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and the World Bank:
Lessons From Project and Policy Influence Campaigns**

by L. David Brown & Jonathan Fox

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by L. David Brown & Jonathan Fox

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Introduction

The World Bank is a premier development institution, employing thousands of highly-trained analysts and shaping the development projects and policies of governments in every region of the world. In the realm of development actors, the Bank is an institutional Goliath—sometimes wrong, but almost always influential, given its financial resources and its capacity for research and policy analysis.

Over the last two decades, the Bank has been challenged with increasing frequency by transnational coalitions of civil society organizations—nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), churches, indigenous peoples movements and international networks—concerned with the impact of Bank projects and policies on grassroots populations in developing countries. Such coalitions have emerged to challenge a number of international actors, including UN agencies, multinational corporations, and a variety of national governments. Playing David to the Bank's Goliath is a particularly striking example of ambitious campaigning—ambitious, and in some cases, quite successful.

This paper draws on a series of case studies, carried out over the last six years under the auspices of the Institute for Development Research (see Fox and Brown, 1998), of transnational coalition efforts aimed at influencing World Bank policies and projects. The paper seeks to extract from those cases lessons about successful influence efforts. More particularly, the paper will focus on answers to two questions:

- (1) What is required for transnational coalitions to influence institutions like the World Bank?
- (2) How can transnational coalition members be accountable to each other across large gaps of power, wealth and culture?

The Transnational Coalitions Study

This study explores critical factors embedded in complex, long-term campaigns. We chose to develop in-depth case studies and then compare those cases to see what sorts of patterns emerged. The cases were written by individuals close to events on the ground with access to both the grassroots populations involved and decision makers at the World Bank and other agencies. Four cases focused on coalition

efforts to influence specific development *projects*: a thermal plant in the Philippines, a natural resource management project in Brazil, petroleum and land legislation in Ecuador, and a dam in Indonesia. Four others focused on coalition efforts to shape Bank *policies* on critical issues: indigenous peoples, water resources management, resettlement of populations ousted by projects, and information and inspection panel policy. Tables 1 and 2 summarize major features of the project and policy cases.

These cases are reported and compared in considerable detail elsewhere (Fox and Brown, 1998). In this paper we present, in summary form, important lessons suggested by those detailed analyses. The next two sections present and illustrate eight lessons, four concerning coalition impacts and four concerning coalition organization and accountability.

Lessons about Coalition Impacts

It is clear that influencing an institution like the World Bank is not a short-term, low-investment process. Making a difference requires a sustained, cohesive coalition capable of mobilizing and analyzing information relevant to Bank activities, making that information available to key actors, and mobilizing many sources of influence. The analysis of these cases suggests the first four lessons about effective transnational coalitions.

Lesson 1: Different goals and targets require different kinds of coalitions.

We found that different patterns of coalitions emerged to deal with different issues. For some coalitions, the dominant issue was moderating or undoing harmful impacts of Bank projects on grassroots populations. In the Philippines, for example, the coalition challenged the building of a thermal power plant in a park sacred to the indigenous peoples. In Ecuador, an agricultural development program involved legislation which threatened the communal lands of indigenous peoples. In both cases, the transnational coalition was spearheaded and sustained by grassroots movements directly affected by the projects, and the coalition took a form we labeled *national problem coalition*.

In other settings, the coalition was primarily concerned with Bank failures to live up to its own policies. While impacts on local constituents were evidence of Bank failures, the primary target was reform of the Bank itself. In Brazil, for example, international NGOs challenged the Bank's failure to ensure local participation in the natural resources management project. Similarly, opening access to Bank information, and creating access to an Inspection Panel for grassroots groups, were policy initiatives pressed by coalitions dominated by international NGOs. Such *international issues networks* can press for systemic reform over long periods of time and throughout numerous local instances of abuse.

