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#### 1) [Africa Gets Additional Seat on Bank Executive Board](#)

The Bank's Board of Governors has approved a first phase of reforms to increase the influence of developing countries within the World Bank Group, including adding a seat for Sub-Saharan Africa to allow developing countries a majority of seats on the Executive Board, and expanding voting and capital shares. "Adding another seat for Africa, reaching developing country majority on the Board, expanding developing country shares and laying the groundwork for further reforms represent real change," said Bank President Robert B. Zoellick. These reforms were initially agreed at the Bank's Annual Meetings in October 2008. With the Governors' approval, the amendment to the Bank's Articles of Agreement to increase basic votes, which benefit smaller shareholders, now moves to the 185 member countries for final approval. [More...](#)

#### 2) [Seeking Feedback for a Climate Change Strategy for South Asia](#)

The Bank's South Asia Region is in the process of seeking feedback from interested parties on its draft climate change strategy. "Towards a Climate Change Strategy for South Asia" will articulate the guiding principles for the Bank's climate-related work in the region. This is part of an ongoing consultation process that will be held around the region from February 1st to March 31st, 2009. The region is seeking the views of representatives from governments, donor agencies, civil society, and other stakeholders, on the document. Your feedback will be essential to help shape, strengthen and define the strategic approach. [More...](#)

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#### 3) [Financial Crisis Could Trap Millions More People in Poverty](#)

Ahead of a meeting of the G7 finance ministers last weekend in Rome, the Bank forecast that as many as 53 million more people could be trapped in poverty as economic growth slows around the world. And in a blow to efforts to reduce infant mortality, between 200,000 and 400,000 more babies could die each year between now and 2015 if the crisis persists. Bank President Robert B. Zoellick has urged developed countries to set aside 0.7 percent of their economic stimulus packages for a special Vulnerability Fund for developing countries. The forecasts say almost one-third (29 percent) of all developing countries are "highly exposed" to the poverty effects of the crisis. Another 62 percent are moderately exposed and face decelerating growth or high poverty levels. [More...](#)

#### 4) [Lessons from World Bank Group's Responses to Past Financial Crises](#)

In the wake of the global financial crisis and the worldwide fiscal response, the Independent Evaluation Group has just released a report on the lessons of World Bank Group interventions in past episodes. These lessons are relevant in helping the WBG and countries to confront the most severe global financial crisis in recent decades. Even as the current crisis differs greatly from previous ones in its origin, depth and reach, lessons from past experiences can point to crucial factors in the effectiveness of crisis response. Evaluation findings suggest seven points to consider. [More...](#)

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#### 5) [Update on Bank's Efforts to Address Food Crisis](#)

The Bank created a new US\$1.2 billion rapid financing facility—the Global Food Response Program (GFRP)—in May 2008 to speed

assistance to the neediest countries. GFRP has disbursed US\$494.4 million out of US\$866 million in 30 countries as of January 22. An additional US\$292 million is being earmarked for programs in nine countries. GFRP is part of the Bank's New Deal on Global Food Policy which embraces short, medium and long-term responses, including safety nets such as school feeding, food for work, and conditional cash transfers; increased agricultural production; a better understanding of the impact of biofuels; and action on the trade front to reduce distorting subsidies and trade barriers. [More...](#)

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#### 6) Climate Investment Funds Identify Countries for Funding

Developed and developing country governments gave an important signal for action on adaptation by deciding which countries will be offered funding under a pilot program within the US\$6 billion Climate Investment Funds (CIF). Eight countries have been invited to participate in the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience which will provide about US\$500 million for scaled up action and transformational change in integrating climate resilience in national development planning. The criteria used to identify the countries include the level of vulnerability to climate change hazards and risks, country preparedness to move towards climate resilient development plans, and country distribution across regions and types of hazards. [More...](#)

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#### 7) Launch of Facility to Support for Microfinance Industry

Bank President Robert B. Zoellick and German Development Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul launched a US\$500 million facility that will support microfinance institutions facing difficulties refinancing as a result of the global financial crisis and ensure that low-income borrowers in developing countries continue to have access to finance. The Microfinance Enhancement Facility, created by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and German development bank KfW is expected to provide refinancing to more than 100 microfinance institutions in up to 40 countries. It will support lending to as many as 60 million low-income borrowers in many of the world's poorest countries. [More...](#)

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#### 8) Burundi Reaches Decision Point under Debt Relief Initiative

The Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have agreed that Burundi has made sufficient progress and taken the necessary steps to reach its completion point under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Because of this agreement, Burundi becomes the 24th country to reach the completion point under the Initiative. Debt relief under the Enhanced HIPC Initiative from all of Burundi's creditors has been revised upward to US\$832 million in net present value terms from US\$825 million estimated at the time of the decision point document. HIPC debt relief committed by IDA and the IMF amounts to US\$425 million and US\$27 million in net present value terms, respectively. [More...](#)

