# Citizens at the Center: A Strategic Review of Good Practices and Lessons Learned for Renewal of World Bank Support for Citizen Engagement and Social Accountability

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The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author and do not represent the views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent.

# Abbreviations

ABCD: Assets-Based Community Development
ACReSAL: Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes
ARIS: Community Development and Investment Agency (Kyrgyzstan)
ASA: Advisory Services and Analytics
BBL: Brown Bag Lunch
BF: Beneficiary Feedback
BFI: Beneficiary Feedback Indicator
BoT: Board of Trustees
BRT: Bus Rapid Transit
CBO: Community-Based Organization
CCDR: Country Climate and Development Report
CCIA: Climate Change Institutional Assessment
CDD: Community-Driven Development
CDF: Comprehensive Development Framework
CE: Citizen Engagement
CESA: Citizen Engagement and Social Accountability
CLR: Completion and Learning Reviews
CMU: Country Management Unit
CPF: Country Partnership Frameworks
CPS: Country Partnership Strategy
CS: Civil Society
CSC: Corporate Scorecard
CSO: Civil Society Organization
DPF: Development Policy Financing
DPL: Development Policy Loan
EAP: East Asia and the Pacific
EBRD: European Bank for Construction and Development
ECA: Eastern Europe and Central Asia
EITI: Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ENB: Environment, Natural Resources, and Blue Economy Global Practice
ESF: Environmental and Social Framework
ESS: Environmental and Social Standard
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
FY: Fiscal Year
GAC: Governance and Anticorruption
GEMS: Geo-Enabling initiative for Monitoring and Supervision
GM: Grievance Mechanism
GP: Global Practice
GPSA: Global Partnership for Social Accountability
GSG: Global Solutions Group
HEAL: Health Enhancement and Lifesaving
IADB: Inter-American Development Bank
ICNL: The International Center for Non-Profit Law
ICR: Implementation Completion and Results Report
ICT: Information and Communication Technology
IDA: International Development Association
IDB: Inter-American Development Bank
IDS: Institute of Development Studies (Sussex University)
IEG: Independent Evaluation Group
IFI: International Financial Institution
IPF: Investment Project Financing

ISAF: Implementation of the Social Accountability Framework
ISR: Implementation Status and Results Report
JSDF: Japan Social Development Fund
LCR: Latin America and Caribbean Region
MAR: Management Action Record
M&E: Monitoring & Evaluation
MENA: Middle East and North Africa
MoE: Ministry of Education
NECTAR: Nagaland Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources
NGO: Nongovernmental Organization
NGOC: NGO and Civil Society Center (ADB)
OAG: Office of the Auditor General (Kenya)
ODI: Overseas Development Institute
OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OGP: Open Government Partnership
PAD: Project Appraisal Document
PEA: Poverty and Equity Assessment
PFM: Public Financial Management
PFR: Public Finance Review
PforR/P4R: Program-for-Results Financing
PIU: Project Implementation Unit
PLR: Performance Learning Review
PME: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
POM: Project/Program Operational Manual
PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RRA: Risk & Resilience Assessment
RSB: Roma Sounding Board
SA: Social Accountability
SAR: South Asia Region
SCD: Systematic Country Diagnostic
SEP: Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SNA: Sub-National Administration
SNDD: Subnational Democratic Development
SPF: State and Peace-Building Fund
SSERP: Sector Support for Education Reform Project*
SSI: Social Sustainability and Inclusion
TOR: Terms of Reference
TTL: Task Team Leader
UN: United Nations
WACA: West Africa Coastal Areas
WB: World Bank
WBG: World Bank Group
WDR: World Development Report
WHO: World Health Organization