In still other cases, coalition leadership came from within the Bank as internal reformers worked with external groups to review Bank experience and articulate alternative policies. In the review of the resettlement policy, for example, an internal team designed and implemented a review which resisted many efforts to blunt its impact. This team benefited from pressure from an external coalition, which empowered the team to confront problems directly. In essence, such *internal reform alliances* make use of the special knowledge and access of insiders to marshal evidence and articulate plausible reforms.

Table 1: Project Reform Campaigns

Projects and Key Actors	Critical Events in Alliance Evolution
<p>Kedung Ombo Dam, Indonesia (1984-94) <i>GRO</i>: Oustees, students <i>NGO</i>: Local and national legal aid; other local and national poverty and environment NGOs <i>BO</i>: International NGO Group on Indonesia (INGI) <i>INGO</i>: members of INGI from Northern countries</p>	<p>Most families were not aware of relocation plans until the dam was almost finished. Then some families asked local and national legal aid NGOs for help getting more compensation for their land. Some suits were eventually successful, but the Government invalidated the judgments. INGI began to lobby the World Bank via its international members in 1988. Popular protests by students and religious groups supported oustees after dam completion in 1989. INGI meetings with the World Bank led to government attacks on INGI for "washing dirty linen" in public. The government did make other land available to oustees. The Bank and other international actors agreed to avoid future 'Kedung Ombos'.</p>
<p>Mt. Apo Thermal Plant, Philippines (1987-93) <i>GRO</i>: Indigenous peoples groups; local farmers <i>NGO</i>: local, regional, national networks; Legal Resources Center <i>BO</i>: PDF (Philippine Development Forum); BIC (Bank Information Center) <i>INGO</i>: Environmental Defense Fund; Columban Fathers; Greenpeace</p>	<p>Indigenous groups and farmers began to organize local, regional and national networks to challenge the project in 1987. Elders of local tribes swore to defend Mt. Apo to "the last drop of blood". Local coalitions built links to INGOs and the PDF. Two Bank missions drew contradictory conclusions about the project. In 1989, the Philippine Development forum of NGOs and INGOs agreed to lobby the Bank on Mount Apo. The GoP (Government of the Philippines) certified the project for environmental compliance in spite of protests. National 'solidarity conferences' among NGO networks agreed to emphasize indigenous rights and carefully monitor lobbying of PDF. PDF lobbying helped the World Bank reject government's environmental impact assessment, and GoP withdrew loan request. In 1993, further solidarity conferences set strategies for lobbying Export-Import Banks.</p>
<p>Planaflo Natural Resources, Brazil (1989-95) <i>GRO</i>: Rubber tappers, farmers organization <i>NGO</i>: Local and national NGOs and networks (e.g., IAMA, CNS, IEA, and others) <i>BO</i>: Rondonia NGO Forum, <i>INGO</i>: EDF, World Wildlife Federation, others</p>	<p>INGOs (such as Environmental Defense Fund) protested lack of local participation in initial design in 1989, in part because few GROs were organized in the region. The Bank suspended the project until the Rondonia NGO Forum was created to enable local and international (but not national) NGOs to participate in project decisions in 1991. It gradually became clear that state agencies would violate loan terms in spite of the Forum role, and Forum protests carried little weight. The Forum requested that the Bank suspend disbursement in 1994 and asked the Bank Inspection Panel to review the project in 1995. Planaflo accepted as case by Bank Inspection Panel that year.</p>
<p>Ecuador Structural Adjustment, Ecuador (1986-94) <i>GRO</i>: Indigenous peoples (IP) groups; environmental groups <i>NGO</i>: CONAIE (IP federation); Accion Ecologica <i>BO</i>: Ecuador Network, BIC (Bank Information Center) <i>INGO</i>: Rainforest Action Network; Oxfam; CAIA</p>	<p>The Federation of Indigenous Peoples (CONAIE) mobilized IP groups. In 1990 it helped organize an uprising against structural adjustment. In 1992 it allied with NGOs to challenge World Bank and government oil extraction initiatives which threatened indigenous groups. Negotiations with the Bank and the government altered the oil law. In 1994 CONAIE led a national 'Mobilization for Life' coalition against a proposed land law which threatened access to communally-held lands and paralyzed the country. CONAIE created the Ecuador Network with INGOs to influence Bank policy-making. Eventually, negotiations with government leaders and agribusiness interests produced a more acceptable land law and a larger policy role for CONAIE in the future.</p>

Note: *GRO* means Grassroots Organization; *NGO* means Local or National NGO; *BO* means Bridging Organization; *INGO* means International NGO.