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#### 9) Bank Supports Swiss Handover of Duvalier Assets to Haiti

Bank Group Managing Director Ngozi N. Okonjo-Iweala has welcomed the Swiss order for the US\$6 million of assets allegedly plundered by former Haitian President Jean-Claude Duvalier and associates to be handed over to Haiti. Okonjo-Iweala commended the cooperation and commitment of both governments to the fight against corruption. The Swiss Federal Office of Justice's ruling on the Duvalier assets was issued after the account holders failed to prove to the court that the funds were legitimately acquired. [More...](#)

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#### 10) MIGA Tackles Declining FDI Levels in Vulnerable Economies

The Bank's Global Economic Prospects report expects developing country growth to decline from 7.9 percent in 2007 to 4.5 percent this year. Investment growth in the developing world is projected to fall from 13 percent in 2007 to 3.5 percent in 2009, due to tighter credit conditions and less appetite for risk. A change in lending behavior and a general reassessment of credit risk has resulted in a negative impact on foreign direct investment (FDI). The Bank is using all its resources to help countries manage this downturn and minimize its impact. As the leading institution promoting FDI in emerging and transition economies, the Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) has acted quickly to help countries caught up in the crisis. The agency's primary instrument—political risk insurance or guarantees—is playing a crucial role to improve credit when the global financial sector is suffering from a severe lack of confidence. [More...](#)

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#### 11) IFC Helps Rebuild Conflict-affected Countries in Africa

The Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) is deepening its impact in some of the most challenging economic environments in Africa and helping countries devastated by conflict rebuild their private sectors to create jobs and opportunity. In 2008, IFC launched the Conflict-Affected States in Africa Initiative, a five-year, US \$25 million program that designs and implements integrated strategies to support economic recovery in fragile and conflict-affected African countries. Working in these countries is core to IFC's mission to support private sector growth, helping create jobs and reduce poverty. Such economies need both immediate assistance and long-term nurturing

to ensure sustained growth and return to stability. [More...](#)

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## 12) Developed Countries Cautioned: Ignore Africa at Their Peril

The Bank urged rich countries to resist the temptation to slash foreign aid, even in the face of the worst global financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression. The leadership of the U.S. government remains vital if pledges to double aid to Africa by 2010 made at the 2005 G-8 Gleneagles summit are to be honored, the Bank's Vice President for Africa, Obiageli Ezekwesili told a U.S. Congressional Caucus for Dialogue on the World Bank. A U.S. pledged contribution of US\$3.7 billion to last year's record \$42 billion 15th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) is pending authorization and appropriation before the U.S. Congress. The Bank has argued that efforts by developed nations to stimulate their failing economies should not focus exclusively or too narrowly on national challenges, if a truly sustainable and global recovery from the crisis is to be achieved. [More...](#)

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## REGIONS

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### [AFRICA](#)

#### Conserving and Managing Biodiversity in Gabon's National Parks

The Government of Gabon has launched a sectoral program on forests, fisheries, and the environment, with the assistance of several of its international partners, among them the African Development Bank, the French Development Agency, the European Union, the United States, and the Bank. The program is helping focus government activities the sustainable management of forest resources and the local processing of timber with a view to creating greater value for the industry. Gabon has the second largest forest in the Congo basin—home to the second biggest forest reserve in the world after the Amazon. Forests cover over three-quarters of the country's territory (more than 22 million hectares) and include more than 400 timber species, 150 mammal species and 650 bird species. [More...](#)

#### Education for All Initiative Helps Drive Reforms in Mauritania

As the new school year began in Mauritania last October, the Ministry of Education distributed school supplies to more than 100 schools across the country with support from the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) project, an international partnership administered by the World Bank. EFA-FTI was launched in 2002 to help low-income countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for education. Mauritania joined the program the same year. Despite achieving a gross enrollment rate of 95 percent at the primary school level in 2007-2008, and near-universal access across gender lines, the school system in Mauritania has faced enormous challenges. [More...](#)

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### [EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC](#)

#### Supporting Indonesia's Move to Get Smart on Tax Reforms

The Bank is set to support Indonesia in its ongoing effort to improve its tax administration system through the Project for Indonesian Tax Administration Reform (PINTAR). An investment loan worth \$110 million has been approved for the project, which aims to increase the efficiency of taxpayer data collection, as well as to strengthen transparency and accountability in tax administration. The main beneficiary of this project is the Directorate General of Tax under the Ministry of Finance, which launched a major reform effort in 2001. This reform effort is guided by two core objectives, namely to increase the tax yield and promote the investment climate. [More...](#)