## Glossary of Key Concepts and Terms

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| ***Citizen engagement*** refers to the two-way interaction between citizens and the state that gives citizens a stake in decision-making with the objective of improving development outcomes. It allows for the fulfillment of citizen rights (and responsibilities) to access information, voice views, participate in public life, influence decisions that affect their lives, and seek accountability.<br>***Social Accountability*** refers to the broad range of actions and mechanisms (beyond voting) that can empower citizens to hold the state (and other powerholders) to account and efforts by civil society, media and state actors to support these. Social accountability approaches, therefore, represent a subset of citizen engagement where the objective of the engagement is to exact accountability. They seek to complement and reinforce, not replace, conventional (political, fiscal, administrative, legal) accountability mechanisms.<br>*For Citizen Engagement and Social Accountability (CESA) there are multiple entry points throughout the public governance cycle. CESA practices can be initiated by state or non-state actors, undertaken independently or jointly, and may be informal or institutionalized. CESA practices are diverse, but common elements include accessing or generating information and evidence, strengthening citizen voice, and direct dialogue/negotiation with state actors. |
| According to the CE Strategic Framework and the Environmental Stakeholder Framework (ESF), the definitions of citizens, beneficiaries, and stakeholders are as follows.<br>***Citizens***: ultimate client of government, development institutions, and private sector interventions in a country. The term citizen is understood in the broad sense of referring to all people in a society or country in an inclusive and non-discriminatory way.<br>***Beneficiaries***: the subset of citizens directly targeted by and expected to benefit from a WB-supported project or program. They can include individuals, groups, associations, or organizations, and may (or may not) belong to the public or private sectors and may represent a variety of interests.<br>***Stakeholders***: people who will be informed and consulted about the project including individuals, groups, or communities that (i) are affected or likely to be affected by the project (project-affected parties) and (ii) may have an interest in the project (other interested parties). |
| ***Citizen charter*** is a document that informs citizens about the service entitlements they have as users of a public service; the standards they can expect for a service (timeframe and quality); remedies available for non-adherence to standards; and the procedures, costs, and charges of a service. The charters entitle users to an explanation (and in some cases compensation) if the standards are not met. |
| ***Citizen report card*** is an assessment of public services by the users (citizens) through client feedback surveys. It goes beyond data collection to being an instrument for exacting public accountability through extensive media coverage and civil society advocacy that accompanies the process. |
| ***Citizen satisfaction surveys*** provide a quantitative assessment of government performance and service delivery based on citizens' experience. Depending on the objective, the surveys can collect data on a variety of topics ranging from perceptions of performance of service delivery and elected officials to desires for new capital projects and services |
| ***Citizen/user membership*** in decision-making bodies is a way to ensure accountability by allowing people who can reflect users' interests to sit on committees that make decisions about project activities under implementation (project-level arrangement) or utility boards (sector-level arrangement). |
| ***Citizens' juries*** are a group of selected members of a community that make recommendations or action participatory instrument to supplement conventional democratic processes. |
| ***Community contracting*** is when community groups are contracted for the provision of services, or when community groups contract service providers or the construction of infrastructure. |
| ***Community management*** is when services are fully managed or owned by service users or communities. Consumers own the service directly (each customer owns a share) when they form cooperatives. |
| ***Community monitoring*** is a system of measuring, recording, collecting, and analyzing information; and communicating and acting on that information to improve performance. It holds government |

