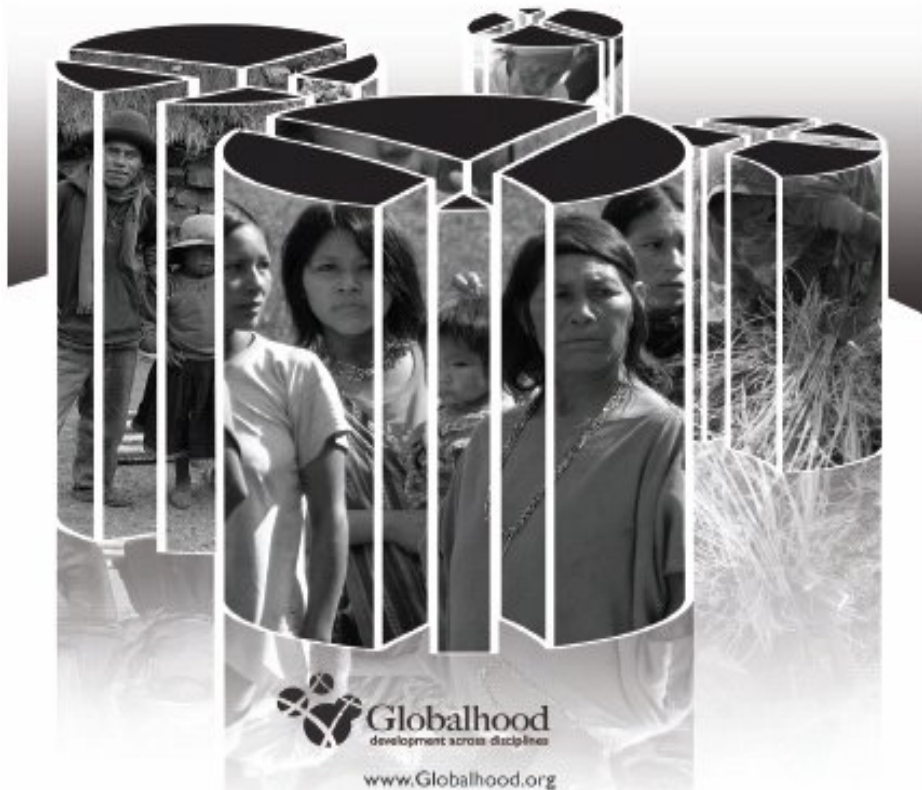


The Advantages of a Multidisciplinary Approach: 15 World Bank Projects Examined



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The World Bank and Multidisciplinary International Development: An analysis and discussion of multidisciplinary in selected World Bank development projects.

The World Bank was founded as part of the Bretton Woods agreement. Originally called the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Bank was created after World War II with the intention of aiding in the reconstruction of Europe (Mallaby, 15). It is not an independent institution in that it relies mainly on North American and European governments for funding and this means that it is somewhat at the whim of domestic politics in those countries. Today the Bank focuses on development and poverty reduction in the developing world. In the past, under different leadership, its policy has shifted from Kennedy-influenced anti-poverty rhetoric to a Cold War era policy which focused on changing poor macroeconomic policies through geopolitically focused aid and structural adjustment. It was during this era that the Bank may have deservedly earned a poor reputation, however, today the Bank has undergone many changes. It has been a major player in the drive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and it has introduced what the institution calls "community driven development" and multidisciplinary projects around the world (Mallaby, 323).

In the past the World Bank has experienced high failure rates for funded projects. At some points, Bank developed projects have promoted risk for borrowing countries, but not for the Bank itself, and this has meant that some countries have been forced to pay by taking out new loans when these risks failed. The Bank has also spent billions of wasted dollars on corrupt governments without functioning administrative infrastructures. However, since the institution



has undergone some shifting of attitude and priorities, a good portion of the Bank's thinking on development today considers more multidisciplinary approaches to projects. It has undertaken smaller projects that avoid corrupt administrations or bureaucracies and projects that focus on health, micro-enterprise, small-scale infrastructure, sustainable energy, etc. to address issues of poverty. In this paper I will not focus on the World Bank's macroeconomic financial austerity programs, but rather these smaller projects because they help more easily illustrate both the potential of collaboration across sectors and the type of thinking that needs to go into the planning of a multidisciplinary project.