Table 2: Policy Reform Campaigns

Policies and Key Actors	Critical Events in Alliance Evolution
<p>Indigenous Peoples Policy (1981-92) <i>GROs:</i> Indigenous peoples (IP) and environment movements in many countries <i>NGOs:</i> Linked to project alliances <i>INGOs:</i> International Survival, IWGIA, Cultural Survival. <i>WB:</i> Social scientists; IP policy supporters</p>	<p>In 1981, indigenous groups at the Chico River in the Philippines won their first victory over a Bank dam project, leading to an initial Bank policy protecting indigenous rights in its projects. IP problems in Bank projects were highlighted in a series of projects (Polonoereste, Transmigration, etc.) and by the Bank's 1987 five-year review of environmental policies. Active local movements lobbied Bank projects successfully over the next five years. INGOs supporting indigenous peoples did not develop a common front, but GROs were quite successful in influencing local projects. The Bank's 1991 policy statement opened the door to further indigenous challenges.</p>
<p>Resettlement Policy (1986-94) <i>GROs:</i> Oustee movements in many projects <i>NGOs:</i> Allies of oustees like Narmada Bachao Andolan <i>INGOs:</i> Narmada Action Council, International NGO Group on Indonesia <i>WB:</i> Resettlement Review Task Force</p>	<p>The Resettlement Policy Review was in part inspired by the revelations of the Morse Commission about the controversial Narmada project. An internal team was authorized to assess implementation of the resettlement policy in Bank projects to respond to external campaigns. The review indicated that compliance with the Bank's 1986 policy was running at about 30 percent in the first five years. It improved rapidly under external and internal scrutiny, though the review team had to fight a 'guerilla war' to get good information from reluctant task managers. Intense internal bargaining over the final report culminated in early publication in 1994 to forestall threats of leaks by external advocates.</p>
<p>Water Resources Management Policy (1991-93) <i>GROs:</i> Not involved <i>NGOs:</i> 50 volunteered to provide input to policy discussions <i>INGOs:</i> International Rivers Network; Environmental Defense Fund <i>WB:</i> Operations and Engineering staff</p>	<p>In 1991, Bank staff organized a workshop for government officials on revising water resource management policy. NGOs were not invited, but INGOs collected comments from more than 50 NGOs. The Bank agreed to consult with NGOs and received substantial inputs. The INGOs found it difficult to maintain NGO interest in the policy process. Bank officials decided against further consultations with NGOs, in part because of internal pressures to shape policies by economic considerations. Ultimately, the INGOs lobbied with Executive Directors to affect the policy. Though the policies adopted did include some NGO recommendations, the initiators were disappointed in the necessity for a retreat to advocacy.</p>
<p>Information and Inspection Panel Policy (1989-95) <i>GROs:</i> Not directly involved <i>NGOs:</i> Narmada, IDA-10 Campaign activists <i>INGOs:</i> EDF; BIC; other Bank Reform Campaigners; Fifty Years is Enough <i>WB:</i> Allies of more open disclosure policy <i>Others:</i> Congressional Committee; US, Japan, Europe EDs</p>	<p>The Bank has always limited access to project information. The struggle over the Narmada Dams and the criticisms of the internal Wapenhans Report set the stage for many Bank reforms. The alliance among INGOs, NGOs and GROs which carried out the Narmada and the IDA-10 replenishment campaigns pressed the Bank for policies making more project information available at early stages and for an Inspection Panel to investigate project abuses. With allies from within the Bank and the US Congress, the alliance successfully lobbied for the new policy with threats to withhold future funding. The new panel was immediately asked to investigate the proposed Arun III Dam In Nepal—its report raised serious questions about the Dam—and the new Bank President canceled the project soon after entering the office.</p>

Note: *GRO* means Grassroots Organization; *NGO* means National NGO; *INGO* means International NGO; *WB* means World Bank staff; *Others* means other alliance participants.

