Approach Paper

Enhancing the Effectiveness of the World Bank's Global Footprint

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Highlights

- The World Bank aims to adjust its global footprint by decentralizing more staff and functions to the field offices by the mid-2020s. It expects that expanding its presence in client countries would help strengthen its development impact in the field.
- The World Bank has a strong presence in the field resulting from continuous decentralization over the last two decades. Understanding the impact of past decentralization efforts is important to making informed decisions about further adjustments in the global footprint.
- This evaluation aims to provide evidence-based lessons on the effects of decentralization on the World Bank's performance at the country level and contribute to better understanding of the benefits and downsides of decentralization. It will also develop a conceptual framework and metrics that will help management collect data and measure progress in expanding the World Bank's global footprint.

1. Context and Background

1.1 In 2019, the World Bank Group announced its intention to adjust its global footprint, aiming to improve the effectiveness of its country programs, especially in low-income and lower-middle-income countries, and in countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV).[1] The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development capital package and International Development Association (IDA) commitments motivate this adjustment. Efforts are already under way to place more technical and managerial staff in the field by moving them directly to client countries or to regional locations that could serve clusters of countries. The World Bank announced a corporate target to increase the proportion of staff in the field to 55 percent, from a baseline of 45 percent, by the mid-2020s. The International Finance Corporation's (IFC) new corporate target is to increase its field presence from 55 percent to 65 percent by the same period.

[1] The term "World Bank Group global footprint" refers to "the Bank Group's presence in part 1 and part 2 countries; countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence; World Bank Group headquarters; and Shared Services Centers to serve clients better," according to the World Bank's "Adjusting the World Bank Group's Global Footprint—An Update, November 2019."

1.2 The Bank Group has often included decentralization as part of its organizational reforms over the past two decades. Decentralization reforms in the World Bank often meant physically locating staff in client countries (deconcentration) and, in some instances, transferring decision-making powers to country offices to improve accountability (devolution) to achieve results (see box 1.1 for a definition of decentralization). Decentralization was part of the 1997 organizational restructuring, which was driven by four core principles: (i) improving the World Bank's responsiveness to clients, (ii) better integrating global and country knowledge inside the organization, (iii) bolstering country ownership and World Bank partnerships, and (iv) maintaining cost-effective World Bank support to client countries. In the 1997–2001 period, decentralization, combined with changes in hiring priorities, resulted in an unprecedented 33 percent turnover of World Bank staff (World Bank 2001).

1.3 By 2008, the World Bank had achieved a notable level of staff deconcentration and devolution of decision-making authority. In the 1997–2008 period, the number of locally recruited professional staff in operations increased from 26.2 percent to almost 50 percent, while the number of internationally recruited staff increased from 12.5 percent 25.3 percent. Decentralizing country program leadership was a major change that led to 75 percent of country directors relocating to country offices. The percentage of tasks managed from country offices—such as lending, analytical work, and supervision—also increased but to a lesser extent. The share of tasks managed by staff located in country offices was 41 percent, with great variation across Regions (World Bank 2008, 2011a).

1.4 Several self-assessments of these decentralization efforts concluded that decentralization had reached its limits because of several factors. The assessments concluded that there were cost constraints in a flat resource environment. The prevailing hub-and-spoke model, with Washington, DC at the center, fundamentally constrains the delegation of decision-making authority (World Bank 2008). There were also problems in taking advantage of the global labor market and in capturing and sharing global knowledge. Global knowledge flow was limited because of fragmentation of technical skills caused by regional silos and poor mobility for both headquarters-based and field-based staff to operate across Regions (World Bank 2009). However, these self-assessments never examined how decentralization has improved the quality of World Bank support and client responsiveness, which were its original objectives.

Box 1.1. Defining Decentralization

The term "decentralization," in both theory and practice, refers to a wide variety of organizational reforms. The high-level distinction between "deconcentration" and "devolution" is a starting point in examining these many meanings and definitions. Academics and practitioners have often used "decentralization" to refer to both deconcentration and devolution, despite general agreement that they mean two different things (Pollitt 2007). Organizational deconcentration refers to the physical relocation of personnel from an organization's center to its peripheral units, with no connotation of power transfer between organization members or units. Devolution, however, refers to the transfer of decision-making power from an organization's center to its periphery, usually from higher-level authorities to lower-level authorities, or between an organization's headquarters and its field units, or both. Devolution can and often does happen without any physical movement of personnel.

