



I. Introduction

“Agenda 2030 is clear on the need to engage civil society organizations (CSOs) in implementing and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. Given their capacity to bring the voices of those on the frontlines of poverty, inequality, and vulnerability into development processes, CSOs have a particular role to play in ensuring no one is left behind.”

—OECD¹

1. **Context.** The International Development Association ([IDA](#)) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development ([IBRD](#)) (referred to collectively as the World Bank² or the Bank in this report) are the largest providers of multilateral finance to developing countries. They are poised for a historic expansion of their mission and financing as called for in the World Bank Group (WBG) [Evolution paper](#) and the [G20 Independent Experts Group report on Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks \(MDBs\)](#).³ The Evolution paper endorsed by the Bank’s shareholders promises to “deepen partnership with civil society,” but the strategy and action plan for the deepening have yet to be worked out. In this context, this report presents analyses and recommendations for IDA and IBRD consideration for deepening partnerships with civil society (citizens and CSOs) in IDA- and IBRD-supported operations at the country level.

1 OECD, *The Development Dimension: Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), 3. <https://doi.org/10.1787/51eb6df1-en>.

2 The [International Development Association](#) (IDA) provides low-interest loans and grants to the world’s 74 poorest countries, while the [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#) (IBRD) focuses on middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries. Both follow the same operational policies and are part of the [World Bank Group](#) (WBG). The Group also includes the [International Finance Corporation](#) (IFC), the [Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency](#) (MIGA), and the [International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes](#) (ICSID).

3 G20-IEG, [Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks: The Triple Agenda](#) vol. 1 and 2 (Independent Experts Group, 2023). [MDBs covered by the G20 Independent Expert Group report](#) include the following: African Development Bank, African Development Fund, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, Central American Bank for Economic Integration, Council of Europe Development Bank, Development Bank of Latin America, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, IDB Invest, Inter-American Development Bank, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Development Association, International Finance Corporation, International Investment Bank, Islamic Development Bank, New Development Bank, North American Development Bank.

- 2. Background, scope, methodology, and consultations.** The report was initiated following the [call](#) in mid-2021 by the CSO members of the [Steering Committee](#) for the 75-country [Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP) for expanded roles and financing for CSOs in the IDA. The Terms of Reference for this report (annex 1) posed the question: *“How the World Bank can finance its commitment to citizen and stakeholder engagement in ways that ensure CSOs have the resources they need to facilitate such engagement, including for independent monitoring of IDA operations.”*

The report was prepared by the [Partnership for Transparency Fund](#) (PTF) advisers with partial financial support from the [Foundation to Promote Open Society](#) (FPOS). Its scope was expanded to cover the [WBG Evolution](#) initiated in December 2022. The recommendations apply to the IDA and IBRD as both are governed by the same set of operational policies. The report is limited to CSO engagement in Bank activities at the country level; engagement at the regional and global levels is important but beyond the scope of this report. The report is based on a review of documents/studies (by the Bank and others) and interactions with stakeholders (i.e., the IDA team, the Bank’s Executive Board and staff, the OGP Steering Committee, and the World Bank’s [Expert Advisory Council for Citizen Engagement](#)).

A [consultation](#) draft of the report was launched at an [event](#) at the Center for Global Development in December 2022, and five webinars were organized during January–June 2023 to consult CSOs in the global south. This final report takes into account the feedback received during the consultations.

- 3. The target audiences for the report include IDA/IBRD shareholders and management and CSOs interested in these institutions’ work and effectiveness.** The report is being shared with the Bank’s management and Board of Executive Directors as they work on the Bank’s Evolution, IDA20 Mid-Term Review, and IDA21 Replenishment in 2023–24. The report would also interest foundations/international NGOs seeking to leverage their contributions to the trust funds and global partnerships at the Bank to influence civil society engagement in the IDA/IBRD portfolio, the localization agenda,⁴ and the protection and expansion of civic space.
- 4. The deepening partnerships with civil society need to be responsive to stakeholder calls.** Over 1,000 stakeholders from around the world provided comments during the consultations on the April 2023 draft of the Evolution paper. One of the key feedback items was that the Bank should seek *“greater engagement with civil society; more emphasis on transparency and accountability; improving governance and anti-corruption measures; and improving World Bank agility and efficiency.”*⁵

⁴ Localization refers to country ownership and leadership in the design and implementation of development policies and programs by expanding local players’ participation and control. For a discussion of the localization agenda and issues, please see the following: [“DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance”](#) (OECD Legal Instruments, 2021); [Localization and Civic Space](#) (Washington, DC: International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, ND); [Local Capacity Strengthening Policy](#) (USAID from the American People, 2022).

⁵ World Bank, [Ending Poverty](#).