I do not declare that Bank projects fail or succeed only because of the presence of (or lack of) multidisciplinary, rather I have chosen to analyze the following projects because they represent wide-ranging attempts to address economic development and poverty reduction from social, political, environmental, economic, and health approaches. In the scope of this paper, 15 World Bank projects were analyzed. According to analyses of the World Bank's own internal evaluations and external criticism, 6 of 15 projects were considered unsuccessful and 7 were considered successful. 2 current projects or projects with mixed results were also considered. The definitions of "successful" or "unsuccessful" are based on my syntheses of World Bank Independent Evaluation Group evaluations and on both local NGO and international NGO reports. Globalhood has considered the following elements: (1) collaboration and consultation with local communities on the community's needs, (2) health concerns addressed as part of an

anti-poverty effort, (3) environmental concerns addressed as part of an anti-poverty effort, (4) support for the strengthening of local civil and social institutions, (5) support for more effective, efficient, and representative governance, (6) support for micro-level business development, (7) specific focus on the participation of women and youth, (8) creative use of technology. Of the 6 successful projects, all included at least 3 of these qualifications. Two of the most successful projects, the Senegal wood fuel project and the Indonesia Kecamatan Development Program include 4 of these qualifications. None of the projects deemed unsuccessful managed to fit more than 2 of these categories, and some faced inept or corrupt government partners that negated the multidisciplinary positives. For example, the World Bank helped initiate huge environmental and social impact research for the Chad Cameroon Pipeline, but corruption and lack of strong institutions in those countries were the main reasons for project failure.

In this paper I will compare specific successful and unsuccessful Bank projects from the point of view of multidisciplinary to illustrate how that approach can influence project success. I will then discuss World Bank dam planning to bring debates over the reach of multidisciplinary and how widely it can be applied. I will then further illustrate successful multidisciplinary World Bank projects.

Failed Projects vs. Successful Projects: A Multidisciplinary Perspective

In the 1980's, the Bank provided almost \$500 million for the Polonoeste project in

Brazil, a highway building and "colonization" project in the rainforest (Mallaby, 48). By the end of the project, many indigenous people who lived in the effected areas had died from new diseases or violence related to land disputes (Goldsmith) and 50,000 square miles of rainforest had been destroyed (50,000 sq. miles makes up "an area roughly the size of Wisconsin") (Mallaby, 48). Polonoroeste was one of the Bank's most well known mistakes. But what could have been done better?

A multidisciplinary approach for the Polonoroeste project might have provided for background research on the residents of the effected areas so as to determine how many people would be effected and how deforestation and influx of outsiders would affect their lives. It would have also made sure that leaders of communities within the range of Polonoroeste would be partners in negotiating the terms of the project and compensation, that they would be consulted on how the project could be improved and on how the project could positively benefit indigenous communities in the area. Provisions in the project should have included enforcing land rights and human rights for people who already lived in the effected area. A multidisciplinary approach might have also included serious environmental impact research to establish what types of flora and fauna inhabited the area and how native ecosystems would be effected, especially considering the amount of land effected.

In 1987, the Bank essentially admitted its own error in its involvement with Polonoroeste, and due to critiques from environmentalist NGOs, set up an environmental oversight division (Mallaby, 48). However, the Bank said Polonoroeste would have been worse if the Brazilian government had undertaken the project without the Bank. The Bank's design had included the

recommendation to create indigenous reserves, biological reserves, and a national park. The Brazilian government did not take the Bank's recommendations in the implementation of Polonoroeste.

The level of the Bank's liability in the outcome of a project like Polonoroeste brings up the complicated issue of the Bank and multidisciplinary. Attributing failure of Bank funded projects to host governments is not unique to Polonoroeste. Some people like Sebastian Mallaby even claim that the highly criticized Structural Adjustment Programs of the past failed equally in part due to host government mismanagement, lack of strong administrative branches in those countries, or ineptitude. The “corruption eruption” is one of the most confounding development questions.

While corruption is a major factor in unsuccessful development initiatives, one of the Bank's most successful programs specifically took the notorious corruption of the host nation into account. In Indonesia, the Bank's historical plan of action in the country had been to embark on large scale projects and ignore the corruption and cronyism. The reasoning was that the lives of many people were improving (in the 80's and 90's, 1 million people were being lifted out of poverty every year in Indonesia and the view was that the corruption of government officials and bureaucrats was a sort of tax to subsidize their relatively low salaries). However, after endemic corruption in Indonesia proved to be a major reason behind its near collapse during the East Asian financial crisis, Scott Guggenheim, a Bank anthropologist in the country led the institution in a new direction in development practice in Indonesia. The highly successful

Kecamatan Development Project became an example of the potential of the World Bank in the financing of development.

