Marine Science Information Throughout the World.
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Environment Information Systems at the World Bank

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ABSTRACT

I'm pleased to be participating in this conference, particularly because one of the greatest challenges to the World Bank's environmental staff is the theme of this meeting: "locating and sharing resources." Today I will tell you about environmental information services at the Bank, and to put these activities in context, I will begin by describing what the World Bank does.

A new International Monetary Fund publication titled *The IMF and the World Bank: How Do They Differ?* by David Driscoll, begins with the following paragraph:

If you have difficulty distinguishing the World Bank from the International Monetary Fund, you are not alone. Most people have only the vaguest idea of what these institutions do, and very few people could, if pressed on the point, say why and how they differ. Even John Maynard Keynes, a founding father of the two institutions and considered by many the most brilliant economist of the twentieth century, admitted at the inaugural meeting of the International Monetary Fund that he was confused by the names: he thought the Fund should be called a bank, and the Bank should be called a fund. Confusion has reigned ever since.

BACKGROUND

In 1944 representatives of 44 countries met at the United Nations Monetary & Financial Conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. The goal of the conference was to erect a framework for future international economic cooperation, first, through a global balance of payments equilibrium and, second, through the repair of war damage which was to be followed by the development of the resources and productive capacity of the world, particularly the developing countries. Two organizations were established to carry out these goals: the International Monetary Fund (the Fund) and the International Bank for Reconstruction & Development (the World Bank). Both institutions are specialized agencies within the United Nations system, and both are owned and directed by the governments of their 151 member nations. Membership in the Fund is a prerequisite for membership in the World Bank.

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

The purpose of the International Monetary Fund is to assure orderly financial exchange transactions among nations. It does this by ordering the flow of payments among nations, overseeing exchange rates and providing for the observance of accepted rules of international financial conduct. The Fund makes short-term loans to member countries, both developed and developing, which are experiencing temporary balance of payments problems.

THE WORLD BANK GROUP

Although the World Bank began as a single organization, today four separate and distinct organizations comprise what is called the World Bank Group: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

(the World Bank), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

The World Bank

The International Bank for Reconstruction & Development is the oldest and largest member of the World Bank Group. Its purpose is to promote economic progress in developing countries by providing financial and technical assistance, mostly for specific projects in the public sector. The Bank's charter spells out certain basic rules that govern its operations: it must lend only for productive purposes and must stimulate economic growth in the developing countries where it lends; it may make loans only to creditworthy borrowers, and each loan is made to a government or must be guaranteed by the government concerned; the use of loans cannot be restricted to purchases in any particular member country; and the Bank's decisions to lend must be based on economic considerations alone. So the Bank isn't really a bank at all, since it does not receive deposits, it makes loans only to governments, and it will not lend or guarantee loans to any borrower capable of borrowing on reasonable terms from other sources.

Although the Bank's original funding came from capital subscriptions by member countries, most of its funds are now obtained through medium- and long-term borrowing in capital markets throughout the world. The interest rates that are paid by developing countries who borrow money from the Bank are related to the interest rate that the Bank is required to pay on the money it borrows.

Creditworthy governments do not go directly to the capital markets for three reasons. First, the Bank has a very solid standing in the financial markets, and this standing allows it to borrow money more cheaply than can many of its less-creditworthy member countries. Therefore, the rates it charges developing countries are usually lower than those charged by commercial lenders. Second, in addition to project funding, borrowing governments receive the Bank's expertise in planning and implementing projects and in providing technical assistance. Third, developing country governments are able to borrow money for 15-20 years with a 2-3 year grace period.

The World Bank's first loans financed the reconstruction of the war-damaged economies of member countries. Since then, the Bank has loaned money, initially, to finance infrastructure projects in sectors such as transportation, power and telecommunications, and more recently, to support projects that directly affect the poorest people in developing countries.