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| institutions accountable, provides ongoing feedback, shares control over M&E, engages in identifying and/or taking corrective actions, and seeks to facilitate dialogue between citizens and project authorities. |
| ***Community oversight*** is the monitoring of publicly funded construction projects by citizens, community-based and/or civil society organizations, participating directly or indirectly in exacting accountability. It applies across all stages of the project cycle although the focus is on the construction phase. |
| ***Community scorecard*** is a community-based monitoring tool that assesses services, projects, and government performance by analyzing qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions with the community. It usually includes interface meetings between service providers and users to formulate an action plan to address any identified shortcomings and make improvements. |
| ***Consultation***, as distinct from dialogue, is a more structured exchange in which the convener commits to "active listening" and to carefully consider the comments, ideas, and recommendations received. Good practice consultations provide feedback on what was heard, and what was or was not incorporated and why to ensure that consultations contribute to improved policies and programs. |
| ***Focus group discussions*** are usually organized with specific goals, structures, time frames, and procedures. Focus groups are composed of a small number of stakeholders to discuss project impacts and concerns and consult in an informal setting. They are designed to gauge the response to the project's proposed actions and to gain a detailed understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, values, and concerns |
| ***Grievance mechanism*** (or complaints-handling mechanism) is a system by which queries or clarifications about the project are responded to, problems with implementation are resolved, and complaints and grievances are addressed efficiently and effectively. |
| ***Independent budget analysis*** is a process where civil society stakeholders research, explain, monitor, and disseminate information about public expenditures and investments to influence the allocation of public funds through the budget. |
| ***Participatory budgeting*** is a process through which citizens participate directly in budget formulation, decision-making, and monitoring of budget execution. It creates a channel for citizens to give voice to their budget priorities. |
| ***Participatory physical audit*** refers to community members taking part in the physical inspection of project sites, especially when there are not enough professional auditors to inspect all facilities. Citizens measure the quantity and quality of construction materials, infrastructure, and facilities. |
| ***Participatory planning*** convenes a broad base of key stakeholders, on an iterative basis, to generate a diagnosis of the existing situation and develop appropriate strategies to solve jointly identified problems. Project components, objectives, and strategies are designed in collaboration with stakeholders. |
| ***Procurement monitoring*** refers to independent, third-party monitoring of procurement activities by citizens, communities, or civil society organizations to ensure there are no leakages or violation of procurement rules. |
| ***Public Expenditure Tracking*** involves citizen groups tracing the flow of public resources for the provision of public goods or services from origin to destination. It can help to detect bottlenecks, inefficiencies, or corruption. |
| ***Public hearings*** are formal community-level meetings where local officials and citizens have the opportunity to exchange information and opinions on community affairs. Public hearings are often one element in a social audit initiative. |
| ***Public reporting of expenditures*** refers to the public disclosure and dissemination of information about government expenditures to enable citizens to hold government accountable for their expenditures. |
| ***Social audit*** is a monitoring process through which organizational or project information is collected, analyzed, and shared publicly in a participatory fashion. Community members conduct investigative work at the end of which findings are shared and discussed publicly. |
| ***User management committees*** refer to consumer groups taking on long-term management roles to initiate, implement, operate, and maintain services. User management committees are for increasing participation as much as they are for accountability and financial controls. |

# Executive Summary

*Abstract: The World Bank has largely succeeded in meeting the corporate requirements outlined in its 2014 Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement, but those minimal requirements do not represent an adequate benchmark for meaningful and impactful citizen engagement and social accountability (CESA). To more fully realize the benefits of CESA, critical for the Bank's mission to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity on a livable planet, a stronger, more strategic, systems-oriented and partnership-based approach to CESA is required. To renew and revitalize its CESA agenda, in alignment with the strategic directions of the evolution roadmap and based on lessons learned to date, this Review recommends that the World Bank take steps to: 1) improve the quality and outcomes of project-level CESA; 2) strengthen country systems for CESA; 3) support enabling conditions for CESA; and 4) ensure an institutional support system for CESA that is fit-for-purpose. Priority actions to implement these entry points include: (i) systematizing the implementation and monitoring of country-level CESA assessments and action plans; (ii) strengthening in-country multistakeholder platforms, and partnerships with and support for civil society actors; (iii) supporting the design and implementation of high quality, inclusive, "vertically-integrated" CESA in priority sectors; and, (iv) increasing resources for the effective implementation of the Bank's CESA agenda.*

## Introduction

The World Bank has largely succeeded in meeting the corporate requirements outlined in its 2014 Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement, but those minimal requirements do not represent an adequate benchmark for **meaningful and impactful citizen engagement and social accountability** (CESA). To more fully realize the benefits of CESA, critical for the Bank's mission to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity on a livable planet, **a stronger, more strategic, systems-oriented and partnership-based approach to CESA** is required.

The Bank's **evolution roadmap** calls for "enhanced civil society engagement" and "enhanced CESA", acknowledging that partnerships with civil society are "critical to ensuring development impact" and that enhanced CESA in World Bank work will "enhance accountability and governance". Based on a stocktake of experiences and lessons learned to date, this review identifies four key challenges to be addressed in renewing and revitalizing the World Bank's CESA agenda, aligned with the strategic directions of the evolution roadmap. These include: (i) improving the quality and outcomes of **project-level CESA**; (ii) strengthening **country systems for CESA**; (iii) supporting **enabling conditions for CESA**; and (iv) ensuring a **fit-for-purpose institutional support system for CESA**. The Review lays out **entry points** to be considered to address each of these challenges. It also highlights **priority actions** that have been collated taking into account anticipated impact and resource requirements.

