

Strategies and Procedures on Sociocultural Issues as Related to the Environment

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A. INTRODUCTION

Recognizing: 1) the close relationship between environmental protection and natural resources management on the one hand, and the role of human population groups as actors within the different ecosystems on the other hand; 2) the special problems associated with vulnerable population groups, especially tribal people, affected by Bank operations; and 3) the positive effect of the timely and effective incorporation of sociocultural concerns on overall project outcome, the Environmental Protection Division will address sociocultural issues in the following way.

B. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

As part of its function of direct support to Bank operations, the Environmental Protection Division will have specific responsibilities regarding the identification, planning, design and analysis of social components of Bank operations that: 1) directly affect indigenous tribal groups and other people that traditionally inhabit natural environment areas affected by the operation; and 2) involve the resettlement of communities as a result of large physical infrastructure works or other project activities that require the availability of land traditionally occupied by local communities.¹

In addition, as part of its role in ensuring environmental quality control in operations, the basic responsibility for which is assumed by other Bank divisions, the Environmental Protection Division will serve as a liaison, so as to ensure that sociocultural issues are adequately addressed. This implies that for those operations that fall beyond the direct responsibility of the Division, but do require sociocultural assessment,² other Divisions, especially in PRA, will have to acquire the necessary anthropological or sociological expertise of their own.

Moreover, insofar as directly relevant to the two areas identified above, the Environmental Protection Division will also assist the Bank in: a) defining policy and strategy issues; b) maintaining working relationships with other institutions; and c) participation in training activities.

C. MAJOR AREAS OF FOCUS

1. Tribal and other Population Groups Traditionally Inhabiting Project Areas

a. Problem identification

Experience gained by the Bank and by other international agencies in supporting projects that directly affected indigenous tribal people and other population groups traditionally inhabiting natural environment areas, has shown that, even though these projects may have intended to benefit these groups, often, they have seriously threatened the physical and sociocultural survival, and sometimes contributed to the

¹ In any case, for those projects that require Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), the project's direct and indirect influence on **all** affected population groups will be included in these assessments (see: "Procedures for Classifying and Evaluating Environmental Impacts on Bank Operations", approved by the CMA on 15 February 1990). The procedural steps and classification procedures outlined in this document also apply to the sociocultural issues as related to the environment.

² The social issues that fall beyond the scope of direct involvement of the Environmental Protection Division but may require specific sociocultural assessment, include: 1) human rights; 2) land tenure; 3) poverty; 4) women and infancy; 5) population; and 6) archaeological and historical heritage. If, however, these issues are directly relevant to operations that affect tribal and other forest people or involve relocation, they will be addressed by the Environmental Protection Division.

extinction of entire groups or the creation of relationships of extreme dependency. Without adequate protective measures, based on solid anthropological expertise, especially the indigenous tribal people in Latin America, which are mostly located in tropical forest areas, are extremely vulnerable to outside intervention.

Traditionally these tribal groups ³ are characterized by: 1) a high degree of isolation and independence from the rest of the society; 2) a largely self-subsistent economy based on hunting, fishing, gathering of forest products and shifting cultivation or slash-and-burn horticulture; 3) an often itinerant or semi-nomadic lifestyle, which, given the low carrying capacity of many tropical ecosystems, requires relatively vast territories; 4) an often extremely simple material culture; 5) a loosely knit political organization, based on relatively small and independent villages, combined with an often complex social and kinship structure; 6) highly specific language, culture and religious belief systems; and 7) a unique relationship to the land that is determined not only by the groups' economic adaptation to the specific environment they inhabit but also by the social and kinship system, cosmogony, religion and ritual. The degree of contact with the national society may vary from the total isolation of still uncontacted groups to very high degrees of acculturation and integration, which for some tribal groups has resulted in access to public services, proficiency in the national language, integration into the market economy, etc.

However, in recent years, important new developments have affected the situation of indigenous people as well as the actions taken by government agencies and international organizations, including:

- a strong process of reconstruction of many indigenous groups, resulting in a reversal of declining population trends, cultural revitalization and strengthening of ethnic identities.
- a rapid process of creation or strengthening of indigenous organizations and movements, at the local, national and international level giving many of these groups increased access and participation in the decision making process.
- the introduction by several countries in the region of reforms in the legislation regarding indigenous people, and the acceptance of native languages as vehicles for education and communication.
- the growing tendency by international organizations to assume responsibilities regarding the material and cultural development of indigenous peoples (often with mixed results), as well as in the realm of indigenous human rights.
- a growing interest in the knowledge and technology of indigenous people with regard to tropical flora and fauna, sustainable use of natural environments, cultivation and harvesting techniques, ethnopharmacology, etc.
- the lessons learned from development projects that negatively affected indigenous peoples, especially those infrastructure projects that improve transport and communication, which often resulted in invasions by miners, migrant farmers, lumber companies and large scale cattle ranching, and resulted in the loss of tribal land use rights and environmental degradation of traditional habitats.

