

Child Rights concerns related to the draft World Bank Safeguards

- We welcome the inclusion of provisions related to child protection in the safeguard draft. We particularly appreciate the requirement in ESS1 that social assessments examine the risks that project impacts will disproportionately impact disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, including children.
- However we are very concerned about what this will mean in practice given that annex 1 of ESS 1 which claims that it will "specify the issues that need to be addressed in an environmental and social assessment" is completely blank. This makes it impossible to know what the Bank will require when it comes to looking at impacts on children.
- More clarity on what the Bank will require when it comes to ESS1, in particular whether unique impacts on children will have to be considered separately from impacts on other vulnerable groups, is necessary in order to have meaningful consultations on the draft safeguards policies
- The Bank must flesh out annex 1, which should include a requirement that the unique impacts on children be considered as part of a social assessment, in advance of the draft being made available for consultation. This is necessary in order to allow for an effective consultative process
- There are also several serious weaknesses in the draft with respect to the issue of child labor. First, the section on minimum age for work, sets the minimum age for work on a Bank project based upon national law. There is no reference to ILO core labor standards, including convention 138 on the minimum age for work. Thus, if national law sets the minimum age for work at 10 (as a new Bolivian law does) the Bank could allow children as young as 10 to work on Bank projects.
- The policy does not address the issue of child labor in primary supply chains. Supply chains are not addressed at all under labor. The World Bank is clearly not opposed to addressing supply chains generally in the safeguards as they are referenced in ESS 6 on biodiversity. Thus the omission of the supply chain issue under labor is more glaring. Note that IFC (World Bank's private sector lending arm) performance standard requires that "Where there is a high risk of child labor or forced labor in the primary supply chain, the client will identify those risks ... If child labor or forced labor cases are identified, the client will take appropriate steps to remedy them." This is absent from the draft World Bank policy.
- ESS 4 (on Community Health and Safety) and ESS 5 (on Involuntary Resettlement) both contain references to the need to pay particular attention to "vulnerable" groups. Vulnerable is not specifically defined in either of these policies, although it may be true that the same definition from above, which includes age related vulnerability and specifically references minors, would apply here. No specific references to children are found in either of these policies. This should be clarified so that discussion of how these two policies will address the unique needs of children can take place during the consultation period.