#### Development Partners Help Cambodia to Improve Good Governance

The Royal Government of Cambodia signed two grant agreements totaling US\$72.1 million with the Bank and other development partners. These agreements provide essential financial support to two different development projects, which collectively aim to improve people's lives and reduce poverty in Cambodia. The first agreement for US\$20.0 million supports the Demand for Good Governance Project (DFGG), aimed at improving the government's accountability and responsiveness to the needs of the public. The second agreement, worth US\$52.1 million, provides additional resources to the Second Health Sector Support Program (HSSP2), designed to help the Government improve the health of underprivileged mothers and children. [More...](#)

This and other regional stories can be found in the [East Asia and Pacific Newsletter](#)

For more regional information: <http://www.worldbank.org/eap>

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## EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

### Bank Launches New Partnership Strategy with Moldova

The Bank's Board of Directors approved the Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for the Republic of Moldova for 2009-2012. The CPS is the main assistance framework at the country level, which will guide the Bank's interventions in Moldova over the next four years. "In a challenging global environment, the Republic of Moldova has set the course to modernize its economy and build a prosperous European future," said Melanie Marlett, the Bank's Country Manager for Moldova. Development assistance efforts in Moldova over the next four years will aim to support a sustainable growth strategy, which capitalizes on opportunities for remittance flows to be used productively to allow the country to increase private savings and investment. [More...](#)

### Launch of Central Asia Development Marketplace 2009

The Central Asia Department of the Bank and its partners announced the launch of the Central Asia Development Marketplace 2009 and invited farmers' associations, NGOs, businesses, academia, local governments, foundations, and other interested groups to submit proposals for innovative projects under the theme of "Efficient Water Use in Agriculture". The idea is based on the successful experience of the global Development Marketplace (DM), which was first tested by the Bank in 1998. The DM is an opportunity for the social entrepreneurs around the world to develop and give voice to innovative ideas for addressing urgent development challenges. Evolved out of the DM concept, the Central Asia Development Marketplace is conceived as "mini market" for innovative ideas held at the regional level. [More...](#)

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## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

### US\$7 Million Grant to Mitigate Impact of Increased Food Prices in Nicaragua

The World Bank approved a US\$7 million grant to Nicaragua to help the country mitigate the impact of increased food prices by providing immediate relief to the most vulnerable groups and expanding the supply of agricultural products. The grant will be funded through the Food Price Crisis Response Trust Fund launched by the World Bank last May. Between early 2006 and mid-2008 global food prices have increased dramatically. In Nicaragua, domestic food price inflation increased from 10.7 percent in January 2006 to 34.2 percent in August 2008. High food prices affect a majority of Nicaraguans, but the poor are disproportionately affected by high food inflation rates, as the share of their incomes devoted to food purchases is larger than higher income groups. [More...](#)

### US\$500 million Credit Line to fight Financial Crisis in Costa Rica

The Bank's Vice-President for Latin America and the Caribbean, Pamela Cox, announced a US\$500 million emergency credit line for Costa Rica, after recently meeting with President Oscar Arias. Cox explained that Costa Rica can use this credit line whenever it has the need for it and that it is aimed at helping the Central American country confront the global financial crisis. Costa Rica's Minister of Finance Guillermo Zúñiga described the loan as a "support fund" that the country will use in case of extreme need. Cox and the Government of Costa Rica also discussed a loan for US \$65 million, which has already been granted by the Bank and is pending Congress approval. The loan is aimed at reconstruction works and prevention of natural disasters. [More...](#)

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## MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

### Qatar Joins Effort to Reduce Greenhouse Emissions from Gas Flaring

The Bank's Global Gas Flaring Reduction partnership (GGFR) officially welcomed Qatar as the first of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to join the global effort to reduce the flaring of gas associated to oil production. In a ceremony in Doha, the Bank called on other oil producing countries and companies in the Middle East to join worldwide efforts of reducing the venting or flaring of natural gas, and of increasing energy efficiency to mitigate climate change. Besides Qatar, other GCC states include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and UAE. [More...](#)

### Zoellick says Arab World Can Play Bigger Role in World Economy

Bank President Robert B. Zoellick told an Arab summit meeting that the Arab world can play a bigger role in the response to the global economic crisis and offer greater opportunities for its people. Addressing the Arab Economic and Social Summit held in Kuwait, Zoellick

said the Bank wants to help the Arab world play a bigger global role by partnering with it on development and South-South cooperation, expanding social and economic opportunities for countries within or neighboring the region, and helping with climate change challenges such as desertification and water scarcity. Zoellick said it was even more important that the Arab world continue to prioritize economic, social, and human development; the alleviation of poverty and illiteracy; protection of the environment; creation of job opportunities and health care. [More...](#)

For more regional information: <http://www.worldbank.org/mena>

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## [SOUTH ASIA](#)