The International Development Association (IDA)

Obviously, the restrictions spelled out in the Bank's charter excluded participation by the world's poorest countries who could not be considered creditworthy under any circumstances. So in 1960 a second member of the World Bank Group, the International Development Association, was established. Although IDA is legally and financially a separate organization, its member countries must be members of the Bank, it shares Bank administrative staff, and it receives some funding from the Bank. IDA's assistance is concentrated on the 50 or so countries whose annual per capita gross national product is less than $791. Over 90% of IDA lending goes to countries with an annual per capita GNP of less than $410. Like the Bank, IDA makes loans only to governments.

The funds for IDA come mostly from contributions by its member countries, of which there are 135. The loans are interest-free, although there is a commitment charge of less than one percent on the amount of the loan. Loans must be repaid over 50 years with a 10-year grace period.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC)

The International Finance Corporation was established in 1956 to assist the economic development of developing countries by promoting growth in the private sector. In addition to lending money to private enterprises in developing countries, the IFC provides financial, legal and technical advice. The IFC does not require, nor will it accept, government guarantees of repayment of its loans; however, it will make an investment only if the government of a member country has no objections. The IFC is a separate entity legally and financially from the Bank, but its member countries, of which there are 129, must be members of the

Bank. Unlike IDA, the IFC has its own operating and legal staff; like IDA, the IFC draws upon the Bank for administrative services.

The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)

The MIGA was created in 1987 to promote the flow of international investments to developing countries by issuing guarantees against non-commercial risks and by extending advisory and technical services. Like the IFC, MIGA is a separate entity, but its member countries must be members of the Bank.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORK OF THE BANK

In the last few years, the Bank has emphasized projects that can directly benefit the poorest people by making them more productive and integrating them as active partners into the development process. Since 1986, the Bank's president has had three priorities on his agenda: population, women in development, and the environment. During the past year, the Bank has significantly expanded its environmental thrust in two ways. First, it has expanded its efforts to address the environmental consequences of individual projects and to identify projects specifically aimed at environmental problems. Second, it has stressed the development of policy interventions designed to influence environmental behavior on a large scale.

To support the Bank's environmental commitment, an environment department was established in 1987. This department helps set the direction for environmental policy, planning and research work, and takes the lead in developing strategies to integrate environmental considerations into the Bank's overall lending and policy activities. In addition, new divisions have been created to review projects and to recommend potential resource-management operations.

Because of the country focus of Bank projects, the work of the staff includes the preparation of country environmental issues briefs which are used to ensure that the Bank's assistance addresses each country's key environmental issues and concerns. More comprehensive environmental action plans or strategies are being prepared in some 30 countries over a 5-year period. Other broad-based initiatives include projects such as increased lending for environmentally-sound forestry projects throughout the world, preparation of guidelines to help prevent industrial disasters such as those in Bhopal and Chernobyl, and participation in a broad, international project to improve and strengthen the environment of the Mediterranean region.

Although it may sound as if attention to the environment is something new at the Bank, that is not the case, and, in fact, the Bank was the first international development institution to set explicit environmental standards and policies for use in the preparation and implementation of its development projects.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Hand in hand with the Bank's environmental commitment came an urgent need for information about the environmental impact of the work of the Bank, about environment activities and research outside the Bank, and about various aspects of natural resources and the environment worldwide and in the countries who are requesting assistance from us. We need to know what others are doing so that aid can be coordinated, so we know what is being tried and what is succeeding, and so we know if there are experts in specific areas or if we must develop expertise ourselves. We also need information on which to base decisions about which strategies will provide effective and economical assistance to our borrowers.

In addition to commercial database systems, such as DIALOG and ESA-IRS, to which we subscribe, we rely on three institutional information systems which have been developed to help us locate environmental information: JOLIS, IBIS and ENVIS.