Through the program, the Bank gives relatively small loans to kecamatans (loose affiliations of about 20 villages or smaller) for both small and large projects, bridges, small cooperatives, or roads that link small villages with small factories (Edstrom). The project is designed so as to avoid some of the corruption in Indonesian politics and society that has historically led to shoddy or half-finished development projects. Money is distributed straight to the kecamatans to make sure they are in charge of its use (instead of leaving potentially corrupt politicians in charge of it), materials are painstakingly catalogued, and records are posted publicly so anyone can see how money is being used and if it is indeed being utilized as intended (Mallaby, 2005). The World Bank provides funds, but does not exert influence in how the kecamatan decides to distribute the money. Proposals for projects are submitted to kecamatans and the most feasible and necessary are selected ("Indonesia Kecamatan").

The Kecamatan project has made it easier to design and implement local projects for new roads which have made it easier for children to go to school in the rainy season and for farmers to do business in market towns. It has lowered maternal mortality rates and has increased general access to medical services. Small cooperatives created through the program have expanded to the point where many now hire extra employees and have multiplied their profits many times the initial loan from the World Bank ("Indonesia Kecamatan").

Previous lending by the Bank in Indonesia was to the government and was macro-

economic in focus. The Kecamatan project involves loans to non-governmental bodies, relies on the expertise of both North American anthropologists and Indonesians, considers cultural and political issues, and addresses local scale economics in its development aims. The emphasis on accountability and local control is key to the success of the project. The project does not focus specifically on roads or small business development- it allows the kecamatans to choose which "disciplines" are necessary to be addressed depending on the need of the community and it allows them to decide what kind of multidisciplinaryity is appropriate. This allows for development projects that are much more reflective of a community's needs.

The success and failure of Bank funded projects with political implications is based on the level of multidisciplinaryity of the project as well as the disciplines of the partners involved. The World Bank was involved with the Indonesian government in a trans-migration program that attempted to resettle landless people from crowded main islands of the archipelago nation to less dense areas. Some ethnic minority communities that lived on the more sparsely populated islands that were the target of the program felt that the government was trying to extend political influence into those areas, areas in which a separatist movement was popular (Marr). The program was also seen as insensitive to local customs because it placed many urban people from different parts of the country onto land and areas traditionally inhabited by already existing communities. Some NGOs claim that the program led to quick and unchecked deforestation that was not occurring before the transmigration program began ("Trial By Fire"). The plan for the program was flawed and it did not take into account the skills of those being transferred; the

program moved urban residents with out farming skills to poor soil areas with the intention of creating agricultural development. As with many Bank projects, the Indonesian Transmigration Program was highly politicized, however, political concerns were not taken into account in the enactment of the program (Marr). This combination meant much less success than predicted.

More recently, however, the Bank has had success in funding multidisciplinary projects that deal with the economic and social effects of politics. The end of conflicts in the African Great Lakes region left thousands of former soldiers, para-military members, and members of rebel groups without jobs or prospects. For ex-combatants, the end of conflicts can mean loss of steady income and social status, as well as lingering social and psychological issues and difficulties integrating back into the patterns of civil society ("Jobs for Rebels"). The remaining presence of armed groups in newly peaceful impoverished countries can also be a destabilizing force to the society as a whole.

It is important that armed groups are demobilized and that members of those groups are eased into economically and socially productive roles, but this is especially difficult considering that the region does not have a diverse or productive economy. The Bank's Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Program has provided "economic reintegration assistance" to more than 30,000 adult and child ex-combatants from various armed groups. It provides psychological support services, education, job training, job opportunities, and "capacity building" for group economic ventures ("Demobilizing and Reintegrating").

Peace ending war is obviously extremely important for the well being of those who are

effected by that conflict. However, a political approach is not the end point, nor is it sufficient to sustain the well being of the effected. In the case of the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Program, economic, medical, and social disciplines are also considered important to lasting peace in the host society. Thousands of combatants essentially lost their jobs after the conflicts ended, so providing them with assistance in finding new ways of supporting themselves and their families is sure to lessen the potentially destabilizing effects of desperation and extreme poverty. Lack of psychological support for people who have been in combat situations can lead to serious social problems down the road, so the inclusion of mental health services in the project curbs what could be a less visible, but serious and potentially harmful issue.