In addition to tribal populations, there are other forest dwellers, such as rubbertappers or “ribeirinhos”, who, though not indigenous to the area, share many of the same characteristics of tribal people in terms of

³ As opposed to indigenous peasant populations descending from the great pre-colombian cultures, and which comprise large proportions of the population of the Andean countries and Meso-america.

economic survival strategies and non-predatory sustainable forest exploitation, and have a long history of inhabiting these areas. Furthermore, other vulnerable population groups inhabiting natural environment areas, such as altiplanos, arid regions, savannas, coastal and riverine areas, to the extent that they are directly affected by environmental projects or projects with a significant environmental impact, will be included among the responsibilities of the Environmental Protection Division.

b. Guiding Principles

The general principles which will guide the Bank's activities with regard to tribal and other people inhabiting natural environment areas are based in the Bank's Environmental Policy and in the Conceptual Framework for the Bank's Environmental Protection and Improvement and Natural Resource Conservation Activities.

These principles are the following:

- the need for indigenous people directly or indirectly affected by Bank financed operations, to be consulted and to participate in the identification, design, analysis, execution and evaluation stages; recognizing as interlocutors the representatives of indigenous peoples, or, in the case of groups that are not organized, the entity they designate as their representative.
- recognition of the individual and collective rights of indigenous populations, especially tribal peoples, as established by national legislations, which in many countries are supported by international legal instruments. These rights encompass civil, political, economic, social and cultural aspects and include: 1) the right of indigenous people to decide their own priorities and to control, to the extent possible and within the country legal framework, their own economic, cultural and social development; and 2) the right of possession and property of the lands they traditionally inhabit and the natural resources found therewithin; the land being the fundamental factor in the physical survival and the sociocultural viability given the strong interrelationship between economic resource management, sociopolitical and kinship organization and cosmogony, and the territory they traditionally occupy.
- the principle that in general the IDB will not support projects that involve unnecessary or avoidable encroachment onto territories used or occupied by tribal groups or projects affecting tribal lands, unless the tribal society is in agreement with the objectives of the project, as they affect the tribe, and unless it is assured that the executing agencies have the capabilities of implementing effective measures to safeguard tribal populations and their lands against any harmful site effects resulting from the project. In addition, the Bank will avoid, where possible, the relocation of tribal indigenous people from the lands they traditionally occupy.
- the recognition of the necessity to support special measures to protect tribal groups and other vulnerable population groups inhabiting natural environment areas, especially those with little contact with the rest of the society, in the following areas: 1) measures to protect indigenous territories, including demarcation and titling of tribal lands; 2) preventive and curative health measures regarding diseases against which indigenous people have little natural resistance; and 3) measures that enable a gradual process of adaptation to the changes introduced as a result of increasing levels of contact with the rest of the society, in order to avoid, to the extent possible, traumatic "cultural shock".
- the necessity to support the institutional strengthening of official agencies in charge of indigenous affairs as well as the indigenous organizations or other non-governmental agencies that provide support and assistance to the tribal and other populations concerned.

- the recognition that indigenous people have a unique sociocultural heritage that should be preserved for future generations; that they are part of the biological diversity of the ecosystems they inhabit and are very valuable sources of knowledge on tropical species and on proven technologies for management of fragile ecosystems; that this body of knowledge should be preserved, understood and utilized; and that indigenous populations should be recognized as natural allies in the solutions to safeguard the environment.
- the realization that, as a result of excessive pressures or interference from outside, especially for those tribal groups that have a long history of confrontation or integration or have witnessed significant encroachment onto their lands, some groups have had to resort to practices that run contrary to the long-term sustainable resource use of their environments.

c. Bank Actions

On the basis of the previous guidelines, the Environmental Protection Division will verify (and provide assistance to other Bank Divisions, if needed) that for all Bank activities that may directly affect tribal and other forest peoples, the following actions are taken:

1. Within the Bank's programming activities, at the country or regional level, informed inputs be provided on any pertinent sociocultural issues related to tribal and other vulnerable population groups.
2. Identification, as early as possible, of tribal and other vulnerable population groups in the project area; early preparation of quality background information, including; if needed, assistance to the borrowers in financing the necessary professional services in order to ensure timely detection of the tribal issues.
3. Design of project components aimed at protecting indigenous population groups and their lands. The components will have to be integrated within overall project design, time-frame and budget, and will involve the consultation of the affected population groups. These specific components will include, depending on the specific needs and priorities of the groups concerned, measures to demarcate and title tribal lands, including relocation of non-tribal settlers, measures in the areas of health, education and support for productive activities and commercialization, as well as institutional strengthening for the government agencies with responsibilities for these project components and, if appropriate, for the indigenous or NGO groups involved.
4. Definition, before the approval of the project, of the implementation plan, the execution mechanisms, the budgets and the institutional responsibilities of all project participants, including the mechanisms for participation of the affected population groups in the execution of the project;
5. Verification of adequate institutional support for executing agencies, and where needed, design of special measures for institutional strengthening.
6. Monitoring, throughout project execution, of the adequate implementation of the measures adopted in the implementation plan.

