Participatory Development and the World Bank

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The World Bank has officially supported the notion of participatory development for over a decade, arguing that development projects are more effective when beneficiaries have a role in the way projects are chosen, planned, implemented, and evaluated. In practice, however, the Bank’s primary model of development continues to be based on expertise rather than participation. This is partly because the participatory model has not been definitively proven to be effective in all Bank projects. This paper criticizes the theory and practice of participatory development in light of the Bank’s experiences, and recommends that the Bank make a stronger effort, not just to promote or encourage participatory development, but to study what specific participatory mechanisms have been shown to work in what kinds of projects and under what circumstances, and then to identify the specific tasks that staff on those projects would need to accomplish to incorporate those mechanisms into their work.

Introduction

In 1970, the year Carol Pateman’s Participation and Democratic Theory advocated a greater role for common people in democratic self-rule,\(^a\) Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed was translated for the first time into English. Freire argued that the poor and marginalized of any society are capable of more than passive learning, and that, given the op-
portunity, they can think critically about and engage the world around them in a way that can transform both themselves and their world.\(^c\) Both authors were influenced to different degrees — in Freire’s case it was indirectly, via Marx — by Rousseau’s criticisms\(^d\) of social structures that encourage thinking about interests in individualistic and competitive terms rather than about common interests, and by his advocacy of participation in collective decision-making as a way of transforming attitudes of self-interest into a general will that serves both individual and public interests equally and justly. These books — and other contemporary works on development,\(^e\) colonialism,\(^f\) and related topics — grew out of or contributed to the various discourses of the social movements that were calling attention to issues of power and justice worldwide, movements that strongly criticized elitism in both theory and practice and demanded greater respect for the needs and perspectives of the poor and the marginalized.

It was during this period that a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) doing small-scale development projects in various places around the world began to put ideas about participation and empowerment into practice, self-consciously shifting their work away from the then-dominant model of development aid as something to be delivered to the poor by technical experts hired by wealthy benefactors — a model that was beginning to be seen, even by larger development agencies, as inadequate to the needs of the worst-off populations of poor countries.\(^g,h\) The point was to give the beneficiaries of development work a greater role in the way projects were chosen, planned, implemented, and evaluated; in some cases this also meant helping poor communities organize and operate their own projects. In the process, these development groups adopted a variety of mechanisms for participation.\(^i,j\) “Participatory action research” was meant to “engage the poor in research through which they can learn about a problem, and then, armed with the knowledge, take action to solve it.”\(^k\) Consistent with the idea that local communities know

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what’s best for themselves, these and other mechanisms took shape and evolved in different ways in different places and for different projects.

By the end of the 1980s, NGOs were proliferating worldwide, and advocacy on behalf of public participation in development projects began to have an effect on the way some of the larger development agencies viewed the participation of “beneficiaries.” These agencies were influenced as well by a growing literature on the inadequacies of existing approaches to development.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, during the late 1980s and 1990s, a number of studies undertaken by both development agencies and independent scholars documented positive correlations of varying strengths between public participation and project effectiveness or sustainability.\textsuperscript{10-5} In response, the World Bank (the Bank) created a Learning Group on Participatory Development in 1990 to study ways to “mainstream” the participation of those who today are called “primary stakeholders,” “those who may be expected to benefit or lose from Bank-supported operations; or who warrant redress from any negative effects of such operations, particularly among the poor and marginalized.”\textsuperscript{4} The Bank implemented several of the Learning Group’s recommendations for increasing participation of primary stakeholders, and by the end of the decade these and other initiatives\textsuperscript{10-8} had succeeded in increasing both the number of projects in which some degree of participation took place, and the degree of participation in such projects.

Advocates of participatory development generally agree that the Bank has made some progress toward greater public participation in the projects it funds over the past 20 years, particularly during James Wolfensohn’s tenure as President. This paper will review a portion of this record. At the same time, many participatory initiatives have faltered and few projects to date have actually been deeply participatory, leading analysts to question the viability of participatory development as a real-world model of international development.\textsuperscript{10-3} In the past three decades, philosophers, economists, and social critics have created an
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Despite these changes, the primary model of development used by the World Bank today is not participatory in any deep sense. It remains an elite venture: aid delivered by technical experts hired by wealthy benefactors, all with the best interests of the poor at heart. Contrary to the suspicions of their critics, many — perhaps most — of the Bank’s staff view their work as an attempt to reduce poverty and ameliorate suffering. It may be that the dominant view within the Bank about the best means to achieve those ends is one that values expertise over participation — for what may or may not be perfectly good reasons.