### Expanding Health Care in Afghanistan

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is investing US\$4.5 million in the ACOMET Family Hospital to expand access to health care and medical training in Kabul. ACOMET, a new hospital and training center, will provide services in family medicine, cardiology, dermatology, laboratory, and pharmacy. It will also help address the country's shortage of medical professionals by providing training to students from local public medical schools, including women and students from rural areas. The government's new health initiatives have been focused on primary care, particularly in rural areas. The ACOMET hospital will complement the government's efforts and help fill the gap in demand for high-quality, affordable health care in Kabul. [More...](#)

For more regional information: <http://www.worldbank.org/sar>

### South Asia Regional Development Marketplace

Development partners and others need to urgently tackle the severe malnutrition situation in South Asia. The goal of the South Asia Regional Development Marketplace (DM) on Nutrition is to identify and fund innovative ideas that deliver improved nutrition to infants and young children during their first two years of life and to pregnant women. This DM will create a platform for engaging civil society and grassroots organizations to share their experiences and innovative ideas with the broader development community on how to improve nutrition among the poor in South Asia. The Development Marketplace invites proposals from all South Asian countries under the theme: "Family and Community Approaches to Improve Infant and Young Child Nutrition." [More...](#)

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## [WEBSITES/ BLOGS](#)

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### Disclosure by Politicians

Blogger Simeon Djankov says on the Crisis Talk blog that "After three years in the making, we have just completed a large research project on the disclosure of conflicts of interest and business dealings by politicians in 175 countries. The resulting paper, Disclosure by Politicians, is the first to look at what disclosures are required by law, which of these are made public, in which countries someone actually checks whether the disclosures are made or not, and what penalties exist in the event of faulty or incomplete disclosures. The topic will undoubtedly raise heat in countries that don't do well. Join the [conversation...](#)

### Wanted: New Ideas for Combating Vulnerability to Climate Change

Rasmus Heltberg notes in the Development Marketplace blog that "adaptation to climate change spans a vast range of possible actions and that it can seem a rather abstract concept. Adaptation can range from sea walls to drought-resistant crops to social protection for climate shocks. This big range of possible actions makes it hard to nail down: what does any given country, region, or village really need to do to start adapting? Join the conversation. [More...](#)

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## [JOBS/ SCHOLARSHIPS](#)

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### Opening - Bank Scholarships and Fellowships for 2009

The Scholarship Program and the Fellowships Program are vehicles for knowledge sharing and capacity building in the developing world. The Programs provide opportunities for graduate and postgraduate studies leading to masters and doctoral degrees in development-related fields for mid-career professionals from eligible developing countries. [More...](#)

Senior Social Development Specialist

The Social Development Department (SDV) of the World Bank is recruiting a Senior Social Development Specialist to support the department's work on enhancing development benefits to local communities in Bank-financed hydropower, integrated water management development and other similar infrastructure and industry projects. This is in the SDV's efforts to ensure that infrastructure projects are socially and environmentally sustainable. The selected candidate will have an advanced degree in anthropology, sociology or related social sciences with a minimum of 8 years of experience - preferably but not exclusively in developing countries. The candidate who has a comprehensive and in-depth expertise in designing benefit sharing arrangements in hydropower or similar infrastructure projects will be given priority. [More](#)

For a full list of open positions and scholarships, please visit:

<http://www.worldbank.org/jobs>

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## PUBLICATIONS

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### Low Carbon, High Growth: Latin American Responses to Climate Change

In this report, released on February 16 in Bogota, the World Bank recommends that it is critical for Latin American countries to develop strategies for adapting to the various impacts of climate change, and for contributing to global efforts aimed at mitigation. The report also specifically recommends that Colombia maintains its policies to avert threats and its model of low-carbon development, adding that the snow that covers the Andean peaks in Colombia will disappear completely by 2030. The report also predicts that the rainy season for the San Andres Islands in the Caribbean will extend 15 percent by 2050 and 20 percent by 2080, increasing the risk for floods. [More](#)

[Also available in Spanish](#)

### Need for Conditional Cash Transfers Highlighted amid Crisis

A Bank report recently released by the Bank says demand for well-designed safety net and cash transfer programs to assist poor families is growing across the world, as 2009 develops into a year of tough economic challenges. The report, "Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty," evaluates CCT programs that offer qualifying families cash in exchange for commitments such as taking babies to health clinics regularly or keeping children in school. It finds that these programs—where the responsibility for breaking out of poverty is shared by the state and poor households—can reduce poverty both in the short and long term, particularly when supported by better public services. [More...](#)

See our [multimedia gallery](#) on Conditional Cash Transfers

### Atlas of Global Development, Second Edition

Published in association with Harper Collins, the completely revised and updated second edition of the Atlas of Global Development, subtitled "A Visual Guide to the World's Greatest Challenges" vividly illustrates the key development challenges facing our world today. Keeping abreast of a changing world, new topics have been added including child employment, internet use, foreign direct investment, food production, and energy flows. [More...](#)

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