SOUTH EAST ASIA CIVIL SOCIETY GUIDE ON INFLUENCING WORLD BANK STRATEGIES
Introduction
As one of the world’s largest sources of funding and technical assistance for developing and transitioning countries, World Bank projects and policies affect the lives and livelihoods of billions of people. The World Bank has two goals it aims to achieve by 2030: to end extreme poverty and to boost shared prosperity. But despite these ambitious and laudable targets, the Bank has repeatedly been exposed for its involvement in problematic projects and policies in developing and transition countries. This can lead to disastrous impacts, such as forced displacement, destruction of livelihoods and environmental degradation.

Civil society plays an important role in holding the World Bank accountable to its mission, as a publically-funded bank. One way to do this is by monitoring specific investments and tracking the social and environmental effects of its projects, programmes and policies on local communities. Where harm occurs, civil society can use tools, such as the Bank’s accountability watchdogs - the Inspection Panel or the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman - to seek redress and systemic change. Another way is to try to influence World Bank investments ‘upstream’ – or before they happen – to ensure that the Bank’s priorities align with those of civil society, such as protecting the environment and addressing the needs of the most marginalised groups.

This briefing introduces the World Bank’s Country Engagement process, a vital opportunity to influence how the Bank positions its activities in a given country for the next four to six years. Since all projects and investments made by the World Bank Group must follow this agreed country strategy, ensuring that the strategy reflects development priorities and excludes harmful activities is a crucial way of tackling bad investments and encouraging good ones.

The briefing focuses specifically on South East Asia, with a case study on Myanmar where the World Bank is currently developing its new strategy. The World Bank is also in the final stages of developing its new strategy for the Philippines and for Timor-Leste. The strategy for Thailand was approved in 2018 and after a long delay the World Bank Board approved the strategy for Cambodia in May 2019. Upcoming strategies for review include Indonesia and Laos. Vietnam’s strategy runs until 2022 and underwent the mid-term review in early 2019.

The World Bank Group

The World Bank was established in 1944 and today consists of five arms, together called the World Bank Group. The Bank’s low-income country arm, the International Development Association (IDA) and its middle-income country arm, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), both lend to governments. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) provides investment and advice to the private sector and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) is the Bank’s political risk insurance arm. Finally, ICSID - the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes – is an international arbitration institution for legal dispute resolution and conciliation between international investors.

The Bank is governed by a Board of Directors made up of the Bank’s President and 25 Executive Directors (EDs), representing the Bank’s 189 member countries. Only the six largest shareholders (US, Japan, Germany, France, UK and China) have their own ED, the rest are organised in constituencies. Myanmar is in the South East Asia constituency (EDS16) which comprises 11 constituent members: Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, Tonga and Vietnam. The Bank is obliged to consult and involve civil society. We will examine the first two steps of the Country Engagement process in more detail, followed by a guide on how civil society can engage, since the Bank is obliged to consult and involve civil society.

WORLD BANK GROUP COMMITMENTS FY2018

THE WORLD BANK’S COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The World Bank’s introduced its Country Engagement approach in 2014, as a new model for how the Bank plans its development activities in a borrower country. It consists of four steps, resulting in two key documents: the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) and the Country Partnership Framework (CPF). The SCD assesses the country context, which then feeds into the development of the CPF – the actual strategy, which replaced the previous Country Assistance/Partnership Strategy (CAS/CPS). These two steps should build on consultative processes with the government and key stakeholders, including civil society. The last two steps in the process review progress and look at lessons learned.

Source: World Bank Group Annual Report 2018
Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD)

The SCD seeks to identify the most important constraints and opportunities for accelerating progress towards the Bank’s twin goals in a given country. It looks at the broader development challenges, rather than the World Bank’s work. According to the Bank it should outline “a clear set of priority focus areas that … the country should address in order to accelerate progress toward [reducing absolute poverty and boosting shared prosperity] in a sustainable way.”