2. Resettlement

a. Problem Identification

The relocation of population groups affected by large infrastructure projects or other projects that require the availability of land traditionally occupied by local communities (e.g. hydroelectric projects, mining projects, road projects, etc.), and the creation of economically and socially viable communities “from scratch”, is considered to be one of the most complex “social engineering” endeavors and one of the most difficult of all development interventions. Especially in the case of compulsory resettlement sponsored by government agencies, as opposed to spontaneous or voluntary resettlement, the experience accumulated in IDB, as well as in other agencies, has shown that in order to be successful, these projects require extremely careful planning based on social science expertise, relatively important financial support, strong institutional capabilities, and active participation by the affected population, in all stages of design and implementation.

To extreme stress associated with leaving behind the familiar surroundings of traditional habitat, social and kinship networks, and often long-established agricultural and productive practices, is compounded by the fact that low income people are especially fearful of the risks associated with resettlement. In order to strengthen the coping responses of the population to be relocated, information sharing, consultation and early participation of the affected families, in all aspects and stages of the resettlement program, including site selection, housing design, land allocation, agricultural support activities, provision of basic services, credit systems, community organization mechanisms, are needed. In addition, emphasis should be placed on recruiting families and social groups rather than individuals; paternalistic approaches and excessive subsidies should be avoided, in order to prevent long-term dependency; and entrepreneurial activities should be encouraged. If properly designed and executed, resettlement can act as a catalyst for long-term integrated area development.

b. Guiding Principles

Recognizing that the adequate identification, design and execution of relocation components in large projects is a necessity, not only on social grounds, but also as a means to increase the economic and financial viability of the project, the timely execution of the other project components, and, ultimately, the long-term development goals to be achieved by the project, the Environmental Protection Division will be guided by the following principles:

1. Prior to the decision to proceed with an operation that will involve resettlement, the Bank will give careful consideration to a wide range of alternatives.
2. As a result of worldwide experience with large relocation schemes, and given the theoretical insights gained by social scientists in the dynamics of resettlement projects, this knowledge, as well as the lessons learned from past Bank experience, will be brought to bear upon the identification and planning of the specific measures to be taken in order to ensure the viability of the relocation components.
3. In the projects that involve resettlement, generally the relocation component will be made an integral part of overall project design, execution schedule and project budget, avoiding, where possible, the approval of the resettlement component as a “parallel” project to be financed by local funds and over which the IDB will have no or little leverage.
4. Given the importance of strong institutional support throughout the process of design, execution and monitoring of the relocation component, extreme care will be taken in defining the

institutional responsibilities. If needed, early measures such as short-term technical cooperation agreements, will be considered, so as to ensure the necessary institutional viability and expertise, before project approval.

5. High quality base-line studies on the economic and sociocultural characteristics as well as on the needs and aspirations of the affected population groups, will have to be carried out as a condition prior to the Bank's consideration of the measures and procedures regarding the relocation plan.
6. The importance of community consultation and participation in all stages of project design and execution, is essential for successful project execution and outcome. This consultation process should be carried out through the existing social organizations and networks, as opposed to recruitment and negotiation with individual families, in order to assure: a) the communities acceptance of and cooperation with project objectives; and b) the reinforcement of community ties which will be the foundation for viable community organizations in the new settlements.
7. The need to include as part of the relocation efforts, not only land assignments, housing solutions, basic social infrastructure services, and, where appropriate, financial compensation measures and relocation subsidies, but also training and technical assistance for agricultural and other productive activities, so as to ensure the long-term economic viability of the new communities, the timely termination of dependency on government subsidies, and the overall increase in income levels and socioeconomic well-being of the resettled population.
8. In cases where the project directly affects places of important archeological, historical or cultural heritage, baseline studies will be carried out and protective measures undertaken.

c. Bank Actions

The Environmental Protection Division will verify (and provide assistance to other Bank Divisions, if needed) that for all projects that would involve a resettlement component, on the basis of the guidelines described above, the following actions are taken:

1. At the level of Bank programming activities, careful consideration should be given to all sociocultural factors that may affect the viability of the possible alternatives of projects for which resettlement may be needed.
2. Once the decision to proceed with the analysis of a project involving resettlement is taken, early baseline studies on the affected population groups should be carried out. These studies should be done on the basis of sound social science expertise, and should take into consideration socioeconomic and cultural aspects which will determine the specific measures and procedures of the resettlement aspects of the project. If needed, financial assistance will be provided to the borrower so as to ensure the timely preparation of these studies.
3. It should be established from the start, that the cost, time-frame, design, execution mechanisms and institutional strengthening components of the resettlement plan, be an integral part of the overall project, so as to guarantee a coordinated development effort and successful project execution.
4. The principle of community consultation and participation throughout project design and implementation, should be assured.

5. The specific measures and procedures of the resettlement plan should encompass not only the short-and medium-term transition aspects, but also those measures aimed at enhancing the prospects for the long-term economic and social viability of the new communities.
6. Given the complexities involved in resettlement projects, special consideration will be given to assuring intense Bank monitoring throughout project execution.