The tactics of a coalition need to be defined in the context of its goals and targets. When the focus is controlling project damage or shaping implementation on the ground, local stakeholders have critical information and often play key roles. When the focus is on articulating the policies which will shape future Bank interactions with grassroots actors, knowledge and credibility across the external/internal boundary, such as that held by some international NGOs, may be critical to the coalition. Where the target is fundamental change in Bank priorities or institutional arrangements, internal reform alliances which unite internal staff holding special knowledge with sources of external leverage may be needed to influence Bank policy-makers who resist reforms.

Lesson 2: Assess targets for leverage in terms of institutional politics and potential allies.

It is easy to think of the World Bank and other large actors as monolithic institutions which present united fronts to external challengers. This assumption can focus coalition attention exclusively on allies outside the Bank.

In actuality, the Bank, like many other large institutions, includes staff with a wide range of political and social perspectives. In every case, some Bank staff strongly favored reforms advanced by external coalitions, and those coalitions often benefited from the advice, information and support given by internal actors. The most effective campaigns built coalitions among progressive groups in many different institutions. The campaign against the Philippines thermal plant, for example, found that different Bank departments made conflicting recommendations. In that case, the struggle was fought in part between different constituencies within the Bank. Identifying sympathetic actors within the Bank can help coalitions understand issues as they are perceived within it, recognize plausible alternatives given Bank priorities, and build the internal support needed to implement reforms.

From the point of view of internal reformers, contacts with external coalitions may be very valuable. When senior management threatened to suppress the resettlement review as excessively controversial, the possibility that external challengers might publish early drafts eventually compelled publication—to avoid the embarrassment of a failed coverup. Institutional change in an agency like the Bank is almost inevitably partial and slow, but these cases demonstrate that internal reformers often depend significantly on the existence of external pressure and scrutiny.

Lesson 3: Recognize multiple forms of success and the tradeoffs among them .

It is easy for coalition members to focus on a few campaign goals—change the policy, stop the project, enhance the resettlement program—to measure success. Such criteria, however, obscure important complexities and possibilities. In these campaigns, 'success' definitions often shifted over time as new strategies came into play or new actors joined the fray. The more effective coalitions recognized that the campaigns could succeed or fail on several dimensions—including strengthening local organizations, building links for future campaigns, increasing awareness and skills for policy influence, evolving strategies and tactics for policy participation, shaping public awareness of critical issues, and encouraging target institution reforms—in addition to shaping specific project and policy outcomes.

Campaigns which don't succeed in direct influence may be considered successful when measured by other metrics. The campaign to stop the implementation of the Kedung Ombo dam in Indonesia was too late to stop the dam; even the successful court challenge to compensation policies was voided by the government. On the other hand, the campaign enhanced the reputation of the association of national and international NGOs which lobbied the Bank and donor governments on the issue. It also led to informal commitments by several donor agencies to avoid such projects in the future—"No more Kedung Ombos".

Making good judgements about objectives tradeoffs may require a broad historical and societal perspective. In the Philippines, for example, the campaign to stop the Mount Apo thermal plant focused on the project's violation of the rights of indigenous peoples, in part because that issue was, at the time, more publicly visible than the parallel concerns of farmers and environmentalists. The emphasis on indigenous peoples' rights helped mobilize support from national indigenous groups. Analyzing the range of possible outcomes and the value of different packages, then, is well worth the investment.