According to the World Bank directive on Country Engagement, the SCD serves as a reference point for the CPF consultations. While it is World Bank led, engagement, the SCD serves as a reference point that guides all World Bank Group activities in a country and is also an entry point for influencing national governments as the Bank is a highly influential player in low- and middle-income countries, whether as a major donor or a behind-the-scenes adviser on government programmes and policies.

Country Partnership Framework (CPF)

The CPF is a four-to-six year strategy document which guides all World Bank Group activities in a borrower country. All projects and programmes in a given country should be aligned with the CPF. It builds on the SCD, but the CPF focuses specifically on the World Bank and its added value in the country. This can include identification of specific sectors that the Bank plans to focus on, for example agriculture, or broader objectives, such as fiscal reforms. It also indicates the expected lending volume. According to its own mandatory policies on country engagement, the Bank should develop the CPF in close coordination with counterparts in the government, and should also consult other stakeholders, including civil society.

On occasion, when the context is uncertain, a Country Engagement Note (CEN) can replace the CPF, while the Bank develops long-term activities. These generally last one to two years, and while consultation is recommended it is not compulsory.

Consultation requirements and best practice

The World Bank is required to consult with stakeholders, including civil society, on the first three steps of the Country Engagement process. The World Bank Group Directive on Country Engagement details this requirement: “To better inform the CPF, the PLR, the SCD, and, to the extent possible, the CEN, the WBG engages through consultations with the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders.”

The need for consultation on the CPF specifically is also outlined in the non-binding World Bank Group Guidance Note on “Country Partnership Framework Products”: “Throughout the preparation of the CPF (and, to the extent possible, the CEN), the team engages in consultations and appropriate collaborative processes with the government, the private sector, civil society, development partners, and other stakeholders in the country.”

Despite this, experience suggests that World Bank staff are often unfamiliar with these requirements, in particular to include civil society in consultations. It is therefore essential that civil society knows its rights and demands to be involved.

Another important aspect is access to documents, and the World Bank’s Access to Information Policy requires disclosure of the CPF’s predecessor, the CAS, before Board discussion – but only if the country consents. This is problematic, not the least in countries with limited or non-existent civil society space. Since the SCD is a World Bank product, there is no reason why this should not be disclosed before approval.

The 2014 Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations highlights the benefits of stakeholder consultations and best practice. This document emphasizes the importance of feeding back on the input received through the consultations: “Documenting consultations and closing the feedback loop (that is, informing those consulted how their feedback has been used) is an important guiding principle.”

HOW TO INFLUENCE THE WORLD BANK’S COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

A CPF outlines what will become the rationale for World Bank projects in a borrowing country in the coming years. Influencing a CPF can therefore help to stop ‘bad’ projects already in process or before they happen and push for ‘good’ projects that, for example, support efforts to protect the environment or to provide energy access. Engaging in this way is also an entry point for influencing national governments as the Bank is a highly influential player in low- and middle-income countries, whether as a major donor or a behind-the-scenes adviser on government programmes and policies.

Finding out about the process

CPFs are updated every four to six years, so the first step is to find information on when the next update will be and the timing of the consultation processes in the country of interest. Given that the SCD sets the context for the CPF, it is important civil society engages in these consultations, too. The Bank is also obliged to consult on the PLR – the mid-term review – which is a chance to raise problems or opportunities related to the CPF and push for the Bank to change direction where needed.

> Find out about the process

> Raise awareness and build capacity

The World Bank normally takes at least a year to draft, consult on and finalize a CPF (including the time it takes to complete the SCD). During this time international, national and local civil society organizations (CSOs) can form partnerships and coalitions to find the best ways of providing analysis and communicating the importance of the process to others. For example, CSOs can present this as an opportunity for citizens and civil society to elevate local and national-level agendas. A good way is to organize a workshop that brings a diversity of perspectives together. This can serve as a forum for building capacity on the inner-workings and politics of World Bank activities, as well as for brainstorming collective actions to influence the country engagement and providing space for communities and CSOs to speak up on issues that matter to them.
In preparation for these activities, it is useful to map World Bank activities in the country, with specific attention to projects that have been particularly good or bad. The World Bank Group’s accountability mechanisms are good sources of information on ‘problem projects’ – the Inspection Panel8 that covers IBRD and IDA and the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman9, which covers IFC and MIGA. Local communities, sometimes supported by NGOs, can approach these accountability mechanisms when they believe World Bank projects have caused them harm or breached its policies, and details on the complaints are available on their websites.