JOLIS

To meet the research needs of both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Joint Bank-Fund Library, was established in 1946. Today the Joint Library coordinates and supports 14 libraries and more than 100 library staff which comprise the Joint Bank-Fund Library Network. Each library in the network is responsible for collecting, developing and managing specific subject specialties. Throughout the

network, special emphasis is placed on collecting materials about developing countries. Collection development efforts are enhanced by contributions from Bank staff who often bring back documents about the countries in which projects are being developed or about the subject-matter of the projects. Consequently, our collections are unique in the United States, and, probably, throughout the world.

The Joint Bank-Fund Library is the largest library in the network and has more than 190,000 volumes concentrated in the areas of economics, trade, public policy, international and governmental finance, government statistics, development issues and the economic situations of the countries of the world.

The World Bank Sectoral Library is the second largest and collects technical materials to support the Bank's sectoral lending activities. In addition to covering subjects such as agriculture & rural development, energy, health, population, urban development, transportation, water supply and sanitation, and women in development, it is the primary environmental library in the Bank. The Sectoral Library actively collects materials from organizations involved with environmental issues, and it owns microfiche collections of the publications of UNESCO, the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

In 1982, the Joint Library began developing JOLIS, the integrated online system that links the network libraries. The computer software used for JOLIS is a database management system called MINISIS, which was developed by the International Development Research Center in Ottawa, Canada. It runs on a Hewlett Packard 3000 minicomputer. Since 1982, the Joint Library has modified the original software and developed new subsystems to meet the needs of the network.

CATALOG is the online catalog of the monographs, serials and periodicals held by the network libraries. At present the file included about 145,000 records, most of which are also cataloged in OCLC. About 5000-6000 of these records deal specifically with the environment.

BIBLIO is the online index of current journal articles and working papers. The file is particularly valuable because materials are added to it quickly, often before they are available through commercial databases, and because coverage includes many international and foreign national publications that are not easily accessible elsewhere. BIBLIO also indexes research and working papers from over 400 organizations. We plan to begin adding environment journals to the file in January 1989.

The other four JOLIS files are periodicals checkin (CHECKIN), circulation (CIRC), JOLIS ONLINE, which is a user-friendly online public-access catalog, and acquisitions (JLA2), which includes an interlibrary loan module.

We are often asked if we will allow outside access to our database. At present, and for the foreseeable future, the answer is no. However, our holdings are entered on OCLC and although we are not an OCLC interlibrary loan supplier, we do lend non-restricted materials upon receipt of an ALA interlibrary loan request.

IBIS

In addition to the library network, the Bank also has a network of information centers which manage internally-produced Bank material. Because of the nature of the Bank's project cycle, Bank documents are enormously important and are used actively over the life of the project--a time span of two to ten years--so these information centers are anything but archival storage areas. This network is linked through an online bibliographic system called IBIS. IBIS, which is also a MINISIS-based system, is not connected with JOLIS; however, members of each network can search both systems. Because IBIS indexes internal Bank publications, the system is not available to the public.

ENVIS

A third internal system, Environment Information System (ENVIS), was developed during the past year by one of the divisions in the environment department. The system provides access to information needed to incorporate environmental concerns in the design and implementation of development programs and

projects and to monitor environmental aspects of Bank work. It is based on a modular approach. An internal module provides full-text access to all Bank projects from 1987 to the present. Other modules have been developed to provide access to information from external databases, such as the Protected Areas database produced by the International Union for Conservation of Nature & Natural Resources (IUCN) and the legislative database produced by the Environmental Law Center. Although the system is brand new, the developers hope that it will contribute to more environmentally-sound project design by providing immediate access to information, experiences and lessons learned from similar projects. Because this database provides access to ongoing Bank work, it is not available to the public.

SUGGESTED SOURCES

For further information about the World Bank Group, the two publications listed below may be obtained free of charge:

Driscoll, David D., *The IMF and the World Bank: How Do They Differ?* Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, n.d.
External Relations Department
Publications Unit
International Monetary Fund
Washington, D.C. 20431

The World Bank & International Finance Corporation. Washington, D.C., World Bank, 1986.
World Bank Bookstore
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433