This paper not only reviews the progress the Bank has made to date but also evaluates the various reasons one might give for valuing or not valuing public participation in its development efforts, and it ends by offering a criticism of the way participatory development is both conceived and practiced. The first section, Participation and the World Bank Project Cycle, reviews the basic operations of the World Bank, focusing on its typical project cycle and the mechanisms through which various forms of participation do or may take place. The second section, Participation in Strategy Formulation and Project Evaluation, appraises the degree to which primary stakeholders are permitted to and actually participate in two stages of the project cycle: the preparation of poverty reduction strategies at the beginning of the cycle, and evaluations of completed projects at the end. Like the first section, this section...
is based on a review of relevant Bank publications and reports, independent studies of Bank projects and practices, interviews of Bank staff in a variety of departments regarding their experiences in or knowledge of relevant Bank practices and their sense of cultural attitudes within the Bank. The third and final section of the paper, Participatory Theory and Participatory Practice, is a critical reflection on the theory and practice of participatory development in the light of the Bank’s experiences to date.

First, however, it is necessary to define participatory development. The Learning Group defined six “participatory mechanisms” that summarize what participatory development means in practice, and these will be used to define the term throughout this paper. In order from least to greatest degree of participation, participatory mechanisms include:

1. Information-sharing. This includes, among other things, public disclosure of activities and intentions related to Bank projects, government development policies, and poverty-reduction strategies; translation and public dissemination of written materials; and public meetings.

2. Consultation. This generally denotes field visits, household surveys, and interviews of primary stakeholders.

3. Joint assessment. Beyond consultation, this mechanism involves the public in identifying primary stakeholders, discovering problems, and evaluating projects.

4. Shared decision-making. Here, primary stakeholders help to determine priorities, plan projects, define roles, resolve conflicts, and review and criticize draft documents.

5. Collaboration. Primary stakeholders are represented on joint committees, working groups, and task forces with full voting rights, or are given principal responsibility for implementing projects.

6. Empowerment. This mechanism includes building capacity and providing financial and legal support to stakeholder organizations; giv-
ing them full ownership or managerial control over a project; and pro-
viding direct support for stakeholder initiatives.

1. PARTICIPATION AND THE WORLD BANK PROJECT CYCLE

The World Bank is made up of two development agencies: the In-
ternational Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which
lends money to middle-income countries and poorer countries with
good credit ratings to fund development projects; and the Internation-
al Development Association (IDA), which lends development funds to
the very poorest countries on somewhat more favorable terms and occa-
sonally offers debt relief to “Heavily Indebted Poor Countries” (HIPC).
The World Bank Group is made up of the World Bank and three oth-
er agencies specializing in different areas of development. The World
Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are both “in-
dependent specialized agencies” of the United Nations (UN) and work
in close coordination with each other, donor countries, and recipient
countries (or “borrowers”) on the overall goals of development and
economic stability within each country that requests their assistance.

Since 1999, the Bank has required, as part of a new Comprehen-
sive Development Framework (CDF), that the national government of
a borrowing country develop an overall “poverty reduction strategy” for
responding to the particular challenges its population faces. The Bank
recommends but does not require that the government use “participa-
tory processes” to develop its strategy and asks it to include a description
of any such processes in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP),
which details its general strategy. “A PRSP needs to describe the for-
mat, frequency, and location of consultations; summarize the main is-
sues raised and the views of participants; give an account of the impact
of the consultations on the design of the strategy; and discuss the role
of civil society in future monitoring and implementation.” Not all bor-
rowers employ participatory processes or describe them in the PRSP;
this issue will be addressed in the following section.

The Bank uses the borrower government’s PRSP as the main source
for the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) that Bank staff develops for
that particular country. In some countries, Bank staff have also consult-
ed with primary stakeholders and civil society organizations to develop the CAS, but this practice has not been adopted universally, as there are few direct incentives for Bank staff to do so: “the predominant incentive for advancement and salary increases continues to be getting loan proposals prepared and approved and getting money disbursed to client governments.” Some staff may be concerned that “too much” consultation with sectors other than the government borrower simply slows down the approval process.