> Get the messages right
To be effective, messages to the World Bank must be clear and concise. There are two levels of messages:

**Consultation process** - There are two key aims here. First, to ensure that the World Bank upholds the consultation requirements for the development and evaluation of the SCD and CPF. Second, civil society can push for best practice, including asking for information and documents to be shared in advance of the consultations; for consultations to be run in multiple regions; and for adequate representation of rural communities and those who may be otherwise marginalised or disadvantaged. The Bank should advertise all consultations in an open, transparent and timely manner, and in relevant languages. Follow up is also important - civil society should ask for feedback on how their input into the consultations has been used in the final document, and for the Bank to translate drafts and final outputs into major local languages.

**SCD/CPF content** - Messages on content should seek to influence how the Bank shapes the strategy, including the analytical context and the strategic priorities. The main issues that civil society chooses to raise will vary from country to country, depending on priorities and concerns. This could be from a positive or negative perspective, for example encouraging the Bank to promote and scale up best practice where investments have proven beneficial, or to state a clear ‘no’ to projects which are causing harm. A key role for civil society is to ensure the Bank listens to voices of marginalised groups. It is also worth emphasising the World Bank’s global commitments, which should be reflected in the SCD and CPF priorities. For example, the Bank has made several commitments about the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including on a country level: “The SDGs and twin goals help us focus our conversations with country clients around shared goals.” On climate change, the Bank’s Climate Action Plan says that the SCGs and CPFs “will consider the risks and opportunities created by climate change and countries’ climate priorities.” The Bank’s Gender Strategy states that the CPF must draw on a country gender assessment, and in addition the SCD should: “take as standard practice the application of a gender lens to the main constraints and priorities they identify.”

> Coordinated advocacy efforts
Advocacy at multiple levels - local, national and international – is vital for influencing the Country Engagement process. At the local and national level, in-country organizations can lead, for example, by organizing information sessions and workshops; by maintaining consistent contact with the Bank’s country office; and by ensuring that local voices are included and amplified throughout the SCD/CPF processes. Building key partnerships can form a key part of this, benefiting from the strength, experience, skills and contacts of the members.

International organizations can play a role by developing links to the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC and feeding information back to national and local organizations. This interaction should build on information about the local context and implications of World Bank activities in country, so it is essential to work closely together. International organizations can also help to foster cross-regional interaction to highlight how the Bank’s engagement on the SCD/CPF varies around the world. For example, success stories on how successful advocacy on the process in one country can help CSOs in other countries be more effective in their engagement, or to pressure the Bank to scale up good practice.

Working together, international and national organizations can put pressure on the World Bank, jointly raising critical issues as they arise, for example through letters to the World Bank to highlight flaws in the consultation process or by communicating key demands and advocacy points in public statements, for which the Bank can later be held to account. Sometimes World Bank staff in country and in Washington DC are not responsive, and in these cases it is important to go to the next level and contact the World Bank Executive Director representing the country in question to reiterate the demands.

> Follow up
It is essential to allow time for follow up once the SCD and/or CPF has been released. CSOs can scrutinize the final documents for evidence of where the Bank has - and has not - included recommendations from civil society or where the document contradicts civil society demands. They can then communicate this analysis through letters to the World Bank, public statements or media releases. It is also important for civil society to share these findings with other stakeholders, in particular project affected communities and marginalised groups.

This final step is crucial in order to hold the Bank accountable for its commitments to take civil society voices into account. This includes any follow up conversations and processes, such as the PLR mid-term review and the CLR final assessment, and ultimately for the next SCD/CPF process. For these engagements to be effective, it is important to keep monitoring World Bank related projects, programmes and policies during the implementation of the CPF.