Other institutions working on or funding demobilization and reintegration issues in the region are the UN International Labor Office, the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program, 12 European countries, and the European Commission ("Rwanda"). This is important because unlike in the case of dealing with Indonesia's government, a widened group of non-affiliated political entities have a much better chance of de-politicizing their involvement as much as possible.

In two controversial projects involving North American companies investing in very poor, the Bank has shown two sides of its oversight. The Marlin Mine project in Guatemala is a more recent example of past Bank mistakes. The World Bank gave a loan to the US based Glamis Gold company. The mining operation was broadly identified as an economic development project, but some argue that the project could have been privately funded and that

seeking the loan from the Bank was an attempt by Glamis Gold to lend some political legitimacy to the project (NPR). There have been allegations of a flawed consultation process in which the Guatemalan government did not consult with the indigenous groups in the area of the mine, "allegations of forced land sales; the mine's unregulated use of municipal water; fear and a lack of personal security in the project area; and the absence of clear development benefits for the villagers who will be affected by the project" ("Glamis in Guatemala"). The Bank did not follow some of its own guidelines which aim to ensure a certain degree of multidisciplinary planning for projects, and again, less than trustworthy government partners were involved in preventing broad economic development schemes to succeed.

In the Chad Cameroon Pipeline project, the Bank forced Exxon and Elf to complete a 19 volume environmental assessment (Mallaby, 347), consult local anthropologists on the best ways to involve women in the construction of the pipeline, promise nature reserves larger than the amount of rainforest to be affected, etc (Mallaby, 345). In an attempt to avoid corruption, the Bank tried to make the Chadian government implement a revenue plan that would keep portions of the revenue offshore for use in education, health, and other services. The plan involved enforcing transparent transactions between the government and oil companies and a new administrative body to oversee the process (Mallaby, 352). However, since the project has started, there have been cases in which portions of small land-holdings have been expropriated without compensation and little actual environmental or worker's rights oversight after the project started (Schwartz). Two government ministers were fired due to involvement in non-

payment of taxes by the oil companies, and the companies involved in the project were ordered to leave the country by the President of Chad in 2006 (Hancock).

In extremely poor countries with badly managed governments, aid or revenue from natural resources almost always "achieves nothing" (Mallaby, 351). It provides "incentives for corruption... and weakens governance" (Mallaby, 351). Even the most well intentioned and multidisciplinary projects cannot protect countries like Chad from that outcome.

Dams, the World Bank, and Multidisciplinarity

Dams are some of the most controversial projects that the World Bank undertakes. While some of the macroeconomic measures and conditionalities enforced in Bank loans also inspired political debate and political upheaval, dams can directly and physically affect thousands. Dams require relocation, compensation, and environmental safeguards, and inspire some of the strongest NGO reaction of any Bank projects. Some generally anti-dam groups like the International Rivers Network and the World Commission on Dams have been criticized for endorsing impossible environmental restrictions that amount to a "virtual ban" on dams (Mallaby, 357), but at the same time, some local grassroots protests against planned dams have arguably prevented unfair and poorly planned and managed dams from going forward. In general, the construction of dams always leads to trouble.

The Chixoy Dam of the Rio Negro in the Baja Verapaz state of Guatemala was constructed during the civil war in that country. Today, the dam provides 80% of the country's

electricity needs today by some estimates (Johnston). At the time of construction, there had been some level of negotiations with the small indigenous Achi Maya community who would be displaced by the construction of the dam, but complications of wartime, the dictatorial government of Guatemala, and lack of oversight on the part of the Bank meant that there was little follow through on the negotiations ("World Bank and InterAmerican"). The government was engaged in a scorched earth policy against indigenous affiliated guerilla groups and villages, and during the time of negotiations for the dam, groups associated with the military attacked the people of Rio Negro, massacring more than 400 men, women, and children. Survivors fled Rio Negro and the dam was eventually built, flooding the valley and the area of the town (Tecu Osorio).

The survivors have only received small amounts the promised compensation from the Bank and now live in impoverished conditions elsewhere Baja Verapaz (Tecu Osorio).

ADIVIMA, a human rights group founded by survivors of the massacres contend that the World Bank knew about the massacres even as they pushed for the construction of the Chixoy ("World Bank and InterAmerican"). Employees of the Bank associated with the project told me that due to the nature of the Guatemalan government at the time, the Bank knew little of the situation on the ground.

