

November 7, 2025

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Dear Civil Society Leaders and Organizations,

Thank you for your letter of October 9, 2025 regarding the involvement of civil society and citizens in World Bank operations. Your interest and input thus far on this agenda is appreciated and we look forward to continued engagement with you and other stakeholders to ensure its success. We want to take this opportunity to share key updates that were also reiterated during our last engagement.

First, the renewal of the Civic and Citizen Engagement (CCE) framework has been advancing well. Global consultations with civil society organizations in March 2025 helped substantively shape the draft framework, which has undergone a technical review. The current draft—now reflecting the shift from compliance to quality and systems-level engagement—will go through a management review after which a second round of civil society consultations will take place.

Second, the new “Quality of Civic and Citizen Engagement” indicator has also been developed and is currently undergoing an internal review. This process involved collecting preliminary baseline data from 45 countries, validating the methodology, and conducting checks for quality and robustness. Once completed, the indicator will be published in the Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Dashboard (OOEE) dashboard. This will introduce, for the first time, a composite measure of engagement quality. It also marks a major shift as part of our efforts to go from tracking compliance to orienting for results.

Third, by the IDA21 Mid-term Review in December 2026, we expect a background note with an update on the methodology of the CCE Indicator, including an update on the consultation of its development, which would fulfil the IDA21 commitment.

Next, our new World Bank Group Country Engagement Approach integrates civil society and citizen engagement. Consultations with civil society organizations are part of the cycle of Country Partnership Frameworks (CPFs) from conception through implementation to completion. That includes extensive stakeholder consultations in the design phase to help shape strategic priorities and reflect diverse perspectives; continued engagement throughout implementation as part of our operations, and at the Completion and Learning Review (CLR) stage of a CPF, completing a full cycle of engagement. Upstream analytics that inform CPFs are also posted online and publicly disseminated across a broad range of groups. This full cycle of engagement ensures that civil society’s input is captured at both the strategic and operational level.

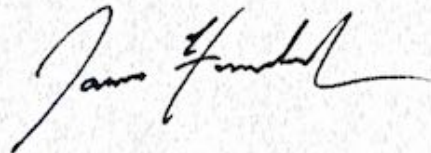
In addition to better integrating civil society engagement on CPFs, we are also committed to boosting transparency related to our Stakeholder Engagement Plans (SEPs). This includes a robust

report of SEPs at the project and corporate level in our investment projects (either as stand-alone documents or as part of Environmental and Social Commitment Plans). In the last year, we have also actively encouraged civil society organizations to provide feedback on draft SEPs and help monitor their implementation on the ground, leading to several promising civil society initiatives now doing so.

We have also made important advances in establishing the Civil Society and Social Innovation Alliance (CIVIC) as the multi-donor trust fund successor to the Global Partnership for Social Accountability, with advanced donor discussions underway. CIVIC's first operational platform, co-created with the Global Financing Facility, has mobilized \$15 million for CSO-led health and nutrition initiatives. CIVIC aims to expand to climate, fragility, conflict & violence settings (FCV), youth, digital, and gender pillars as funding is mobilized. With your collaboration, we hope CIVIC will be an important institutional vehicle for sustained Bank-civil society collaboration and financing.

We hope this update is helpful. We greatly value your ongoing support and active engagement in this important area.

Sincerely,



Jay Heimbach  
Vice President  
External and Corporate Relations  
World Bank

cc: Blair Glencorse, Co-CEO, Accountability Lab <[blair@accountabilitylab.org](mailto:blair@accountabilitylab.org)>; Jamie Drummond, Founder, Sharing Strategies <[jamie@sharingstrategies.org](mailto:jamie@sharingstrategies.org)>

# An Open Letter from Civil Society to the World Bank's leadership

## Please Fulfill Stalled Promises on Deepening Civic and Citizen Engagement in the World Bank and IDA-Financed Development Programs

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Date: Oct. 9, 2025

To: Mr. Ajay Banga, President, and Members of the Board of Executive Directors, World Bank Group

RE: Fulfilling Promises to Deepen Partnership with Citizens and Civil Society in World Bank-Financed Development Programs

The World Bank Group (WBG) has repeatedly declared that people and communities are at the heart of its work. In October 2024, during the WBG Evolution and IDA21 Replenishment discussions, Board members and President Banga reaffirmed this principle. Following the civil society Open Letter to Mr. Banga, and during the worldwide consultations with CSOs in 2023-2024, the WBG promised to deepen partnerships with citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs). However, implementation of these commitments is stalling. The credibility of the Bank's promises—and the effectiveness of its programs—are at risk.

