focus areas. Recent feedback on the IDA was also highlighted, ranging from striking a balance between the continuity and evolution of its goals to the need to set a record level of financing this time.

Plenary Discussion

The discussion is best summarized across a few themes:

Expanded feedback on program areas and lenses: Participants particularly seized on the areas of gender, digital, and climate. With regard to gender, participants stressed the need to focus on gender not just as a lens but an issue of its own, that the Bank would need to pay special attention to in measuring. With regard to the digital divide, they noted the crucial divide that institutions themselves are facing, in trying to "catch up" with the rest of the world in their digital capabilities and the importance of the Bank's work in facilitating this catch-up. Finally, with regard to sustainability, CSOs stressed the importance of preparedness in preparing for projects surrounding climate change, as well as the integration of environmental safeguards in Bank projects.

Crucially, it was important to note how many of the program areas intersected: for example, CSOs cited how the digital divide itself was a gendered issue.

Local integration: One of the biggest requests that CSOs made was to be better integrated with the Bank's work. CSOs desire for the Bank to prioritize its work with local NGOs and stakeholders, as well as the local private sector, where the Bank could leverage its knowledge and earmark funds. At the local level, CSOs also stressed the importance of integrating the youth into the work of the Bank and engaging them on a deeper level.

Global integration: Globally, CSOs urged for the Bank to align its financing to leverage capital markets and to prevent duplication with other MDBs and funding sources – it is crucial to note that the Bank has made steps in this regard, as related by its staff, with the launch of a new co-financing platform to be used between MDBs.

Administration: Though the Bank has made crucial steps to simplify its processes in launching and implementing projects, CSOs continue to encourage the simplification of projects and the use of e-governance in projects. CSOs also suggested easing some of these processes in circumstances where recipients are particularly vulnerable, such as reducing roadblocks for women-led organizations or easing the performance-based criteria for fragile countries.

Accountability: Participants stressed the need for greater clarity on accountability measures the World Bank has planned on reforming: particularly on what changes have come to its redressal mechanisms and the safeguards it has implemented. In particular, participants wanted to understand whether the Bank was measuring any cases where its projects may have harmed recipients than solely benefited.

A broad question that many participants had was how they could perceive the Bank translating its claims and goals into impact on the ground. In order to answer this, several participants asserted the need to hold the intermediary partner – government – accountable, or in cases where this is a challenge, to develop ways for the Bank to work with people directly on ground.

Closing Remarks

Closing remarks were made by Mr. Tauquir Shah, World Bank Group Executive Director and IDA Deputy from Pakistan. Mr. Shah thanked participants for their intervention, setting it in the context of subsequent IDA Forums to take place until the final replenishment meeting in Korea in early December. He concluded by saying: "WBG represents multilateralism at its best – and IDA is its flagship – we want IDA 21 to provide 21st century solutions to 21st century challenges."