



II. World Bank Policies for Civil Society Engagement (CSE)

“The World Bank will deepen its partnership with civil society, especially at the country and regional levels, to make the evolution process more effective.”

—World Bank¹

1. **Evolution of Bank policies for civil society (citizen and CSO) engagement (CSE).** The Bank acknowledges that civil society engagement can improve development outcomes in the programs it finances. Over a long time, it has accordingly introduced policies that have progressively promoted collaboration with CSOs and, subsequently, citizens/stakeholders’ engagement in its financing and country engagement activities. The policies aim to increase the voice of beneficiaries and other stakeholders in decision-making that affects them with the objective of improving development results. These policies overlap but are not the same (box 1). Specifically, the Bank has taken the following initiatives:
 - a. **1981**—The Bank’s board approved a policy for engagement with CSOs.²
 - b. **1989**—The Bank issued an [Operational Directive 14.70 on “Involving Nongovernmental Organizations in Bank-Supported Activities”](#) followed by a Good Practices Note (GP14.70).³
 - c. **1990s**—The Bank increased frontline staffing to promote CSO engagement (CSE) and established a civil society fund.⁴
 - d. **2005**—A paper on [“Issues and Options for Improving Engagement between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations”](#) was prepared and presented to the board.
 - e. **2009**—A [Guidance Note on Multistakeholder Engagement](#) outlined the legal and policy basis for working with CSOs, the media, and parliaments.

1 World Bank, [Ending Poverty](#), para. 31.

2 World Bank, [“Civil Society”](#) (World Bank Group, 2023).

3 This policy and good practices note are no longer in the Bank’s Operations Manual.

4 Frontline staffing information is from para. 3.38 of the assessment. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development et al., [Assessment of the Strategic Compact](#) (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2001).

II. World Bank Policies for Civil Society Engagement (CSE)

- f. 2008–2010—CSOs participated in 82% of more than 1,000 projects funded by the Bank. Funding for CSOs was reported to be about \$645 million according to the [Bank’s review of CSE during FY2010–12](#).⁵
- g. 2010–2020—Successive [IDA replenishments](#) made specific commitments to promote/require CE/CSE (annex 4).
- h. 2012—CSE for improving governance and reducing corruption became an integral part of the Bank’s [governance and anti-corruption strategy](#), and the Bank established a [Global Partnership for Social Accountability](#) (GPSA) solely dedicated to funding CSOs.
- i. 2014—The Bank adopted a [Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement \(CE\) in World Bank Group Operations](#).
- j. 2018—The World Bank [Environmental and Social Framework](#) (ESF) mandated [stakeholder engagement plans](#) (SEP) in all investment projects and included CSOs among “Other interested parties.”

Box 1: Citizen (CE), Stakeholder (SE), and CSO Engagement

These three agendas overlap but are not the same. A [policy for collaboration with CSOs](#) was introduced in 1981 (updated in 1989), and CSOs engage in Bank operations, but the policy is no longer in the Bank’s [Operations Manual](#). A [strategic framework for mainstreaming CE](#) was introduced in 2014. CE is optional and focuses on individuals. SE is mandatory as part of the Economic and Social Framework (ESF) introduced in 2018. According to the Bank management, “*Stakeholder engagement as addressed in the [Economic and Social Framework] ESF is a specific aspect of the broader citizen engagement. The ESF uses two main avenues of stakeholder engagement (consultations and grievance redress), while the strategic framework [for CE] has a broader menu with seven approaches. The ESF obligates the borrower, while citizen engagement is developed through a dialogue with the borrower.*”

Source: World Bank Management Response to 2018 [IEG evaluation](#) of CE Strategic Framework (page xxi). Emphasis added.

- 2. **These initiatives have enabled CSOs to play four vital roles in IDA/IBRD-supported operations:**
 - a. *CSOs facilitate the design and implementation of [citizen](#) and [stakeholder](#) engagement in investment projects* to give citizens a decision-making stake in development programs affecting them and to make development outcomes more responsive to their needs.

⁵ [World Bank–Civil Society Engagement: Review of Fiscal Years 2010–2012](#) (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2013); [Global Partnership for Social Accountability and Establishment of a Multi-Donor Trust Fund](#) (World Bank Group, 2012), 2.

The report found that 27 Bank mechanisms provided \$842 million in funding to CSOs during FY08–10.