### Stalled Progress on the Bank's Promises on Civic and Citizen Engagement

In the Evolution agenda and IDA21 Replenishment Report, the Bank committed to:

**Promise 1.** Renew the Civic and Citizen Engagement (CCE) Framework. **Progress Status:** The proposals for renewal of the ten-year-old CCE Framework were completed through global consultations in March 2025, but senior management review has been pending for months, with no date for Board approval.

**Promise 2.** Publish a CCE Indicator with disaggregated data in the WBG Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency Dashboard. **Progress Status:** The CCE Indicator data has not been published.

**Promise 3.** Integrate CCE into the new Country Engagement Approach. **Progress Status:** The new Country Engagement Approach omits meaningful CCE from CPF outcomes and fails to require strategies or action programs for CCE and the CCE indicator in the CPF results scorecard.

**Promise 4.** Strengthen the quality and implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Plans (SEPs) in investment projects and invite CSOs to play an expanded role. **Progress Status:** There is no public reporting at project and corporate level on SEP implementation in investment projects, despite mandatory requirements for SEPs since 2018.

**Promise 5.** Establish a new CSO funding facility (CIVIC) to succeed the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA). **Progress Status:** President Banga announced the CIVIC facility in October 2024. While GPSA has set up platforms for green accountability and health services, no trust fund has yet been established, and the Bank has not committed its own financial contribution—leaving other donors reluctant to pledge.

**Promise 6.** Consult civil society on a progress report on "quality of citizen engagement" as part of the IDA21 Mid-Term Review. **Progress Status:** Civil society has not been consulted on the scope and methodology of the IDA21 Mid-Term deliverable, raising fears of another tokenistic retrospective like those in IDA19–20

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## **Our Appeal: Four Urgent Actions**

The need for deeper civic engagement has become more acute and urgent. First, a healthy civil society is absolutely critical to furthering development goals, including those of the World Bank. Second, local CSOs face shrinking space, budget cuts, and greater risks; while governments face huge fiscal constraints, public debt, and accountability challenges, which improved citizen engagement would help to solve. The Bank's delays directly undermine the ability of citizens to contribute to improved results with accountability in Bank-financed operations, especially those under IDA 21, whose implementation has started in July 2025.

**We respectfully urge the President and the Board to take the following actions ahead of the 2025 Annual Meetings:**

### ***1. Finalize and Institutionalize the CCE Framework and Indicator***

Approve the renewed CCE Framework and Indicator at the Board level by October 2025; Institutionalize them as an Operational Policy (OP) accompanied by staff guidance; and ensure the Indicator provides disaggregated, country- and project-level data that tracks implementation, not just design.

### ***2. Systematically Monitor and Report on Implementation of Stakeholder Engagement Plans (SEPs)***

Require every Implementation and Results Summary (ISR) to include a rating on SEP implementation; commission a comprehensive review of SEP implementation since 2018; and publish country-level reports so CSOs and communities can track performance.

### ***3. Integrate CCE into the proposed New Country Engagement Approach***

Make "strengthening systems for CCE" a mandatory outcome area in every CPF Results Framework; require CPFs to include strategies and action programs for collaborating with CSOs; and include the CCE Indicator in CPF scorecards to ensure accountability.

### ***4. Uphold Commitments to IDA21 Mid-Term Review and CIVIC Facility***

Consult CSOs on the scope and methodology of the IDA21 CCE progress report before the end of 2025; and commit meaningful funds from the Bank to the CIVIC facility to catalyze other donors.

## **A Call for Leadership**

President Banga, you have called for the World Bank to work "better and faster." Yet on the civic engagement agenda, the Bank has been slow and hesitant. Swift action now would rebuild trust with civil society partners; demonstrate seriousness to IDA21 donors and shareholders; and equip the Bank to deliver responsive, accountable development at scale. The credibility of IDA21—and of the Bank's pledge to put people at the center of its mission—depends on fulfilling these commitments.

With respect, urgency, and hope,

**Signed: 282 Civil Society Representatives and Development Partners from 65 countries**