The project cycle begins with a joint review of the PRSP and the CAS. Bank staff and the borrower government perform this review to identify projects that might achieve the goals set forth in those strategies. They may undertake household surveys and other studies to identify who the primary stakeholders in a project might be or what their needs are, and may consult those identified as primary stakeholders in greater detail to assist in identifying projects that might be helpful. At this stage in most cases the primary participants continue to be the Bank and the government, not the public.

Nevertheless, the Bank expects any proposed project to comply at least with the Bank’s policy on information disclosure and with its ten key environmental, social, and international law policies known collectively as the “10 plus 1” policies or Safeguard Policies. Because the government borrower is responsible for designing the projects, however, the quality and degree of disclosure to the public and of compliance with the safeguards vary from country to country. The variations depend not only on the government’s ability to comply with the Safeguard Policies, but also on the political preferences of the gov-
government. For example, if the “10 plus 1” safeguards serve the interests of the party in power, they are more likely to happen; otherwise, compliance can be grudging at best. Although the Bank’s adoption of the Safeguard Policies has benefited many of the countries whose leaders have embraced them — and even some whose leaders have not — evidence suggests that these policies are observed infrequently enough to have required repeated attempts to strengthen and adapt them, with mixed results.\textsuperscript{as}\textsuperscript{-st} Even the Bank’s Inspection Panel, which investigates complaints from people who believe they have been harmed by a violation of these and other policies, serves partly at the pleasure of the government of the country where the alleged violation took place, and its purview is too constrained in any case to have a “sustainable impact” on compliance.\textsuperscript{as}

Once the project proposal is submitted, the Bank appraises it without any outside consultation and, if satisfied, approves the requested loans or credits. Once the borrower government gives final approval to the terms, it discloses the full agreement to the public, and the funds are disbursed according to the approved procurement guidelines. Implementation may then begin.\textsuperscript{av} During this process “supervision of the project is the responsibility of the Bank” and “implementation is the responsibility of the borrower.”\textsuperscript{aw} The responsibility of the primary stakeholders is defined by the borrower government. Consequently, opportunities for their participation are again at the mercy of the capabilities and preferences of the country’s political leaders.

Further, these political leaders may be discouraged by Bank staff from soliciting participation, as many staff question the usefulness of public participation during the implementation phase for certain kinds of projects. One staffer cited a controlled study in Indonesia designed to test different methods of reducing contractor corruption: one group of contractors was made to attend and answer questions at community meetings; the other group of contractors was told they would be audit-
ed. This study found the threat of audits to be far more effective in reducing corruption and accordingly, the cost of the project; by contrast, community monitoring did little to reduce corruption and cost. Nonetheless, some service-delivery projects, such as health, education, and water extension projects, have clearly benefited when managerial control is delegated to local governments and civil society, particularly when paired with capacity-building efforts and citizen monitoring to guard against corruption and elite capture. Still, Bank and borrower-country staff often hesitate to encourage community participation in projects where local prejudices or unresolved intracommunity conflicts could undermine the project’s efforts to empower or aid disadvantaged groups.

The project cycle ends when the completed project is evaluated, a phase that will be examined in the next section.

2. PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGY FORMULATION AND PROJECT EVALUATION

2.1 Strategy Formulation

Bank staff have often cited Tanzania as a model of participatory development in the formulation of poverty-reduction strategies. When it was preparing its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in the late 1990s, it solicited public input at a series of district and zonal workshops covering all regions of the mainland. Each district in the country sent four villagers, one district councilor, one town councilor, one district executive director, and five NGO representatives to every zonal workshop. There, they deliberated, among other topics, over the definition, causes, and characteristics of poverty. At the end, each workshop ranked its priorities for government action and sent them to the capital, where they were aggregated at the national level and folded into the final PRSP. In total, 804 citizens — 22 percent of whom were women — participated in the process. After completing the PRSP in October
2000, the Tanzanian Vice President’s office, in what has been called one of the most comprehensive PRSP dissemination efforts ever undertaken, published summaries of the paper and announced plans to set up a monitoring website and documentation center.