Lesson 4: Propose institutional arrangements which enable future influence.

The interests of grassroots constituencies are often focused on the direct impacts of projects, but changes in policies and other institutional arrangements may have more impacts in the long run. Project campaigns focus on specific issues affecting particular countries. Combinations of project campaigns may focus on institutional arrangements which affect many future activities.

Changes in Bank policies, for example, reshape the context within which project managers operate. The adoption of a new policy does not guarantee its implementation, as has been amply demonstrated by the review of compliance with the resettlement policy. But the existence of a policy does create leverage when external coalitions can demonstrate failure to comply with it. Bank staff have become sensitized to the embarrassment created by failures to meet their own policies; compliance with the resettlement policy improved dramatically as it became clear that the review was going to make non-compliance visible. So promoting policies which protect indigenous peoples or resettled populations can create leverage for confronting future abuses.

Campaigns promoting pro-accountability institutional arrangements may have even bigger impacts. More open information policies can enable early challenge of problematic programs. It is easier to influence projects in the design stage than it is later on, when a variety of national and international interests are vested in project completion. Influence at early stages is difficult if no information is available, however. Institutional arrangements for wider and earlier sharing of project information are essential to early action. Altering institutional arrangements can enrich options for future campaigns.

Coalition Organization and Accountability

Transnational coalitions often span great differences in cultural backgrounds, economic wealth and political power. Rubber tappers in Brazil and indigenous farmers in the Philippines are as organizationally distant from leaders of the Environmental Defense Fund as they are from World Bank policy-makers. For coalitions to be effective over years of under-resourced struggle, they need to build shared strategies and bonds of trust which can sustain collective action in spite of the conflicts and misunderstandings inherent in the gaps separating them.

This study also asked how transnational coalitions can be organized to enable mutual influence and accountability in spite of these differences; the results are detailed in the next four lessons.

Lesson 5: Build horizontal links which enable credible representation and local voice.

Transnational coalitions are sometimes initiated by grassroots movements seeking to pursue their goals through international linkages. The Ecuador Network, for example, was initiated by the federation of indigenous organizations which led the protest against the new Ecuadoran land law. But it is more common for grassroots constituencies to be poorly organized and unaware of the interests they share with potential international allies. In the Indonesian and Brazilian cases, for example, few credible voices emerged to speak for grassroots interests. Transnational coalitions often struggle to represent local

concerns; even when grassroots participants are present, they often have difficulty influencing coalition organization and decision-making.

These cases suggest that coalition organizers are wise to find or foster horizontal linkages among constituencies in order to enable credible local voices. Where social capital, in the form of grassroots federations, already exists, as in the Philippines and Ecuador cases, the coalition can build on genuine local representation. In other situations, a coalition with genuine grassroots representation may depend on local organization building. In the Brazil project, an alliance of local NGOs and grassroots groups did not emerge until relatively late in the project. In the Indonesia case local voices never really spoke together.

While grassroots voices are particularly difficult to mobilize, similar problems may affect other members. The effort to shape policy on water resource management, for example, found it difficult to mobilize national NGOs, given the expense of transportation and the lack of immediate impacts of policy decisions. Ironically, the press to keep directly affected constituencies involved in the coalition may come, in part, from the Bank challenging the extent to which international NGO positions reflect local concerns and interests.

Lesson 6: Build interorganizational 'chains' to connect organizationally distant partners.

Coalitions across geographic, cultural, economic and political differences may require substantial investments in order to build the mutual influence and trust which enables a quick and cohesive response to changing circumstances. The challenge of building such relationships between a Washington-based lobbyist and a Brazilian rubber tapper, separated by language, economic fate, political perspective and cultural values, may be formidable. Constructing and maintaining such relationships, "social capital", can be difficult and expensive, but it is central to effective coalitions.

