An Introduction to

World Bank Group Country Partnership Frameworks

The World Bank Group (“WBG” or “the Bank”) announced in 2014 that it is changing its Country Engagement approach, in line with the 2013 WBG Corporate Strategy that aims to streamline operations across the institution (public and private sector) and focus all operations moving forward on two goals of reducing absolute poverty and boosting shared prosperity. The new approach is scheduled to take effect in July 2014. This primer seeks to give a basic understanding of the new approach, and outline how citizens in countries can play a role in setting the WBG’s agenda in their country. This newly proposed approach has not yet been finalized and is up for discussion at the Bank’s Board on May 27, 2014. The information provided in this primer is based on the latest documents disseminated by the Bank on this issue and will be updated based on any new available information.

1. What is a Country Partnership Framework?

The Country Partnership Framework (CPF) will replace the Country Assistance/Partnership Strategy (CAS/CPS) and is a four-to-six year strategy that the World Bank Group develops for a country to guide its operational activities in that country. The CPF should focus on the Bank’s added value in that country and is produced in close coordination with the Bank’s counterpart in government (usually the Ministry of Planning/International Corporation, or Ministry of Finance). All projects and programs that the Bank finances within the time frame of this strategy must be aligned with it. The CPF will be “built around a results framework that identifies the objectives that the WBG activities are expected to help the country achieve, the results chain that links the objectives to the country’s development goals, and indicators of progress. It will also lay out how the objectives will contribute to the Bank’s twin goals”\(^1\) of reducing absolute poverty and boosting shared prosperity “in a sustainable manner.”

In terms of objectives, the Bank may identify in the CPF specific sectors that it plans to focus programming on, for example agriculture or energy, or it may identify broader objectives such as enhancing service delivery. In the past, CASs and CPSs have been quite broad in their objectives and the Bank states that it will move towards a more selective approach with the CPF.

2. What is the process for developing a CPF?

According to the Bank’s new approach, the Bank will first gather and develop background materials that will serve as a basis and rationale for the programmatic priorities in the CPF. The main component of this background material will be a Systemic Country Diagnostic (SCD), which should provide analysis and grounding for determining the opportunities and constraints to poverty alleviation in a country. The SCD along with the government’s national development plan will then be used to begin a discussion with the government about priority areas for the country and where the Bank’s added value could be. The Bank will also look to see what other donors are planning in the country, and should consult with various stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, to hear inputs about what the CPF should include.

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In sum, key inputs to the CPF include: the SCD; the government’s development plan; other donors’ plans; and stakeholder consultations.

After a final draft of the CPF is completed by the World Bank country team and has been signed off on by the Regional Vice President and the Managing Director, it will then be sent to the Bank’s Board of Directors for discussion. If your government has given the Bank “simultaneous disclosure” approval, the final draft of the CPF will be disclosed to the public at the same time it is sent to the Board. Otherwise it will be disclosed after the Board discussion.

After the Board date, the CPF will come into effect, and the Bank can start negotiating, designing, and financing projects to invest in at the country level as well as provide technical assistance to the government and private sector. The Bank will periodically conduct Performance and Learning Reviews (PLRs) to assess how the CPF is being implemented, and the CPF will be updated every two years accordingly. At the end of the CPF period (between 4-6 years), the Bank will produce a Completion and Learning Report (CLR), which assesses the results of the CPF and should be used to feed into the next CPF.

3. **What is the Systemic Country Diagnostic?**

The SCD is a document that the Bank will produce which aims to identify the key constraints and opportunities for poverty alleviation in a country and which will be used as an input towards the development of the CPF. It will not look specifically at the Bank’s work in a country but rather take a broader perspective of the country. The depth and scope of SCDs will vary from country to country depending on availability of data, but all SCDs will “identify a clear set of priority focus areas that, from the Bank’s perspective, “the country should address in order to accelerate progress toward [reducing absolute poverty and boosting shared prosperity] in a sustainable way.”

4. **What happens when the WBG is unable to predict the political or economic context of my country in the medium or long term? How would they go about developing a strategy?**

In these cases, the Bank will produce a Country Engagement Note (CEN). This is a temporary version of a CPF and is produced when the WBG “is re-engaging after a long absence in countries affected by conflict, in countries where there is no well-defined government program, or in other situations that prevent the development of a medium-term program.” The CEN will usually be a one-to-two year strategy and does not require an SCD to underpin it nor will it have a fully developed results framework.

5. **Does the CPF guide the Bank’s operations with the public sector only?**

No. The CPF guides all the World Bank Group’s operations in the country including its investments with the private sector. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) – the private sector arms of the WBG – should also only approve operations that are consistent with the objectives set out in the CPF.

6. **Does the Bank have to consult with civil society when preparing the CPF and associated documents?**

According to the current proposed approach, the Bank is not mandated to consult with civil society at the different stages of CPF preparation. However, based on the experience with the CAS/CPS, the
country offices usually do consult to some extent with CSOs and other stakeholders for example from the private sector. There is currently no requirement for how the Bank should be consulting with these stakeholders although there are Consultation Guidelines which Bank staff can choose to follow or not. The Bank is also now developing a strategy for engaging citizens that might include clearer standards but none of this will be mandatory.

7. Why should civil society care about the CPF?

By policy, the World Bank Group requests that the borrower governments or private companies consult with communities and civil society when developing high-risk projects. However, civil society is not systematically consulted at other important decision-making points. If we push for meaningful engagement at the strategy level, CSOs will have the opportunity to make their voices heard about what kinds of investments they would like to see the Bank financing and which sectors should be focused on as well as what key considerations should be taken into account that the Bank might not know about. If CSOs and communities are able to provide input at the CPF level, starting with the SCD, there is a stronger possibility that the Bank will focus on activities that have stronger and more positive development outcomes and that benefits are distributed more equitably.

8. How can CSOs in a country be involved?

There are a few ways that civil society can be involved.

- Provide input to the World Bank about the new Country Engagement Approach.
- Until the Bank develops a policy and clear standards to engage CSOs and citizens in developing its country strategy, you can still make your voices heard and officially request from the Bank to be consulted when the Bank is developing a CPF in your country.
- Find out more information about where the Bank is in developing a CPF for your country. To find contact information for your local World Bank office, go to www.worldbank.org/YourCountyName and the contact information will be at the left. If you then click on “Overview” also at the left, and you will find information about this country’s CAS/CPS/CPF under the “Strategy” tab.
- Visit the Bank’s consultations page at consultations.worldbank.org to see if it is holding consultations for any strategy, policy or project in your country.
- Find out which projects the Bank is financing in your country and become involved in monitoring how the Bank is implementing its CPF. This is useful not only to see if results are actually being achieved on the ground but also for the Bank to hear citizens’ feedback on its portfolio. It is also important in case there are negative impacts of a project that ought to be addressed.
  - To find out which projects are being financed in the public sector: Go to your country page which is www.worldbank.org/[your country name]. Click on Projects and Programs at the left. In the Projects and Programs page click on “View All Projects” under the search box.
  - To find out which projects are being financed in the private sector: Go to www.ifc.org and under the “Projects” tab click on “Disclosed Projects”. On the next page, click on “Search Projects” in the left-hand column. In the search function, choose your country from the drop-down list and make selections in any other categories you are interested in or simply leave them blank. Click Search.