How could a human rights disaster like this be averted? It is not clear how much the Bank knew about what was happening. Even giving the benefit of the doubt, should institutions like the World Bank undertake projects in war torn countries with undemocratic governments since

those projects are likely to have worse human rights? In important infrastructure projects that will benefit millions of people, what kind of safeguards are necessary? In this case, full negotiations with representatives of the Rio Negro community and contracted agreements on compensation (monetary, residential) and guarantees of rights should have been required before the Bank would provide the funding for the project. Was this possible in 1980's Guatemala? It is hard to know. The government was engaged in what is now classified as a genocide against the Mayan people of the country, so the prospect of amicable relations between indigenous people and parties representing the interests of the government seem unlikely. In peaceful times, a multidisciplinary approach to constructing a dam like the Chixoy would include consulting with communities in the effected area to determine how their lives will be changed (where they live, livelihoods, religious practice, access to roads/markets/agricultural fields, etc.). It would also include structured enforceable agreements on compensation. The lack of enforceable agreements has also caused problems for a dam in East Asia.

The Nam Theun 2 Dam in Laos is a \$1.25 billion electrification project. Up to 1,200 families will be displaced by the flooding of the river valley (Lang). As of now, progress in building the dam is on schedule, but the compensation and assistance in finding new farmland or other livelihoods for people living in affected areas is "slow" (Lang). According to the World Rainforest Movement, the anthropologist hired by the dam developer has said that presentations to effected communities were done in the Lao language, but most people in the effected area do not speak that language (Lang). This has meant that there was confusion about

exactly what was happening, why the dam was being built, and how compensation would work. Some have said that the flood covered vegetation will cause excessive production of greenhouse gasses and that not enough is being done to take care of the issue. Finally, some argue that effective political dissent against the dam is hard in Laos, which has a strong dictatorship ("Dam the Consequences").

The issues associated with the construction of dams has caused the Bank to pull out of some projects. The Narmada Dam project called for a series of dams in the Narmada Valley in India with the intention of providing irrigation, drinking water, and electricity to 40 million people (Mallaby). According to some estimates, it would displace a half million people and would effect the livelihoods of even more who live upstream and downstream from the project. After intense grassroots protest to the project, the World Bank pulled funding. The fight over the dam is still in the Indian courts. There is yet to be a multidisciplinary approach to dam construction that has been able to avoid controversy and mismanagement on the part of the World Bank and its loan recipients.

Other Projects

Bangladesh is located on a delta of 400 rivers making the development of a traditional energy grid essentially impossible. Many people in rural areas of the country live with out electricity at all. The World Bank's Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development's

goal was to extend electricity to these rural areas in a sustainable way (“Rural Electrification”).

The project was successful in providing sustainable energy to the rural areas, and some of the existing para-statal energy infrastructure was turned over to the control of community cooperatives (“Electricity for Rural”). Bringing sustainable electricity to the areas had other positive consequences as well. Electricity made it easier to start business ventures and the number of home businesses increased. The average amount of time spent of household chores decreased. Because of the availability of light at night, levels of reading for school aged children increased. The provision of electricity was also directly linked to fewer missed days of school and lower child mortality (“Electricity for Rural”).

Unlike other situation, sustainable energy in Bangladesh was not replacing any existing unsustainable electricity sources. The provision of electricity to un-electrified places (at any degree of sustainability) is an "effective anti-poverty instrument", and in this case the benefits crossed sectors. Electrification in rural Bangladesh encouraged entrepreneurship, less menial household labor and more free time, better education, and better child health, all of which are anti-poverty strategies.

Because the status of women in Bangladesh is significantly lower than that of men, the World Bank funded a different program with the goal of increasing female enrollment in schools in order to combat some of the causes of the inequality (“Female Secondary”). In Bangladesh, as in many developing countries, it is often the case that if money is short, boys are sent to school over girls, and on average, girls go to school for less time than boys. The Bank project meant to

encourage girls to stay in school by providing stipends for tuition for girls and providing financial incentives to successful students to encourage higher achievement. The program also financed teacher training rewards to schools that provided access to safe drinking water and latrines.

The female secondary education project increased female enrollment to almost 50%, raised the average age of marriage, decreased the average number of children per woman, and led to better nutrition among women as well as higher incomes. The implementation of the project was combined with health sector reforms. In this case, making reforms in congruence with other projects increased the effectiveness of both.