An organizational reform can involve elements of both deconcentration and devolution at the same time if it shifts both power and people. This is the case when the World Bank moves personnel with decision-making power, such as country directors or task team leaders, to the field. In such cases, there is a physical shift of personnel and devolution of some decision-making power to the field office. When the World Bank moves technical staff with little decision-making power to the field, it is engaging in pure deconcentration. This type of personnel transfer does little to alter the sharing of power between World Bank headquarters and country offices.

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

1.5 Since 2012, the impetus for further decentralization weakened because of these critical issues and the World Bank's 2013 organizational change. As such, decentralization slowed down or even reversed in some sectors. In certain places and sectors (for example, in Africa's transport sector in 2012), the World Bank even started to bring internationally recruited staff back to Washington, DC because of high costs. Nevertheless, in the 2013–19 period, the number of professional staff in operations (grades GE and up but excluding staff from institutional, governance, and administrative units) increased by 1.4 percentage points in the field, from 44.1 percent in 2013 to 45.5 percent in 2019 (table 1.1). The number of internationally recruited staff as a share of total professional staff in the field increased by 2.5 percentage points, from 29.7 percent in 2013 to 32.2 percent in 2019.

Table 1.1. World Bank Professional Staff in Operations (Grade Level GE+) by Location, FY13–19

Staff Location	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Non-US based	2,240	2,292	2,037	2,226	2,407	2,609	2,684
of which, FCS location	(301)	(335)	(237)	(293)	(329)	(395)	(424)
US based	2,843	2,921	2,688	2,878	3,022	3,124	3,210
Total	5,083	5,213	4,725	5,104	5,429	5,733	5,894

Source: World Bank human resources department data.
Note: Also excludes extended term consultancy contract holders. Excludes staff from institutional, governance, and administrative units. FCS = fragile and conflict-affected situations; FY = fiscal year.

Table 1.2. World Bank Professional Staff in Operations (Grade Level GE+) by Contract Type and Location, FY13–19

Staff Location	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Locally recruited staff	2,348	2,388	1,919	2,066	2,269	2,401	2,439
Non-US-based LRS	1,575	1,634	1,383	1,527	1,683	1,793	1,819
of which, FCS locations	(199)	(234)	(155)	(197)	(224)	(250)	(270)
US-based LRS	773	754	536	539	586	608	620
Internationally recruited staff	2,735	2,825	2,806	3,038	3,160	3,332	3,455
Non-US-based IRS	665	658	654	699	724	816	865
of which FCS locations	(102)	(101)	(82)	(96)	(105)	(145)	(154)
US-based IRS	2,070	2,167	2,152	2,339	2,436	2,516	2,590
Total	5,083	5,213	4,725	5,104	5,429	5,733	5,894

Source: World Bank human resources department data.
Note: Also excludes extended term consultancy contract holders. Excludes staff from institutional, governance, and administrative units. FCS = fragile and conflict-affected situations; FY = fiscal year; IRS = internationally recruited staff; LRS = locally recruited staff.

1.6 The World Bank expanded its staff presence more consistently in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCSs; tables 1.1 and 1.2). This has been part of IDA's policy commitments since the 16th Replenishment of IDA (IDA16). As such, the World Bank established its first regional hub in Africa in 2016. The more recent IDA18 commitment aimed to increase World Bank staff by 150 (GE+ grade staff) in IDA FCSs and in countries with significant risks of FCV by fiscal year (FY)20 (World Bank 2018a). The World Bank is expected to deploy an additional 150 GE+ staff, including extended term consultants, to IDA FCSs and nearby locations by June 2023 (World Bank 2020).