By clarifying the complementary and mutually reinforcing nature of the **ESF (ESS10)** and **CESA** agendas and by strengthening alignment of **GPSA** successor-financed activities with the Bank portfolio, the proposed way forward brings **greater coherence** and **synergy** to the implementation of these four important and inter-related areas of work, providing a solid foundation for more **strategic, meaningful, and impactful delivery of development outcomes**.

### Strategic Objective #1 - Improve the quality and outcomes of project-level CESA

*Why is this important?*

- Engaging citizens and CSOs in a meaningful way in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of WB-supported projects is critical to achieving **effective development results**.
- Bottom-up approaches that engage citizens meaningfully at the community/local level **provide the foundation** upon which **higher-level "vertically integrated" engagement mechanisms** can be developed.

*Key findings*

While Bank project teams have made great strides in consulting with citizens to collect feedback, the use of approaches that give citizens a meaningful say in **decision-making** remains limited. **Social accountability** approaches, which have particularly strong potential to empower citizens, fight corruption and contribute to development effectiveness by engaging citizens/CSOs in monitoring and oversight, remain underutilized and and a lack of adequate **stakeholder** and **political economy/power analysis** limits the ability of WB-supported projects to understand and address power differentials between different groups of stakeholders. A failure to allocate project funds for CESA purposes has resulted in a **significant design to implementation gap,** and a **deficit of adequate CESA-oriented human resources** and **capacity/skills** within WB project teams and PIUs further constrains the implementation of planned CESA activities. While progress has been made in **leveraging ESF-CESA synergies**, more work is needed to ensure a **coherent, client-focused and genuinely inclusive approach** and to improve the **quality, tracking and reporting of monitoring indicators**. Finally, **collaboration with CSOs** as social mobilizers/organizers, implementing partners, facilitators and independent monitors is critical to achieving high quality CESA, but is hampered by **cumbersome bureaucratic procedures** and **lack of financing**.

## Strategic Objective #2 - Strengthen country systems for CESA

*Why is this important?*

- Approaches that strengthen country systems (both state and non-state) for CESA are more likely to yield **scalable and sustainable development results**.
- CESA at this level can also contribute to broader goals such as **enhanced citizen-state relations** and more **responsive and accountable governance.**
- The nature of WB development support (which spans multiple sectors, stakeholders, levels of government and funding cycles) makes it **uniquely well-placed** to encourage and support a **holistic, systems-oriented approach to CESA**.

*Key findings*

Promising examples exist of WB-funded projects that support embedded CESA practices, but much more could be done to support **"vertically integrated" CESA systems** from local to national level, including through the judicious use of **digital technologies**. Due to the current focus on IPF-related corporate requirements, **country-level, systems-oriented CESA** has received less attention at the Bank. As a result, CESA has not yet been fully or effectively integrated into the Bank's **country engagement model** and there is strong, and largely untapped, potential to make use of **CPF products**, as well as lending instruments like **P4Rs** and **DPF** to support systems-level CESA. **Strengthening the CESA orientation and capacities of existing country systems/institutions** (especially those with an accountability/oversight mandate) can be a particularly strategic and effective way to achieve CESA goals. While the Bank continues to support CESA as a core practice across its operations, it should pay **specific attention to areas of priority importance where CESA is likely to have greatest strategic impact** (e.g., climate action, anticorruption, fragility and conflict) and use its unique convening power to support **inclusive multi-stakeholder CESA platforms and mechanisms** at the country/portfolio/sector level in areas of priority importance.

## Strategic Objective #3 - Support enabling conditions for CESA

*Why is this important?*

- Understanding and addressing issues of civic space is **critical for the World Bank's ability to meet its development goals**.
- The Bank's high-level commitments to transparent, accountable and participatory development and to meaningful engagement with citizens and CSOs are all **directed related to and influenced by civic space**.
- The Bank has acknowledged **shrinking civic space** over the past decade (noting that this "narrows the policy space" and "limits the channels available to citizens to engage"), however, there is **no clear operational guidance** on how to respond to this challenge.
- Understanding the context in which CESA is undertaken is key to the **successful design and implementation of CESA practices.**
- A failure to adequately understand the context in which engagement takes place can put **citizens, civil society and project-affected communities at risk**.