This would indeed be a fairly impressive example of primary-stakeholder participation in the crucial, earliest stages of development policy-making in a poor country, but this may not be the whole story. A staff source at a non-Bank major donor agency with direct knowledge of Tanzania’s PRSP process indicated that this was an example of participatory development in form only, that political party elites dominated the process, and that what looked like an inclusive and participatory process was in fact exclusionary and government-dominated. The villagers sent to participate in the district-level and zonal workshops were chosen on the basis of party affiliation, but even they did not receive the same level of remuneration as the government officials sent from the same district. Moreover, the PRSP was written in English, while the poor in Tanzania speak Kiswahili, a fact that effectively excluded them from any real dialogue about its content. The Vice President’s office translated the first PRSP progress report into Kiswahili, but failed to do so for subsequent reports. Finally, this source questions the degree to which the ruling elite of Tanzania even uses the PRSP to guide development policy and project implementation there. Even if it did reflect the interests of the primary stakeholders who had a hand in its formulation, it may not actually serve as a guide to implementation, and the interests of the primary stakeholders may not in fact be served.

If this is a model of participatory development — assuming this account is correct — then it stands as an argument in favor of alternative models of participatory development.

It has been only five years since the Bank initiated the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) that encourages countries to take...
Participatory development aims to give local beneficiaries a key role in choosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating their projects. However, this model has not always proven effective with World Bank projects.

*Photo by Kyra Rice*
ownership of their own development by defining the relevant strategies in the PRSP and implementing those strategies with the help of Bank funding and advice. The Bank’s hope is that, by encouraging countries to “own” their own development and adopt participatory processes, the CDF will eventually improve the transparency, accountability, and capabilities of the government and the efficiency and outcomes of development projects. It may simply be too early to judge whether or to what degree the CDF, and its PRSP process in particular, will eventually be embraced by the entire range of development actors, from the local to the international levels.

Likewise, primary-stakeholder participation in the formulation of the PRSP has taken place too infrequently to judge whether it is capable of being done in a way that is not subject to abuse by entrenched interests, as may or may not have happened in the Tanzania case. Through 2002, only four countries had completed full PRSPs, while 34 had completed “interim” PRSPs. Since the guidelines for the interim PRSPs do not require extensive public participation, governments solicited little. Despite these lax guidelines, 28 out of the total 38 countries undertook at least one participatory process, such as direct consultation with the poor, while preparing the poverty analysis for the PRSP. Of these 28, however, only 10 invited the poor to participate in the actual formulation of that analysis, and only 14 even cited the results of the participatory poverty analysis in the final PRSP. The extent of participation in the development of the PRSP, then, even among the countries employing participatory processes, remains fairly minimal. This suggests the Bank needs either to undertake more capacity-building efforts, so that governments can better employ participatory processes in PRSP development, or to put more pressure on countries that have that capacity but lack the political will to use it.

2.2 Project Evaluation

At the other end of the project cycle, the project evaluation phase, participatory development faces similarly critical challenges. While the Bank has embraced participatory evaluation in word, it has not fully backed up that embrace in deed. There is no institutional mandate requiring evaluators to solicit primary-stakeholder participation, just non-binding guidance recommending it, and Bank staff report that partici-
Participatory evaluation takes place only at the initiative of certain staff. As one staff member explained:

The Operations Evaluation Department does field visits and in depth evaluations, called project assessments or audits, in about 25 percent of completed Bank projects. Usually beneficiary groups are visited, but it depends on the individual evaluator as to how much [community participation] is done. Also, when large sector studies are done, the case studies usually include some meetings with beneficiaries and some surveys, usually verbal, occasionally written.

The few studies that have been done on participatory evaluation found very low levels of primary-stakeholder participation, around 9 percent between 1994 and 1998, for example; some Bank staff had a “gut instinct” that the levels have risen significantly since then, though they had no empirical evidence to support it.

Not everyone views such increases as a good thing. Many within the evaluation community are concerned that primary-stakeholder involvement in evaluation processes may damage the objectivity and impartiality of the evaluators. This concern has some merit, but the degree to which it is a problem in Bank project evaluations is unknown. It is equally unclear how widespread the concern is among Bank staff, or what its effect has been, if any, on the institutionalization of participatory evaluation.