**CASE STUDY: MYANMAR**


As of end April 2019, the World Bank’s IBRD and IDA had 15 Active Projects and 39 Advisory Services and Analytics projects focusing on three main areas (1) Reducing rural poverty, (2) Investing in People and Effective Institutions for People and (3) Supporting a dynamic private sector to create jobs.13 Since 2013 the IFC has invested and mobilized over $1.3 billion, in the infrastructure, manufacturing, finance, tourism and agri-business sectors in Myanmar. IFC also supports reforms to the business environment, trade and access to finance for corporations. As of December 2018, IFC’s portfolio in Myanmar totalled $486 million.14

**Lessons learned from the previous Country Partnership framework**

In 2017, the Bank conducted a PLR to review Myanmar’s CPF (2015-17), revisiting Myanmar’s evolving development challenges and opportunities.15 The PLR assessed how far the previous CPF addressed its three main focus areas: (1) Reducing Rural Poverty, (2) Investing in People and Effective Institutions for People and (3) Supporting a Dynamic Private Sector to Create Jobs.

The PLR identified the following lessons learned from the World Bank’s perspective which should be taken into account for the development of the new CPF:

- Implementation challenges: Bottlenecks include strong centralization, weak coordination across Ministries, lengthy and sometimes unpredictable internal decision mechanisms, weak capacity on handling fiduciary (financial management, procurement) and safeguards aspects.
- In a fragile and conflict context such as in Myanmar, the following is critical: Strong in-country presence, solid understanding of social and political dimensions of fragility and conflict; willingness to touch on sensitive issues and take risks; do no harm; and partnerships.
- Emphasis simplicity in project design because of the relative inexperience in handling WBG projects and procedures.
- South-South learning: while in context is important, Myanmar-which has opened up only recently-can learn from its immediate and regional neighbours, thus avoiding costly mistakes.

**Proposed World Bank priorities for the new CPF**

The World Bank is currently consulting on Myanmar’s next CPF. The Bank has developed a consultation plan for the CPF in Myanmar, with very little notice and insufficient information (the Bank released the summary SCD on a Friday night before the first Monday consultation, and gave just two weeks’ notice to...

The SCD consultations took place in January and February 2019; with the final SCD being approved in May 2019. However, the SCD was not released until late November, after the CPF consultations had started – first as an executive summary in English and Burmese, and a week later as the full report, which at the time of writing was available in English only.11 This means that participants in the first rounds of consultations were not able to provide informed input, drawing upon the full SCD analysis.

The SCD summary identifies a number of priorities for Myanmar in the coming years, including “three interrelated paths to revive growth momentum, share the benefits of growth more widely, and ensure sustainability for future generations:

Pathway 1: Strengthening economic and financial sector management to sustain growth and job creation
1.1 Maintain fiscal balance and macroeconomic stability.
1.2 Develop a sound, efficient, and inclusive financial system.
1.3 Strengthen the environment for investing and operating businesses.
1.4 Close the gap between supply and demand for infrastructure and technology.
1.5 Improve income-generation opportunities and accessibility in rural areas.

Pathway 2: Building inclusive institutions and human capital for all to foster peace and shared prosperity
2.1 Foster peace, social cohesion, and more inclusive governance institutions.
2.2 Strengthen systems for the delivery of equitable and quality services and risk protection that allow people to lead healthy lives.
2.3 Ensure education for all and skills for productive employment.

Pathway 3: Managing natural endowments sustainably and building resilience for long-term prosperity
3.1 Manage land and natural resources transparently, equitably, and sustainably.
3.2 Build resilience to disasters and mitigate the impact of environmental degradation.

In addition, the SCD identifies a cross-cutting priority of “Reforming public institutions for effective and equitable policy implementation”.

4.1 Improve effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of public sector institutions.

From a first reading of the summary SCD, the following aspects can be noted: the proposed pathways lack a focus on climate change; there are no clear references to the Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change Action Plan or gender (neither the word ‘gender’ nor ‘women’ appears in the summary SCD); there is zero mention of renewable energy.

However, there are promising commitments to education for all; the importance of fostering peace, inclusion and social cohesion; and a commitment to delivery of quality electricity services to reach all people in Myanmar by 2030.

