



## IDB Civil Society Advisory Councils ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF COUNCILS

### BACKGROUND

The report on the Inter-American Development Bank's Eighth Capital Replenishment (1994) highlighted three aspects of civil society participation in Bank operations:

- Public policies in member borrowing countries must be the result of a dialogue among national actors and be subject to broad, sustainable consensus;
- Countries must make a decisive effort to incorporate groups previously marginalized in modern society.
- The Bank is directly responsible to governments and indirectly responsible to legislative bodies and citizens.

Within this framework, the 2004 Strategy for Promoting Citizen Participation in Bank Activities (GN-2325) officially mentions for the first time the establishment of Civil Society Advisory Councils (CSACs), which were initiated in 2000:

**As a mechanism of contact between the IDB and civil society:** “(...) out of which have come formal and informal Bank–civil society liaison arrangements, such as the Civil Society Advisory Councils (CSACs) created in some of the Bank's Country Offices.” However, it does not specify whether the mechanism is formal or informal.

**As a method of consultation:** “(...) Others will be electronic consultations, taking advantage of the facilities offered by modern information technologies. The Civil Society Advisory Councils (CSACs) can be an important instrument in helping to identify the consultation formats most suited to each particular case.” However, there are no institutional guidelines for consultations at the operational level.

**As a way of channeling civil society participation:** “(...) In this regard, it is necessary to reinforce the practice of setting up Civil Society Advisory Councils (CSACs) in the Bank's Country Offices, which need to be broad-based and diverse, with members periodically renewed.” However, the criteria for establishing the CSACs are not clear.

The Strategy develops an Action Plan that focuses on strengthening these mechanisms and at the same time presents an **overall definition**: “(viii) Strengthen Civil Society Advisory Councils (CSACs) in the Bank's Country Offices and finish organizing CSACs in offices that have yet to create one. These should be flexible, pluralistic, advisory and consultation bodies of the Country Offices but should not preclude other liaison and coordination arrangements between Country Offices and civil society organizations. Provision needs to be made for adequate resources for Country Offices for that purpose and to be able to fulfill other responsibilities that will fall to them in implementing this strategy.” In practice, however, assigning specific resources for the CSACs within the Country Office budgets is still a challenge.

### **ANALYSIS AND JUSTIFICATION FOR A REDEFINITION OF THE CSACs:**

The Strategy for Promoting Citizen Participation has provided an overall definition of what the CSACs should be and why systematic interaction is important for strengthening dialogue with civil society organizations (CSOs), thereby fulfilling the mandate of the Eighth Replenishment. In reality, however, institutional compliance with regard to the CSACs has been limited.

The results of an internal survey that EXR conducted of the Bank's 26 Country Offices between February and April 2009, supplemented by interviews with civil society liaisons, show us the following:

1. **Not all countries have set up CSACs.**
2. **Great diversity in the way the CSACs function:** Although the CSACs are flexible entities, the Country Offices lack any guiding documentation for establishing and governing them.
3. **Lack of (or inconsistency in) an institutional focus on relationships with the CSACs.**
4. **Lack of guidelines and direction for the way CSACs are to function:** The Country Offices report that they set up the CSACs without clear definitions of their roles and functions, and without membership criteria.
5. **Lack of human resources for monitoring the CSACs:** In theory, the civil society liaisons are responsible for convening and monitoring the CSACs. However, all of them view the liaison function as a task that is additional to the responsibilities they already have. On average, the liaisons devote less than 10 percent of their time to working with civil society.
6. **Lack of financial resources for establishing, implementing and strengthening the CSACs:** The Country Offices report that the budget is usually their most difficult challenge.
7. **CSAC's role not understood by the government.**

### **NEW CSACs:**

The definition of the words ADVISORY as "giving advice or expert opinion" and "COUNCIL" as both "expert opinion" and "organ" may give the wrong signal with regard to the spirit in which the CSACs were conceived. The suggestion is therefore made to change the word ADVISORY to CONSULTING (defined as "said of a committee or of a corporation: established to be listened to and consulted by those who govern"), and COUNCIL to GROUP. Thus, given the need to **renew** the focus and relaunch the deficient implementation of this forum in order to hear the voice of civil society, a new name has been proposed: **Civil Society Consulting Group**, which could be called **ConSOC**.