There are other obstacles to participatory evaluation within the borrower countries themselves. A 1998 survey of aid recipients’ attitudes toward evaluation in general — excluding participatory evaluation — concluded that “they continue to regard evaluation as a donor-driven activity providing them with few benefits” rather than as a method for improving existing and future projects. This official pessimism about evaluation can trickle down to the communities where projects have been completed, which may in turn discourage primary stakeholders from participating in evaluations even if they are specifically invited.

The Bank has taken a number of steps to promote — though not require — participatory evaluation. On the standard form that project evaluators fill out, the Bank includes three questions related to com-
community involvement: (1) Were beneficiaries consulted? (2) What stages of the process were they involved in? and (3) What was the extent of their participation? It is intended that the very presence of these questions on the evaluation form would be an incentive for staff to involve the community, but because these questions ask the evaluator to comment on his or her own performance, one might reasonably question whether the incentive succeeds.

Other Bank-driven initiatives have included citizen report cards, public-expenditure tracking surveys, participatory social auditing, and independent budget analysis, among others. For example, the Bank initiated a pilot “citizen’s report card” program in sections of the Indonesian forestry sector, primarily to demonstrate the feasibility of large-scale stakeholder involvement in evaluating public services, but also partly to evaluate the effect of aid. Another program, called Groupware, used computers to gather stakeholder input in real time. The effectiveness of this program was limited by participants’ computer skills, and the Bank has attempted low-tech versions of the program (i.e., without the computer) as well. It is difficult to determine how effective these and other efforts have been in promoting participatory evaluation or what effect they ultimately will have on existing and future Bank projects, primarily because the Bank does not have a robust system in place to systematically track participation. A fair evaluation of these initiatives would require access to data that is currently unavailable and a mandate from the Bank to do internal research.

3. PARTICIPATORY THEORY AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE

3.1 CHALLENGES TO PRACTICE

Why has the Bank been so resistant to efforts to implement its own president’s stated priority of “mainstreaming” participation? A number of explanations have been offered for the limited progress the Bank has made, as an organization, toward that goal, including the following:

• an inadequate top-level strategy to improve participation;
• insufficient buy-in by Bank senior management and mainstream economists;
• staff-level disincentives to participation and inadequate participatory skills; and
• a project cycle not designed to facilitate participation.

Other explanations focus on concerns about the impracticality, effectiveness, and risks of implementing participatory processes, or on observations about country and project specific factors rather than on organization structure. These are not so much explanations of why the Bank has not incorporated participatory development into its practices as they are explanations of why participatory development does not always work when attempted, or arguments for why the Bank should not embrace participatory development at all. Some of these challenges have been described in this paper, but they bear repeating here, and others deserve at least to be mentioned:

• borrower-government opposition to or manipulation of participatory processes;
• government, staff, community, or primary-stakeholder deficits of capacity;
• projects too large or too diffuse for deep participation to be realistic;
• elite capture of participatory processes;
• weak traditions of civic and political participation, especially by women; and
• primary-stakeholder doubts that their participation will make any difference.

Perhaps the biggest impediment to participatory development at the Bank is the fact that a very large number of Bank staff at all levels are skeptical about the value or desirability of participatory development.

Many claim that participation does not contribute to project effectiveness; that it can in fact undermine project effectiveness; that even if it is effective, its costs outweigh its benefits; and that it creates false hopes or unrealistic expectations among primary stakeholders in a way that can ultimately damage the legitimacy of development work.
in those communities; or that it involves the Bank in politics in borrower countries in inappropriate or unacceptable ways.  

3.2 CHALLENGES TO THEORY

These challenges to the practice of participatory development are also challenges to participatory development as a normative theory or goal. Why do participatory theorists believe that participatory development is desirable, and how might they respond to these criticisms? One might give three general reasons for valuing participatory development: its transformative value, its instrumental value, and its intrinsic value.  