II. World Bank Policies for Civil Society Engagement (CSE)

- b. *CSOs boost government delivery capacity by providing operational services to supplement the efforts of project implementing agencies (IA).* This helps governments deliver more and faster results than what they can do alone. These efforts will be especially helpful as the governments gear up to implement expanded programs under the higher financing levels of the IDA/IBRD. CSOs have helped deliver development services in areas such as promoting inclusion through community engagement and outreach; organizing participatory approaches, such as in Community Demand Driven (CDD) operations; and supporting the implementation of social and environmental development and mitigation components and delivering services in remote areas, especially in fragile, conflict, and violent (FCS) situations.
- c. *CSOs participate in the World Bank's [country engagement activities](#) to enhance inclusion, country ownership, and effectiveness in development policies and programs.* The key [country engagement](#) activities by the WBG include Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD), Country Partnership Framework (CPF), Performance/Completion Learning Reviews (CLR), Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR), and Country Engagement Notes (CEN). These will be enhanced through the updated set of core analytics.⁶

The Bank policy and business practices for these county engagement products mandate consultation with CSOs. CSOs' expertise is sought to promote inclusion, responsiveness, country ownership, and trust in development policies and programs being supported by the Bank. In addition, the IDA is supporting MSPs in 40% of IDA-eligible countries.⁷ These MSPs seek engagement with CSOs, women, and vulnerable groups in policymaking to enhance public participation. The consultations during the country engagement and MSPs provide CSOs with huge opportunities for advocacy, constructive engagement, and influencing development policies and programs.

- d. *CSOs enhance accountability and value for money by enabling citizens and their communities to monitor the implementation, results, and use of funds.* Ensuring accountability in public spending is challenging in all countries, and the countries receiving Bank financing are no exception. CSOs help by providing independent third-party monitoring (TPM)⁸ and oversight and demanding that project resources are channeled as intended. They can work constructively with state accountability institutions and media to help ensure that those responsible for diverting resources are held accountable. CSOs also carry out social accountability activities such as public expenditure tracking surveys, public hearings, social audits, community/citizen scorecards, participatory audits, budget or procurement monitoring, and so forth.

⁶ See box 2: World Bank, [Ending Poverty](#), 6.

⁷ The commitment was “to establish and strengthen platforms for engaging with multiple stakeholders, including women as well as vulnerable groups, in policy-making and implementation to enhance public participation, accountability, and responsiveness.” The list of 30 countries where MSPs were supported, per a policy commitment, is available at: International Development Association, [IDA19 Retrospective: Responding to Multiple Crises on the Road to 2030: Growth, People, Resilience](#) (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2023), 83.

⁸ Comprehensive analyses and recommendations are available in the following report: Christian Donaldson et al., [Civic Space: The Missing Element in the World Bank's Country Engagement Approach](#) (Oxford: Oxfam International, 2022).



II. World Bank Policies for Civil Society Engagement (CSE)

3. **The Bank's Operations Manual does not contain a policy and associated staff guidance for collaboration with CSOs.** This contrasts with the [Asian Development Bank](#) and the [Inter-American Development Bank](#), which have recently updated CSO collaboration policies and action plans. The African Development Bank has in place a [framework and action plan for enhanced engagement with civil society](#). It is likely that several operational policies in the Bank's Operations Manual, such as on fragile states and the ESF, mention the role of CSOs. While this is good, it would be useful to consolidate all such policy references on CSE in one place and present an overall policy for CSE as has been done by the Asian Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.⁹

This should be accompanied by a monitoring and reporting system to track progress in partnerships/collaboration with CSOs. This is needed as the Bank's last progress report on [collaboration with CSOs](#) is more than a decade old, and the Bank's [contract awards database](#) cannot be queried for contract awards to monitor progress in contracting CSOs at country, regional, and global levels.

4. **The policy ambiguities and lack of appropriate staff guidance necessitate that the Bank clarify its policy on collaboration with CSOs as it embarks on deepening partnerships.**

Recommendation #1: Issue a comprehensive statement to clarify policies for collaboration with CSOs beyond consultations; reinstate staff guidance, including for explicit funding within the project life cycle for planned CSO engagement and periodic progress reporting with measurable indicators; and make contract awards to CSOs searchable in the contract awards database to facilitate ex post monitoring.

9 [“Promotion of Engagement with Civil Society Organizations.”](#) *Operations Manual* (Asian Development Bank, 2023); [A Sourcebook for Engaging with Civil Society Organizations in Asian Development Bank Operations](#) (Asian Development Bank, 2021); and IADB [Civil Society Engagement Strategy](#).