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Shall We Break It? Or Shall We Make It?

The team behind the new infrastructure strategy uncovers internal obstacles and shortfalls in an effort to make sure the strategy does more than gather dust.



Getting buy-in is just the first step. What about communicating, implementing, and tracking a strategy across regions, sectors, and Bank Group institutions?

March 27, 2012—The Bank, IFC and MIGA are investing significant time and resources to prepare [sector strategies](#). For network anchor teams in charge of drafting these strategies, this often means a heavy-duty process spanning months or years, involving several rounds of discussion with sector boards, councils, regions, IFC, MIGA, senior management and external stakeholders—all in an effort to ensure buy-in.

But what about communicating, implementing, and tracking a strategy across regions, sectors, and Bank Group institutions? The team behind the [Bank Group's new Infrastructure Strategy](#) offers here lessons learned on some internal obstacles and on making sure a strategy does more than gather dust.

Tracking the untrackable

For Jose Luis Irigoyen, director of Transport, Water and ICT Department in the SDN anchor, "we need innovative approaches and a new mindset in order to walk the talk on implementation."

To meet this challenge, the infrastructure team first created a [Prezi](#) for country teams to engage client countries on the "what, why and how" of infrastructure. The team then developed a new tool for the SDN Council, "[Focus on Implementation](#)," that uses the strategy's results framework as metrics to report on implementation performance.

For most Bank work, Business Warehouse and SAP provide the basic data we need. But what if your strategic goals are not trackable through these systems?

Mobilization of private sector funding, South-South knowledge transfer, and public-private partnership (PPP) projects are all corporate priorities. Yet, aggregated data on these is not gathered automatically anywhere in Bank systems.

The same is true for three of the four infrastructure sectors. The data for core sector indicators is unavailable for energy, water, and ICT, for reasons ranging from lack of uptake by project teams to lack of consensus on the indicators themselves.

So how can we stay accountable to our strategy without spending more time monitoring than doing projects? We may have first to examine the benefits of data collection. In this spirit, the infrastructure team paired up with WBI to assess the value added of several data collection methodologies to proxy [South-South Knowledge Exchange](#). This is an area that the infrastructure strategy had identified as critical, but where there is no automated data generation.

Breaking "silos," managing risks

Collaboration within and across the Bank Group is at the heart of the infrastructure strategy. There is still a debate on how to balance deep sectoral expertise with ability to integrate across sectors. Add to that the complexity of working across institutional cultures—World Bank, IFC, and MIGA.

To help break the silos, the infrastructure team set up to align its reporting system with the strategy, noting that IFC was ahead of the game on some indicators, such as the PPP advisory activities, while the Bank was ahead on others, such as gender. The delivery of the joint Bank-IFC Action Plan on PPP will test our ability to work across institutions.

The strategy advocates scaling-up "transformational projects," those that optimize green, inclusive, spatial and/or have more than one benefit. An example is a [sustainable flood risk management project](#) that combines physical infrastructure work (such as drainage works) and non-structural measures (such as flood maps, linked with IT-based forecasting systems, and effective land use planning).



"We need innovative approaches and a new mindset in order to walk the talk on implementation," says Jose Luis Irigoyen, director of Transport, Water and ICT Department in the SDN anchor.

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Main Points

The team behind the infrastructure strategy is working to ensure the strategy is communicated, implemented, and tracked across regions, sectors, and Bank Group institutions.

Main challenges are: goals not trackable through Bank systems, and collaboration across Bank Group institutions, sectors, and regions.

Sector strategies are a key part of our matrix system, and without them, we would become an increasingly regionalized Bank Group.

Main Points

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Projects like this, with high rewards, often entail higher risks. One lesson is that additional mechanisms, such as identification of high risk/high reward projects for corporate attention by [Network Councils](#), may be needed to complement existing institutional arrangements and collectively manage risks.



Staying ahead of the game

Many aspects of the strategy hinge on a set of reforms to Bank policy, including [safeguards](#), procurement, and new Bank instruments, like Program-for-Results lending. Other efforts, such as the [modernization of the Bank's guarantee instrument](#) to attract the private sector into infrastructure financing, are well under way.

What this all shows is the interdependency of efforts across VPUs. While the Anchors may draft sector strategies, efforts across the Group are needed in order to deliver on the vision.

Like any sector strategy, the infrastructure strategy provides the conceptual framework for positioning the Bank Group in the global arena. Sector strategies are a key part of our matrix

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system, and without them, we would become an increasingly regionalized Bank Group.

Letting these strategic instruments fade is a missed opportunity, keeping the Bank Group back as the world spins ahead. To remain relevant, the Bank Group needs to stay ahead of the game in both regional and sectoral agendas, not letting one lag behind.

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