WORLD BANK OPERATIONS EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

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EVALUATION BRIEF

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Learning to Implement the CDF

The Comprehensive Development Framework aims to help the Bank become more effective in achieving its ultimate goal of poverty reduction by balancing macroeconomic issues with an emphasis on human, social, and structural concerns. The CDF takes a longer-term, holistic view of how to create the human and institutional conditions needed for sustainable development. The CDF is based on cooperation with partners, respect for local needs and democratic processes, the building of local capacity, and a continuous process of learning and evaluation so that programs can be adjusted as often as necessary to achieve optimal results. The CDF shifts the development planning paradigm from blueprint to process, and from inputs to results on the ground.

- It puts the country at the center of the development effort to achieve more coherence, synergy, and cooperation within the development system.
- It elevates human, social and structural concerns to the same level of influence as the traditionally dominant macroeconomic concerns.
- It is participatory—grounded in transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.
- It consists of a process of institutional and social transformation achieved through incentives, information, and infrastructure.
- It promotes linkages toward the ultimate development objective—poverty reduction.

Key Challenges to Implementation

The implementation of CDF should be guided by the lessons of experience of the Bank and other development partners. What follows are the highlights of the workshop participants' messages to the Bank.

- Reduce fear of Bank control among partners and borrowers.
- Make more transparent the CDF theory of poverty reduction and social and institutional change.
- Overcome resistance to broadening the locus of dialogue beyond central government to include local governments and nongovernment players.
- Nurture country ownership and development of domestic capacity.
- Respect local democratic processes and institutions.
- Involve the poor and marginalized.
- Balance "doing" with capturing information about what works and what does not, to enhance learning.
- Set baselines and systems of monitoring and evaluation.
- Communicate the CDF challenge strategically.

WORKSHOP

Two OED workshops held in Washington, D.C., on June 16 and 17, considered the lessons of experience relevant to the CDF and explored the roles of evaluation. One of the two workshops, which included high-level officials and evaluators from developing countries, aid agencies, and academia, was cosponsored by the WBI.

Risks

The participants noted that the CDF can have a high pay-off, but with major risks and challenges. Too great an emphasis on a holistic approach could undermine selectivity. The greatest risk is overselling the CDF, which could threaten the credibility of the Bank and disempower its partners.

Long-Term Holistic Approach

The long-term view is important because institutions take time to create, policies take time to take root, and it may take a generation or more for newly implanted technologies to bloom, and give rise to a competitive economy. Reforms have all too often been designed and implemented under the pressure of time associated with crisis management. Lessons have been learned by the World Bank in creating the conditions needed for sustainable policy reform. The CDF should be adapted to a risky, volatile external environment:

- Global development challenges cannot all be tackled at the country level.
- Flexibility and learning are essential.
- The matrix is best viewed as a checklist, complemented by other tools to adapt to the dynamics of development and to facilitate prioritization and sequencing.
- The CDF appropriately emphasizes governance and other structural and social dimensions, but should also include key factors to competitiveness such as science and technology.

Ownership and Participation

Donors can play a proactive role, stimulating ownership, bringing about holistic views, and moving toward results orientation. But it will take time and commitment to make this happen.

The challenge is learning how to develop and engage civil society and the private sector. Broad, open, and transparent consultation processes will be difficult to achieve in many countries. Engaging and empowering the poor will be even harder.

CDF should be applied only in cases where there is clear country ownership. The Ghanian experience suggests that national participatory processes take time and substantial government commitment. Imposing participatory approaches with tight timetables could displace or delay adoption of homegrown approaches and undermine local democratic processes. Ghana and Bolivia are promising because the countries had determined their development agenda and national vision well before the CDF.

Tools are urgently needed to engender broad-based ownership of policy reforms and national development strategies. Donors' push for disbursement and lending often impede ownership. Instead, donors should create the right incentives for governments to face pressure groups, to own policy reforms, and to accept responsibility for change.

Evaluating the CDF

- The Bank must be clear about what it wants to achieve and learn from the CDF pilots.
- The 18-month period envisaged for reviewing the pilots is too short a time for measuring impact; hence, evaluation will have to rely on process indicators and surveys.
- The value-added of the CDF should be examined against the costs added for all partners.
- Evaluation of the CDF should reflect reality on the ground, which calls for locally based partnerships in monitoring and evaluation.

Assessing the Benefits and Risks

Benefits	Risks
Long-term, holistic approach	
Priority for poverty reduction	Reduced selectivity
Improved linkages across sectors	Return to central planning
Partnership	
Transaction costs reduced	"Big Brother" syndrome
Comparative advantage of actors used	Higher coordination costs for donors and Bank
Ownership	
Policy reform commitment ensured	Capture by vested interests
Capacity building given priority	Reduced focus on performance
Keeping score	
Clear linkages to DAC goals	Overly elaborate indicators
Focus on structural and social factors	Bank-Fund tensions

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