3.2.1 Transformative value. As noted in the Introduction to this paper, the initial attraction of participatory development in the 1970s among many NGOs and social critics was its potential to transform and empower the poor and marginalized to improve the conditions of their lives. The literature on civic engagement suggests that participation provides the civic skills and social capital that societies need to sustain democracy. Critics cite two objections to this conclusion:

- **It is not true.** While it may be difficult to measure, it may nonetheless be the case that participation has little or no effect on the consciousness, values, or capabilities of primary stakeholders. *Response:* One must concede that not everybody would respond to opportunities to participate in the way participatory theorists might expect: different people respond to social stimuli in different ways under different circumstances. The transformative value of participatory development may be constrained as well by political and cultural circumstances in the countries and communities where projects are undertaken. Assuming the critique of the Tanzanian process is valid, it is unlikely that the PRSP process there transformed all of those who participated, since most participants were chosen on the basis of what they already believed. Nonetheless, there is no good reason to believe that participation in some phase of development would have no effect whatsoever on participants: at the very least participants learn more about the project and how it might affect them, and with deeper or repeated participation they would be likely, at least marginally, to expand their social networks, learn something about their community or government, develop their civic skills, or increase the social capital of their community.

- **It’s not desirable.** There is some concern that the consciousness-raising efforts that Freire, Fanon, and other Marxists advocate may have
the revolutionary effects those authors desire. As the lives of poor and marginalized people begin to improve, it is often the case that they become less content with the status quo and with their lives, and in some cases this disrupts society. *Response:* It is desirable for the lives of poor and marginalized people to improve, and it is rarely the case that the raised expectations that such improvements cause lead to revolutions. More commonly, efforts that succeed in raising consciousness lead simply to demands for rights and the redistribution of social and economic goods.

### 3.2.2 Instrumental value
 Much of the more recent advocacy of participatory development by economists and Bank staff is based on the belief that primary-stakeholder participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation can improve the effectiveness and sustainability of development projects. There is one main objection to this argument:

- *It is not true.* This is the objection noted at the end of Section 3.1. *Response:* It is of course true that primary-stakeholder participation at any phase of the project cycle does not invariably improve every project: different mechanisms of participation are appropriate to different kinds of projects, different phases of the project cycle, and different social and political circumstances under which stakeholders live. If this is the case, then one cannot reasonably claim that participatory development “works” without also specifying the conditions under which it succeeds and providing evidence to support the contention. In fact, as noted in the introduction to this paper, there have been a number of Bank studies that provide some such evidence, and scholars who study participatory development are generally quite careful not to oversell the concept, though some advocates may be guilty of overselling.

### 3.2.3 Intrinsic value
 Philosophers, NGOs, and even some economists claim that participation in the improvement of one’s own life is a basic right, an expression of dignity, an exemplification of democracy, or any combination of these. This is a little more difficult to object to, since it goes to the heart of the democratic concern for the right of all humans to have some degree of influence over things that affect their lives. Development projects designed to improve the lives of the poor and marginalized are likely to have an effect — positive or negative — on the lives of the poor and marginalized.
Nonetheless, there are minimalist and elitist conceptions of democracy that favor allowing a minority to make decisions on behalf of a majority as long as the majority has regular opportunities to vote them out of office, the theory being that the threat of elections is enough to deter leaders from harming the majority. An extension of this approach would be to argue that the threat of elections is an incentive for leaders to respect the inherent “right to development” that is beginning to be embraced by some in the international development community.

This argument would have more force if all development projects took place in countries where the poor and marginalized could vote in elections that are free and fair, but this is rarely the case. The Bank’s articles of agreement prohibit any political interference within a country, but a strong case can be made that the Bank is, in fact, permitted to promote human rights and freedom. An equally strong case can be made that it makes no sense to conceive of development without including human rights and freedom as inherent in the concept. Therefore, the Bank is morally obligated at least to try to solicit participation in cases where borrower governments fail to give citizens the opportunity to influence its policies and where participation is least likely to have perverse effects on those it is trying to help.

3.3 Recommendations

To change an organization such as the Bank whose mission affects and is influenced by the public, the organization’s leadership cannot simply redefine the strategic vision or the mission of the organization, importune staff to support it, and launch a few initiatives without also making deeper, more difficult changes to the way the organization operates. Successful change requires clearly defined adjustments to the everyday tasks that staff at all levels undertake, paired with appropriate resources and incentives that directly link the successful completion of those tasks to successful career advancement. At the Bank these tasks are project-related, and those should be clearly defined in such a way that staff cannot misunderstand that they should be incorporating par-
participation into their work. This suggests, of course, that the Bank must identify the tasks that will further the mission by analyzing the types of projects and circumstances in which participation is most likely to make a difference in the projects’ effectiveness and their impacts on the lives of primary stakeholders.