Pathway 3 bears further scrutiny, as it relates to management of Myanmar’s natural resources. “Myanmar needs to change the way it manages, monitors, and uses its wealth of natural assets. More equitable legal frameworks are needed for the use of land, forests, and fisheries.”

WORLD BANK GROUP PROJECTS IN MYANMAR

The World Bank Group’s engagement in Myanmar since 2012 has included a number of controversial projects, a couple of which we highlight below:

Shwe Taung Cement

In July 2017, the IFC approved a US$20 million loan and US$15 million equity investment in the Shwe Taung Cement Company (STC), a subsidiary of Shwe Taung Group (STG), for the expansion of a cement plant in Mandalay region and an associated coal mine in Sagaing region.16 Six months later, a financial intermediary (FI) run by the IFC’s Asset Management Company, called the IFC Emerging Asia Fund (EAF), made another investment in STC.17

A key feature of the investment is a new kiln which will increase production capacity from 1,500 to 4,000 tons of cement per day. This means that the volume of coal burned to fuel the kiln will increase substantially, almost tripling greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The expansion of the plant will also require increased extraction from the adjacent limestone and mudstone quarries, as well as the coal mine that supplies the plant exclusively. The mine, which is run by another STG subsidiary, Shwe Taung Mining (STM), is expected to increase production from 60,000 to 150,000 tons per year, with supplementary coal purchases from other suppliers also likely. The Bank has still not released an assessment of the GHG emissions associated with the mine.20

Prior to the approval, in June 2017, over 170 civil society groups, the vast majority from Myanmar, wrote an open letter to the IFC calling on its Board to refuse the funding.21 One of the central concerns was the use of coal in the industrial process and the expansion of the coal mine. The letter also listed a number of other negative social and environmental impacts, such as pollution of lands and waters, deforestation, destruction of sensitive habitats and impacts on livelihoods near the coal mine and factory areas. When the IFC Board voted on the project, the US voted against it, referring to “significant concerns about the environmental due diligence”.22 Others have raised concerns since, including a review by USAID criticising the lack of assessment of alternative fuels amongst other things.23 After some delays, the expanded plant is expected to come into full operation very soon.

Myingyan Combined-Cycle Gas Turbine Power Plant

The IFC is a co-finanancer in a gas power project in Mandalay, alongside the Asian Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Local communities, while broadly supportive of the 225MW combined cycle plant, have voiced several concerns about the lack of information disclosure, consultation and environmental impacts of the project.24

Mid-way through project construction, which began in 2015, there was a major design change, with waste-water now being channeled to the Ayeyarwady River. But project developers have not released any data on the quality of this water being discharged by the now-completed plant, nor studied its impacts on the river’s ecosystem, fisheries or local livelihoods. The plant is also Myanmar’s first energy Public Private Partnership (PPP), and one which the IFC says will serve as a blueprint for future PPPs in the country.25 As such the project is of systemic importance and public interest. The PPP is between the Myanmar government and the two private sector partners in the venture - Sembcorp of Singapore and MMID Utilities, a Myanmar partner, which has now pulled out after legal battles.26 CSOs have raised questions about the terms of the PPP contract and Power Purchase Agreement, including regarding the risk-sharing between government and private sector and the electricity tariff. Although the World Bank does recommend to its government clients that PPP contracts should be disclosed, to help with transparency and risk-sharing, the contracts remain the property of the Myanmar government, which has not disclosed the information.27 The use of a PPP also relies underlying assumption that the PPP model is successful, in particular for infrastructure projects. But this ignores repeated warnings, even from the International Monetary Fund, of significant financial and other risks with PPPs.28