## - PROPOSAL - GUIDELINES FOR HOW THE IDB CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTING GROUPS WOULD WORK

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This proposal is based on the Strategy for Promoting Citizen Participation in Bank Activities (GN-2325); the internal survey described in the preceding pages; interviews with civil society liaisons; the analysis of the terms of reference, regulations and working plans pertaining to the Civil Society Advisory Councils (CSACs) established in the region; and several proposals presented by civil society organizations (CSOs) and civil society liaisons with this specific purpose.<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION:

These guidelines are intended to serve as a reference point to each Country Office (COF) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB or Bank) with the aim of providing guidance and support to the institutional relationship that the COFs are currently establishing, or will establish, with various CSOs in their respective countries.

Therefore, taking into consideration this document, each Country Office, in collaboration with its Civil Society Consulting Group, will issue specific Operational Guidelines (as defined below) adjusted to the context, reality and peculiarities of its own country.

### DEFINITION:

1. The IDB **Civil Society Consulting Group (ConSOC)** is a forum for exchanging information, strengthening dialogue, and for ongoing consultations between the IDB and the CSOs that are pertinent to its work in the countries where it functions.

### OBJECTIVE:

2. To get CSO feedback concerning IDB interventions in order to improve the Bank's impact in the country's social and economic development.

### PROCESS:

3. In order to achieve this objective, it is sought: (i) to increase the quantity and quality of the IDB's interaction with the country's CSOs; (ii) to improve mutual

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<sup>1</sup> **HONDURAS** (CSAC-H Work Guidelines; 2008 CSAC Work Plan); **ARGENTINA** (Proposal to develop CSACs in the Argentina IDB Country Office) submitted by the Center for Human Rights and the Environment (CEDHA [its initials in Spanish]); **BRAZIL** (Civil Society Advisory Council of the Inter-American Development Bank); **URUGUAY** (Action Plan: The IDB and its Development Partners); **MEXICO** (Mechanisms for the Functioning of CSACs in Mexico, 2005; Assistance with Report, June 2007 Session); **PERU** (Report on CSAC Activities, 2008); **BAHAMAS** (Terms of Reference for the CSAC); **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO** (Guidelines: CSAC Work Plan); **JAMAICA** (Terms of Reference for the CSAC; Summary of Discussions and Meetings, 2009); **PARAGUAY** (Draft Proposal for the Bank–Civil Society Interaction Mechanism, 2006; Draft CSAC Internal Regulations)

understanding of both actors' functions, limitations and challenges; (iii) to identify opportunities for mutual collaboration; and (iv) to strengthen an informed, critical and constructive dialogue with the CSOs in various IDB working areas.

#### STATUS:

4. As a forum for dialogue and consultation, the **ConSOC** will have no legal status, nor may it be considered as a substitute for other mechanisms the Bank already has, nor should it be seen as an entity operating under Bank authority. It is a meeting place and a space for strengthening voluntary, cooperative relationships among various groups. In this forum, all the participants agree to work together to provide the necessary inputs with regard to opinions, information, knowledge and availability in order to help improve the IDB's work in the country.

#### CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHMENT AND PARTICIPATION:

5. Participants of the **ConSOC** are those civil society organizations with direct relationships to IDB projects or affected labor sectors within the country<sup>2</sup>.
6. In specific and duly justified cases, people may join the **ConSOC** on an individual basis, without necessarily representing an organization. In these cases, such persons' intellectual work and their experience in and knowledge of the sector would justify their participation.
7. Participation in the **ConSOC** is voluntary and without remuneration.
8. CSO participation in the **ConSOC** does not authorize any privilege or preference with regard to management of technical or financial resources that the IDB may channel through the CSO directly or indirectly, either as executor or beneficiary.
9. CSOs invited by the Country Office to participate will express their commitment to the **ConSOC** upon the receipt of its establishment notice<sup>3</sup>. The minimum commitment of any member to the **ConSOC** is one year.
10. Even though alternation between members of the **ConSOC** is recommended, depending upon the evolution of the IDB's portfolio of projects in the country, the Country Office may keep the membership of the **ConSOC** constant for an additional agreed upon period of time.
11. If one of the members of the **ConSOC** does not attend the meetings called and does not provide a reason, the Country Office may request a change of representation or replace the CSO.