*Key findings*

The Bank's approach to CESA needs to be **better informed by context analysis** and **supportive of enabling conditions**. With governments in many countries facing a crisis of legitimacy and trust, efforts to enhance civic space and CESA can serve to **strengthen relationships between citizens and the state, build trust** and **renew the social contract**, especially in **fragile and conflict-affected contexts.** However, a **lack of political will and capacity to engage** (on the part of both state actors and citizen/CSOs) pose a challenge in many country contexts and, despite the Bank's commitment to "not tolerate reprisals and retaliation against those who share their views about Bank-financed projects", the institution has been criticized by some for what is seen as an **inadequate response to reprisals** in some cases. **Governance-oriented DPF** is a particularly **well-suited** and currently **underutilized instrument** for supporting an enabling (legal, policy and institutional) environment for CESA and civil society, and efforts to address systems-level issues and support enabling conditions for CESA will benefit from a **stronger focus on CESA within the Governance GP**.

## Strategic Objective #4 - Ensure a fit-for-purpose institutional support system for CESA

*Why is this important?*

- The Bank's ability to fulfill its CESA commitments, and to implement the Entry Points of IEG's 2018 evaluation and this review, are dependent upon **a fit-for-purpose institutional support system.**
- Ensuring adequate institutional support will allow the Bank to reap the **untapped benefits** of CESA.
- The Bank's failure to adequately resource its CESA commitments runs the **risk of reputational damage**.
- Given **growing demand for CESA support**, it's important for the Bank to bolster its capacity to respond.

*Key findings*

Despite strong corporate commitments, CESA remains a largely **peripheral and poorly funded mandate** at the Bank. Current staffing, skills and resources for mainstreaming CESA across the Bank are **not fit-for-purpose**. The Bank's CESA GSG and network of CE Focal Points play a critical role but **lack time and resources to support the operationalization of the approach** beyond the minimal requirements. The

Bank's **current skills set is not optimal** to effectively implement its CESA agenda. Specialized expertise in the fields of participatory governance, political economy/power analysis, citizen-state relations, civil society and social accountability is largely lacking. The current system of monitoring and reporting does **not incentivize high quality** CESA. The Bank has conducted only a relatively small number of **studies of CESA impact**. Given the state of implementation of the agenda, important learning could be gleaned from more systematic impact evaluation. There is a **deficit of effective knowledge management** in relation to CESA at the WB.

Considering these findings, the review proposes 21 entry points to meet the identified strategic objectives. These involve, among others: updating and expanding operational guidance on CESA, strengthening country engagement, increasing learning and capacity development opportunities, and enhancing funding for CESA. Based on an assessment of the anticipated impact and required resources of these entry points (summarized in the table below), and guided by the strategic directions of the evolution roadmap, proposed priority actions to renew the Bank's CESA agenda are to:

1) **Systematize the implementation and monitoring of country-level CESA assessments and action plans;**
2) **Strengthen in-country multistakeholder platforms, and partnerships with and support for civil society actors;**
3) **Support the design and implementation of intensified, systems-level CESA in sectors/ issue areas deemed as priorities by in-country actors; and,**
4) **Increase resources for the effective implementation of the Bank's CESA agenda.**

## Conclusions

In the current global context, **effective CESA is more important than ever** to respond to multiple crises and achieve development effectiveness and efficiency. Despite high-level corporate commitments to CESA, **the Bank's CESA agenda has remained largely peripheral, projectized and under-funded.** To achieve its twin goals of *ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity on a livable planet,* ***the Bank must actively engage the people it exists to serve****, not as project "beneficiaries" but as primary stakeholders, who are actively engaged in development decisions and actions and to whom both the Bank and governments are ultimately accountable.* Since 2014, the concepts of citizen engagement and social accountability have gained broad-based recognition across the Bank; another **shift in mindset** is required to move the agenda **from the periphery to the center** of the Bank's work and to **position it as a leader in this field**. The Bank's current **evolution process** represents an important opportunity for the institution to reposition CESA, not only as essential at the project level, but as core to the Bank's role as a global development institution. The entry points and priority actions put forward in this review propose practical pathways towards a renewed "CESA 2.0" that integrates principles of **inclusive, systems-level engagement and accountability** across all aspects of Bank support for global development, in line with the strategic directions of the evolution roadmap.