World Bank Energy Access Programme in Myanmar

A recent assessment by Bank Information Center Europe, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Hivos and Save the Natural Resource of the World Bank Group’s energy sector portfolio in Myanmar revealed several concerns that are important to consider for the new CPF. The assessment found that even with the World Bank’s $400 million National Electrification Project, the cost for new electricity connections is still unaffordable for poor households in Myanmar. In addition, if the World Bank does not help Myanmar increase and sustain the rate of electrification to 500,000 new household connections per year, Myanmar will not reach its goal of universal energy access by 2030. Furthermore, the World Bank Group has prioritised the development of gas while providing no finance for utility-scale renewable energy. Such an approach makes electricity even more expensive for poor households because Myanmar has to import expensive and GHG-intensive liquefied natural gas (LNG).29

The new World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework for Myanmar should make reducing the costs of energy for the poor and for the development of renewable energy the central focus of WBG energy sector assistance. In order for the WBG to
directly help the poor gain access to electricity, the WBG should provide adequate grant-based finance to cover the initial installation costs for poor urban and rural households. In addition, the WBG should commit adequate International Development Association (IDA) finance to sustain an electrification rate of at least 500,000 new household connections per year from 2020-2030 in accordance with Myanmar’s National Electrification Plan (NEP). From 2020-2025, the WBG should provide project finance for at least 5 utility-scale renewable energy projects (excluding large hydropower). Lastly, limited WBG public finance should not be used to subsidize GHG-emitting fossil fuels. Gas has significant climate, availability, and cost risks for Myanmar, therefore, the World Bank should terminate consideration of $160 to $280 million for a 300 MW Ywama gas plant. In addition, the WBG should finance a fund that specifically supports on-the-ground, indigenous expertise in renewable rural electrification by offering concessional finance to local entrepreneurs (e.g. revolving funds to provide loans with longer tenure and lower interest).

World Bank Investments in Myanmar

World Bank Investments by Sector 2012 to August 2018

1. WB Projects in Myanmar

World Bank Project Description by environmental risk category (2012-August 2018)

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<tr>
<th>Environmental Risk Category of Active and Proposed Projects</th>
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<td>Categories</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<th>Sector Project Costs (USD-Million)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>Banking/Financing</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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2.2 Sector Project Costs (USD-Million)

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IFC Investments by Sector (2012-August 2018)
IFC Project description by environmental risk category of active and proposed projects
2012-August 2018

2.5 Environmental Risk Category of Active and Proposed Projects

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<th>Categories</th>
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<td>C</td>
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MIGA investments in Myanmar 2012-August 2018

3.1 Projects by Sector

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<th>Sectors</th>
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<td>Power/Energy</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
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</table>

3.5 Environmental Risk Category of Active and Proposed Projects

- **Environmental Category**
  - A: 1
  - B: 3
  - C: 0
  - F2: 1
  - **Total**: 5

ENVIROMENTAL RISK CATEGORY OF ACTIVE AND PROPOSED PROJECTS

- **MIGA Projects in Myanmar**
  - A: 3%
  - B: 10%
  - C: 3%
  - F2: 87%
  - **Total**: 100%
Information and analysis of the World Bank’s country engagement approach i


World Bank, Consultation http://consultations.worldbank.org


World Bank in South East Asia

Endnotes

1  https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/leadership/directors/eds16
3  This includes commitments through Recipient-Executed Trust Funds (RETIF) – financing arrangements where the Bank manages the funding from one of more donors and plays an operational role, see https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2015/03/world-bank-trust-funds/
6  materials/new_approach_to_country_engagement_april_29_1.pdf
8  https://inspectionpanel.org
9  http://www.cao-ombudsman.org
12 https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/myanmar/blog/world-bank-and-myanmar
14 https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/region_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/eastasia+and+the+Pacific/countries/ifc-in-myanmar
18 IFC Project Information Portal (2017, 7 April), STG Cement, https://disclosures.ifc.org/#/projectDetail/SII/38831
20 IFC Project Information Portal (2017, 7 April), STG Cement, Environmental & Social Review Summary https://disclosures.ifc.org/#/projectDetail/ESRS/38831
25 https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/3a5b1dbd-a18d-4542-a78a-0b17788a1c0a/PPP-Stories-My- ingyan-IPP-2017.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=m4bc8BB
30 Converting gas into LNG is a highly energy-intensive and thus GHG-intensive process.