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<sup>2</sup> Civil Society Organization are: non-governmental organizations; community organizations or groups; labor unions; professional associations; academic institutions; foundations; non-profit organizations; or relevant network of organizations that are relevant to the work of the Bank in the country.

<sup>3</sup> The Bank's Representative is responsible for the final selection of ConSOC's participants.

## MEETINGS:

12. The **ConSOC** will meet in the city where the IDB's Country Office is located. The IDB's Country Office may decide to convene, if relevant to strengthen its impact locally, meetings in other regions, or the city in which the COF is located.

## NUMBER OF CONSOCs IN A COUNTRY:

13. The number of ConSOCs in a country will depend upon the characteristics of the interactions and consultations to be established between the Bank and CSOs in the country. Each Country Office may decide the quantity of **ConSOCs** necessary to improve the impact of the IDB in the country.

## NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE:

14. The IDB Country Office, through its Representative, is responsible for setting up the **ConSOC**. The Bank's Representative will make the final decision on the selection of participants for the **ConSOC**.
15. The Bank's Representative, or a person indicated by him, will convene and chair the meetings of the **ConSOC**. The invitations for the meetings will be sent together with its respective agenda. The Bank's Representative must convene at least one meeting per year for each established **ConSOC**.
16. The **ConSOC** may be set up in two formats: General level: seeks participation from CSOs for matters of general interest across various sectors (e.g. Country Strategies); and Thematic level: seeks specific participation from pertinent CSOs with expertise in key IDB themes (e.g. Bank's policies). The invitations for a meeting of a **ConSOC** may include guests or other CSOs specialized in or interested on a certain topic to be discussed.
17. A meeting may be requested by any of the members of the **ConSOC**, though the Bank's Representation will have the discretion to decide when to convene it.

## OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES:

18. The Bank's Representative must issue, in open consultation with the **ConSOC**, specific operational guidelines for its operations in the country. This document will govern, among others, the following topics: (i) additional criteria for the selection of participants; (ii) the maximum number of participant for each established **ConSOC**; (iii) criteria and time for the rotation of participants; (iv) additional responsibilities related to the draft and circulation of agendas for the meetings; (v) deadlines for the issuance of notices calling for meetings; (vi) the language of the meetings and the documents to be distributed to and elaborated by the **CONSOC**; (vii) the appropriate channels of communication with the members (e.g. webpage, in coordination with EXR); and (viii) responsibilities related to the elaboration and publication of minutes of the meetings.

### **BANK'S RESPONSIBILITIES:**

19. Under OP. 102 - Disclosure of Information, members of the **ConSOC** must be provided with timely and pertinent information about the Bank's activities in the country, but will respect the current norms and policies concerning document confidentiality.
20. Will offer logistical facilities and meeting space for the various **ConSOC** meetings.
21. Will allocate financial and human resources such that the **ConSOC** can function well in the country<sup>4</sup>.
22. Will promote exchanges of experience with consulting groups established in other countries to the extent possible.

### **ROLES OF THE CONSULTING GROUP:**

23. The **ConSOC** is expected both to participate in general and thematic public consultation processes and to make information available to the groups it represents and to the networks to which it belongs, thus supporting the IDB in providing notice of the public consultation process.
24. To suggest organizations of interest for the Bank to contact about topics or specific projects outside the **ConSOC** field.
25. The **ConSOC** is a forum for dialogue and consultation, not a substitute for the IDB's accountability mechanisms.

### **FINAL POINTS:**

26. Each Bank's Representative in the region is being called upon to set up **ConSOC** before the end of the first semester of 2010.
27. Annually, in the month of November, the Country Office must provide a consolidated report of activities and results, including a detailed description on the use of resources allocated to the **ConSOC** and other activities related to civil society, to the Vice Presidency for Countries (VPC) and to the Office of External Relations (EXR) that will review and include them in the IDB's Annual Report with Civil Society.

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<sup>4</sup> The Budget allocated by the COF to the ConSOC will cover mainly the costs of the meetings, capacitation of the members, operational costs (i.e. reimbursement of certain costs previously agreed with the CSO and duly approved by the COF), and costs related to specific activities. This expressly excludes any stipend, bonus or similar compensations. The budget has to be duly supported and backed by the ConSOC activity plan.