The senior leadership of the Bank, primarily in the person of its erstwhile president, James Wolfensohn, has made it clear that incorporating participatory development into the Bank’s work is a priority. If the Bank wants to succeed in putting it to practice, the Bank should make a stronger effort not just to “promote” or “encourage” participatory development but to learn where it is most appropriate and effective and then define specific tasks that staff in different roles need to accomplish to (1) incorporate participation into their work, and (2) advance in their careers.

The primary recommendation of the authors, then, is for the Bank to review project reports, studies, and evaluations to identify what specific participatory mechanisms have been shown to work at what specific phases of the project cycle for what specific kinds of projects under what specific circumstances; then to identify specific tasks that Bank staff would need to take to incorporate those mechanisms into their work; then to identify and make available the appropriate resources those staff would need to carry out those tasks; and finally to add those tasks to those employees’ job descriptions and make them the subject of the employees’ annual reviews, with the requirement that they may not be promoted without having accomplished those tasks in an appropriate and effective manner.

Given the challenges participatory development faces from all quarters, it is almost certain that a very few number of staff, projects, and stakeholders would be directly affected by these steps. This implies a very modest role for participatory development at the World Bank in the short term. This is as it should be, as participatory development has not yet been definitively proven to be effective in all Bank projects.
under all circumstances. To force participatory processes into circum-
stances where they are likely to fail, to backfire, or to be undertaken in
form rather than substance is to risk creating even more opposition to
the concept than already exists. A modest but focused effort may help
to illustrate the potential of participatory development to skeptics, as-
suming it succeeds.
Participatory Development and the World Bank · 191

Notes

a The authors would like to thank Benjamin R. Barber and David A. Crocker for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Responsibility for any errors or omissions belongs solely to the authors.


i Long, Carolyn, Participation of the Poor in Development Initiatives: Taking Their Rightful Places (Sterling, Va.: Earthscan Publications, 2002), 16.


k Long, 7-8.


q World Bank 1994, 2.


s Long, ch. 4.

t Long, ch. 2-4. Robb 2001 pp. 1-21; Cracknell 2000 ch. 1; interviews with World Bank staff


v Cracknell, Basil Edward, Evaluating Development Aid: Issues, Problems and Solutions

w Interviews with World Bank staff, 2004. See Note 31.

x see Crocker 1998.


z e.g. Drèze, Jean, and Amartya Kumar Sen, India: Development and Participation, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

aa e.g. Narayan, Deepa, and Patti L. Petesch, eds., From Many Lands, Voices of the Poor (Washington: Oxford University Press and The World Bank, 2002).


ad Crocker, David, Deliberating Global Development: Ethics, Capabilities, and Democracy forthcoming.

ae All interviewees had requested anonymity, and those requests are honored here. As only a small and presumably non-random sample of Bank staff (and a smaller sample of non-Bank donor agency staff) were interviewed for this study (November-December 2004), the authors do not claim that the results are representative of Bank staff in general, nor that the interviewees’ comments represent official Bank policy concerning the issues discussed; any misinterpretation of those comments, and any other errors or omissions, are the sole responsibility of the authors.

af World Bank 1994, 12.

ag World Bank 1994, 12.


ak Robb, 87-105.


am World Bank 2003, 37

an Long, 85-86, 102-105.

ao Interviews with World Bank staff, November 2004.

ap Long, 65-68.

aq Interviews with World Bank staff, November 2004.

ar Environmental assessments, natural habitats, pest management, involuntary resettlement, indigenous peoples, forestry, safety of dams, cultural property, projects on international waterways, and projects in disputed areas.

national Monetary Fund, 2003), 139-145. World Bank 2002 pp. 3-9


au Freestone, 149-156.


aw Ibid., 57.

ax Interviews with World Bank staff, November 2004.


ba World Bank 2004a, 3.

bb Interviews with World Bank staff, November 2004.


bd Interview with donor agency staff, December 2004.

be The distinction between full and interim PRSPs is defined in World Bank and International Monetary Fund 1999.

bf Robb, 97

bg Interview with World Bank staff, November 2004.

bh Interview with World Bank staff, November 2004.


Interview with World Bank staff, November 2004.

Sen 1999.


World Bank 1994, 12; cf. Introduction to this paper

World Bank 2003, 55-59; cf. Section 1 of this paper

cf. Section 3.2.2 of this paper