I. Introduction

The [G20 Independent Experts Group report on Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks \(MDBs\)](#) includes “engage local communities and civil societies” among the five priority areas for converting operational models of MDBs (including the World Bank) and states that “engaging local communities and civil society in advocacy, monitoring and problem-solving, through transparent and publicly available project data, can mitigate risks of waste and misuse of public funds.”⁶

On September 1, 2023, the civil society members of the OGP, in close coordination with PTF, issued a [statement](#) calling upon the Bank “to rethink, expand, and finance the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Bank’s work, including through the proposed expansion of financing by [IDA](#) and the [IBRD](#).” This statement has been endorsed by more than 200 CSOs around the world.

The International Rescue Committee has proposed greater use of partnerships with civil society in fragile and conflict situations.

- 5. There is positive evaluative evidence for the Bank that citizen and civil society engagement improves development effectiveness.** This evidence has been comprehensively reviewed by the World Bank⁷ and others over the years, and a summary of reviews is included in annex 2. The WBG’s [evaluation of the citizen engagement framework](#) found that “engaging citizens in development operations can have a tangible impact on the quality of services and on development outcomes. Evidence from this evaluation’s case studies agrees with the literature that if the conditions of high-quality design and implementation are met, and activities are well-embedded in the local context, impact on development outcomes is more likely (and vice versa).”⁸ The Bank’s “[Citizen Engagement](#)” webpage states: “Growing evidence suggests that, under the right conditions, meaningful forms of citizen engagement and social accountability (CESA) can result in better governance, citizen empowerment, more positive and constructive citizen-state relations, strengthened public service delivery, and, ultimately, enhanced development effectiveness and well-being.”

Key findings from evidence-based reviews show that civil society (citizens and CSOs) engagement in development programs and policies has produced one or more of the following outcomes when the context is supportive and engagement is financially supported and sustained:

6 G20-IEG, [Strengthening MDBs](#), vol. 2: 28, 30.

7 The World Bank has assessed evidence on CE/CSE development on at least five occasions during the past two decades: (a) the [World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People](#); (b) in 2012 as part of [Board Paper #67581](#) establishing the GPSA; (c) in 2014 as part of the [Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement report](#); (d) IEG, as part of its [evaluation of the CE mainstreaming strategy](#), did a literature review; and (e) the [2017 World Development Report on governance and law](#) examined the role of citizens in improving governance. PTF, in 2019, reviewed over 30 studies and meta-studies that synthesize hundreds of other studies, including the nearly 250 projects PTF has supported around the world. The findings are discussed in chapter 3 of the PTF report and summarized in annex 1. Vinay Bhargava et al., [Expanding Civil Society Contributions to the Governance Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals and International Financial Institutions](#) (Partnership for Transparency Fund, 2019).

8 Independent Evaluation Group, [Engaging Citizens for Better Development Results: An Independent Evaluation](#) (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2018). This evaluation includes both a literature review and country case studies.

I. Introduction

- a. Increased citizen awareness, knowledge, and understanding of their rights and responsibilities
- b. Improved implementation through constructive engagement with authorities
- c. Increased access, broadened inclusion, and community participation in basic services
- d. Improved grievance redress
- e. Improved quality of services and reduced waste and corruption
- f. Increased government responsiveness to community needs
- g. Enhanced accountability and trust in the state

6. **The Bank’s recent initiatives to update citizen and stakeholder engagement frameworks and deepen partnerships with civil society are welcome, but details remain to be determined.** While preparing this report, Bank management and staff acknowledged the need to update the [2014 Citizen Engagement Framework](#) and launched a strategic review in mid-2022. The September 2023 version of the [Evolution](#) paper commits to deepening the partnerships with civil society and notes that *“enhanced civil society engagement and other country-level partnerships will provide critical inputs to World Bank investments to better reach clients. Encouraging citizen engagement and social accountability in World Bank work will also enhance accountability and governance.”*

As of the end of December 2023, we understand the Bank is working on an enhanced country engagement model, a new corporate scorecard, streamlining the Environment and Social Framework, establishing a successor to the GPSA, and developing a plan to deepen partnership with civil society in the IDA and IBRD. While we welcome and appreciate the Bank’s responsiveness, the details of actions and monitoring arrangements to track progress will matter. The detailed analysis and recommendations presented in this report on all these areas aim to provide inputs into the Bank decision-makers (management and shareholders) and the broader group of stakeholders’ thinking and actions.

7. **Structure of the report.** Chapter II reviews the evolution of Bank policies for engaging civil society and presents recommendations for clarification. Chapter III discusses entry points and actions for enhancing partnerships with civil society in the Bank’s current and enhanced [country engagement](#) products and country-owned multistakeholder platforms (MSPs). Chapter IV discusses the roles citizens and CSOs play in boosting delivery and results in IDA/IBRD-[financed operations](#) and challenges that need to be addressed to effectively deepen their roles. Chapter V discusses how partnerships with CSOs can improve governance and combat corruption. Chapter VI analyzes the availability of financing for deepening partnerships with civil society. Chapter VII outlines a framework for establishing a funding facility dedicated to closing the existing gaps in funding CSO engagement in the IDA. Chapter VIII discusses the way forward.