In rural areas of Senegal, overuse of charcoal for fuel had been leading to degradation of forests and forest ecosystems. It was directly related to increasingly poor soil quality, the "impoverishment of rural areas", and the subsequent exodus of people in rural areas to urban centers. The wood fuel industry in the country was highly centralized, which meant the enrichment of a small number of urban fuel companies at the expense of rural areas ("Sustainable Woodfuel"). The Bank funded a successful project which crossed many disciplines, multiplying the success. First, the project particularly promoted the participation of women because although men were traditionally leaders of rural communities, wood collection was considered a woman's job. This job was becoming increasingly difficult and time consuming in some areas due to the scarcity of wood. The project also included a GIS "forest monitoring system" to map forests, and villages signed contracts making them responsible for the maintenance specific tracts of forest. In return for agreeing to sustainably maintain their forests,

villages received training in micro-credit enterprise. The project also provided training in the production and distribution of more environmentally friendly wood stoves economically viable, creating a niche industry to fill the growing need in the country's emerging market for the stoves. Today, between one quarter and 50% of the country's fuel production is from sustainable wood fuels. Micro-credit enterprises in various sectors (agriculture, crafts, livestock) and production of sustainable fuel have generally increased the incomes of residents of the rural villages involved ("Sustainable Woodfuel"). The project gave economic importance to traditional women's activities

In the decade after the end of communist rule, the Ukraine was experiencing poorly functioning social service programs, income disparities, "dysfunctional" health and education sectors, and "persistent under funding" of services. The World Bank funded a project meant to address these issues through community-based services. The project is in the style of more recent "community driven development" Bank projects.

\$60 million of the approximately \$70 million project went to micro-projects designed by communities, NGOs, and local governments. A set of evaluation criteria was established to determine the most worthy projects. The number of beneficiaries, level of involvement by those effected, compliance with "good standards", and sustainability were all taken into account. Small civil works, training, and infrastructure were funded. The project also allotted \$3.5 million to local and central government capacity building. The Ukraine Social Investment Fund was not exactly like the Kecamatan project in Indonesia, but it involved some of the same

multidisciplinary criteria and was able to promote positive growth across several sectors.

Conclusions

Some of the World Bank's biggest failures and mistakes in the past have been because their ambitious projects did not include enough multidisciplinary planning, research, and consultation. Projects have failed, faced complications, or have had other negative effects on people and places due to dealings with corrupt and/or authoritarian governments, lack of proper environmental safeguards, misunderstanding of local customs, promotion of unsustainable practices, use of the wrong language in presentations to affected villagers, among many other classic development mishaps. On the other hand, some of the World Bank's more successful projects have helped create a multidisciplinary framework for the recipients of the loans to operate their own development projects or have utilized approaches that cross disciplines to fight problems with many roots.

There is no singular methodology in undertaking a development project with a multidisciplinary approach and the Indonesian Kecamatan and Senegal wood fuel projects are good examples of this. The Kecamatan Program was set up in a way that not only gave control over what needed to be built to the communities affected, but also in a way that helped circumvent the corruption of the government and contractors in Indonesia. Local communities decided which projects would receive grants, and transparency was enforced in every part of the Kecamatan Program's operations (public bulletin boards listed materials and costs with the intent

of making records public to shame politicians and contractors if there were discrepancies in the books). The World Bank's role was more hands off; it provided funding and oversight, allowing local experts rather than far off economists to be responsible for the program's success. The project helped facilitate necessary small-scale infrastructure development like road and bridge construction (which helped farmers and craftsmen travel to markets much more easily and increased school attendance), increased community participation in democratic processes, curtailed endemic corruption in politics, and included funding for training in small business development. In the Senegal wood fuel project, technology was used to monitor unsustainably logged forests and villages were given training in marketing and producing sustainable wood burning stoves. This not only included the use of several disciplines of expertise, but also promoted positive cross-sector growth in renewable energy, slowing of rural to urban migration, sustainable forestry, and the creation of businesses and jobs in rural areas.

Some of the World Bank's least successful programs have been macroeconomic financial austerity plans with very vague anti-poverty goals for governments with shaky economies and some of the Bank's harshest critics have said that it has been out of touch with the needs and customs of its constituency. Therefore, although it is clear that the World Bank has demonstrated ability to learn from its mistakes, it is clear that there is significant work remaining to be done to be sure that future implementation of projects employ best practices in multidisciplinary that will generate the best outcomes for beneficiary populations.

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