In our cases, coalitions seldom depended on bonds across such great organizational distances. More common were organizational 'chains' of numerous, relatively short links which spanned great organizational distances. Thus, in the Philippines coalition, the elders of the indigenous groups connected horizontally with local NGOs, church groups and other local network members, and vertically with the regional representatives of their own and other constituencies. Those regional representatives, in turn, were connected vertically with the national network. National network representatives worked with members of the Philippine Development Forum, a Washington-based group of Philippine and international NGOs concerned with Philippines development. To maintain the links, participants exercised mutual influence from local to regional, from regional to national, and from national to international—more manageable distances than the gap from local to international.

In addition to building new links for these chains, in these cases coalitions built in part on previously existing social capital. The national–international link in the Philippines coalition, for example, was the Philippine Development Forum, a pre-existing network of national and international NGOs. The link between Indonesian national NGOs and international actors was provided by IFID, a pre-existing forum of large Indonesian NGOs and the international actors which support them. The nucleus of the national–international coalition on the information and inspection panel policy drew on relationships built during the Narmada Dam campaign. These chains, once forged, can be used for other purposes. Investments in such relationships may be productive long after their initial impetus has passed away.

Lesson 7: Face-to-face negotiations can clarify goals, responsibilities and accountability.

Coalitions evolve over time in response to external and internal forces. At the outset, most transnational coalitions are loosely organized around shared values and visions rather than detailed strategies and

responsibilities. But policy influence campaigns often require systematic articulation of goals, development of strategies and plans, and agreement on how to implement those plans. Without agreement on who is responsible for what, it is difficult to hold one another accountable, or even to know how or where influence might be exerted to shape coalition activities.

Transnational coalitions are by definition geographically dispersed, and consequently face difficulties in negotiating shared expectations. To some extent, modern information technology enables interactive decision-making. The coalition to reform the information and inspection panel policy made extensive use of electronic communications. But there is no substitute for face-to-face negotiations in creating trust and mutual influence in these coalitions. Members of the Narmada Action Council report that visits to the Valley were essential to their commitment, and the director of the Philippine Development Forum attributed her loyalty to the indigenous elders to her personal contacts with them. Face-to-face engagements among key individuals shape the coalition's social capital, influence patterns and membership.

Lesson 8: Individuals and organizations linking key actors wield great influence.

The actors in these cases are national governments, large international institutions and social movements composed of thousands of members. The stakes involve millions of dollars, thousands of lives and scores of countries. Given the stakes, it is striking what pivotal roles—many of them tiny—individuals and organizations play to bridge the chasms separating the actors. Such bridges are central to these coalitions.

The effectiveness of transnational coalitions depends on trust and mutual influence among individuals and organizations along the chain. Conflicting pulls and incentives can easily pull apart coalitions, and coalitions are difficult to reassemble once disintegrated. The Narmada Action Council coordinated lobbying activities around the globe and forced the Bank's reluctant withdrawal from the Narmada project. It then provided the nucleus for the campaign to reform the Bank's institutional arrangements for sharing information and enabling stakeholder challenges to projects. In effect, a virtual organization of less than twenty people played a central role in reshaping the institutional characteristics of the world's most influential development organization. It is apparent, then, that a tiny group of individuals acting as bridges in a global network can have influence wildly disproportionate to their wealth or formal power.

Transnational Coalitions and Global Influence

Coalitions are essential to civil society organizations seeking to influence events beyond the ordinary scope of small, economically limited, locally-based actors. But building trust and understanding across gaps of wealth, power and culture does not come easily to civil society leaders, who are more accustomed to influencing those who share their values, aspirations and expectations. This paper suggests lessons from examining David and Goliath encounters between civil society coalitions and the World Bank. If civil society actors are going to fulfill their aspirations for wider influence, they must expand their capacities for bridging such differences, understanding their institutional targets, and learning from failures and successes. These cases suggest that transnational civil society coalitions can indeed influence large scale actors and contextual forces which shape or constrain the environments in which civil society organizations must operate. Learning to build bridges across major social, political and economic differences is pivotal to gaining that influence.