World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework for Ethiopia
Summary of Consultations with Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, Think Tanks and Academia
March 24, 2026

Consultations on the World Bank Group's proposed Country Partnership Framework (CPF) were conducted with 30 representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs, think tanks, and academic institutions across key sectors such as agriculture, health, education, women, and youth. Participants offered valuable feedback and recommendations regarding CPF priorities, current challenges and needs, and strategies for creating lasting impact.

Key Points Discussed:

The Role of Civil Society, Funding, and Localization

A central theme emerging from the discussions was the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) as important partners in accountability and service delivery, particularly in their engagement with frontline communities. Participants noted concerns about declining global funding for CSOs and the potential implications for the broader development ecosystem. There was also strong interest in advancing localization efforts in a way that meaningfully supports community-based organizations and grassroots structures, alongside subnational governments. Participants highlighted the importance of designing approaches through which the World Bank can engage with and support CSOs.

Job Creation, Agriculture, and Rural Livelihoods

Participants affirmed that job creation should be the defining strategic priority of the CPF, noting that the absence of job-rich growth is a key driver of conflict and fragility. There was a consensus that the previous state-led infrastructure model did not create sufficient jobs, necessitating a shift toward private sector-led growth. In agriculture, structural concerns were raised, including severe land degradation, high dependency on rain-fed agriculture, the need for stronger land tenure security to incentivize farmer investment, and significant value loss due to poor logistics and transport inefficiencies.

Human Capital: Health and Education

CSOs called for a strategic shift in human capital investments. In education, there was strong support for prioritizing early childhood education and foundational learning, given that only 3% of students in some regions progress to higher secondary levels. In health, participants urged a

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focus on primary health clinics and the availability of essential medicines over investment in high-technology specialist centers, a concept framed as prioritizing "medicine before machines."

Gender, Inclusion, and Conflict Sensitivity

The "massive gap" in gender equality was highlighted as a critical issue affecting half the population. CSOs emphasized the need for partnership to address deep-rooted cultural practices and noted the importance of programs that improve women's access to finance without requiring traditional collateral. Conflict sensitivity was raised as a non-negotiable dimension of all programming. CSOs urged the Bank to prioritize post-conflict reconstruction and embed conflict-sensitive approaches throughout the portfolio, reinforcing the view that peace and stability are prerequisites for investment.

Future Engagement and Adaptive Management

The World Bank team noted interest in exploring more flexible approaches to engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs). This could include periodic reengagement to reflect evolving contexts, as well as considering opportunities for CSO participation across different stages of the project cycle beyond design. CSOs were encouraged to engage with the Bank through available channels and at multiple levels, with a view to helping ensure that community perspectives are informed into project design, implementation, and results frameworks.

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