1.7 Decentralization has been a core aspect of IFC's client-oriented business model. IFC started to decentralize its staff and functions in the early 2000s. The institution has significantly decentralized its staff, processes, and functions since 2007 as reflected in the IFC 2010: A Client Centered Corporation (World Bank 2007) strategy report aiming to provide better services to clients and improve its development impact. IFC has made several decentralization and centralization efforts since then that have shaped its business model. During these efforts, IFC devolved decision-making and placed more technical specialists in the field alongside the investment staff and established a number of operations centers outside the United States. IFC adjusted its model over the subsequent years. For example, in 2018, IFC shifted project decision-making from Regions (regional head of industry) to headquarters (global head of industry) to ensure quality, consistency, and knowledge transfer across Regions. IFC moved its Regional Operations Center from Istanbul, Turkey to Vienna, Austria a few years ago because of security risks.

1.8 In general, the World Bank and IFC implemented their decentralization efforts separately. However, they made some joint efforts recently, such as efforts to develop common global real estate management, review country office staff compensation, and develop a new approach to Shared Service Agreements, which can enhance decentralization's efficiency and cost effectiveness (World Bank 2019b).

1.9 There is little evidence on how staff location and decision-making affect the World Bank's performance effectiveness and client responsiveness. The World Bank has made several attempts over the years to track some results associated with decentralization (box 1.2). However, these efforts were not systematic because of challenges in setting easy-to-measure indicators, lack of reliable data, and competing organizational priorities.

1.10 Many key assumptions about how decentralization affects the World Bank's effectiveness, efficiency, client responsiveness, and knowledge flows are untested. For instance, would a stronger field presence help the World Bank improve the intensity and quality of its country-based partnerships that are particularly critical in FCSs? Would the benefits of scaling up the World Bank's global footprint outweigh the costs and downsides? Can the World Bank maintain global knowledge flows with more technical staff dispersed in the field? Can the envisioned mechanisms mitigate the risk of silos? Would the World Bank capture local knowledge better than before? Putting decentralization in a broader development context, how can the World Bank maintain its leadership role on global issues and meet the growing demand for global knowledge while decentralizing further? These are important issues touching on the World Bank's core mission. Some of these issues could be very difficult to measure. However, it is critical for the Bank Group to monitor and periodically assess these issues to gauge the impact of decentralization on the institution.

Box 1.2. Measuring Decentralization and Its Impact

In 2009, the World Bank proposed an approach to systematically track the benefits of decentralization by (i) measuring client views on progress against the World Bank's decentralization objectives using standardized country and global survey data, (ii) measuring operational quality through the new Quality Assessment of the Lending Portfolio index, and (iii) measuring improved country ownership and partnerships using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee survey data. The data from these three sources would be tracked over time against a composite decentralization index that measures the degree of decentralization by country, Region, and client segment (World Bank 2009). The Independent Evaluation Group was unable to find any information on this exercise. It is unclear whether the proposed monitoring was ever implemented.

The World Bank Group's first Corporate Scorecards (2011–13) reported on some of those indicators. The early Scorecards also reported on a special decentralization indicator defined as "services for clients managed by staff based in client countries," measured by the percentage of tasks managed by staff in the field (World Bank 2013). This indicator was dropped in 2014.

Starting in 2011, the IDA Results Measurement System also included a few indicators to monitor progress "in strengthening presence and moving decision-making authority to the field, especially in FCSs (IDA16)." It intended to track progress in (i) increasing the number of country directors in Africa, (ii) moving more task management to country offices, (iii) moving sector management closer to decentralized staff, and (iv) establishing at least one subregional hub in Africa to serve fragile states (World Bank 2011b).

More recent World Bank Group Corporate Scorecards and IDA Results Measurement System reports include indicators of organizational and operational effectiveness that measure some aspects of client responsiveness, staff accessibility, and collaboration with other donors at the country level.

IFC set indicators and targets to track its efforts. Several core indicators are selected to measure the progress related to client services; business growth, productivity, and efficiency of business; and development impact. Relevant targets included reducing processing time for clients (from 204 days in 2008 to 140 days by fiscal year 2012) and increasing client satisfaction with IFC processes and procedures to 80 percent (IFC 2007). Some of these indicators were measured as part of IFC's Corporate Scorecard.

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

2. Evaluation Evidence

2.1 Previous Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) evaluations offer partial insights on the impact of past decentralization reforms. Overall, IEG evaluations point to mixed results. *IEG Annual Report 2010: Results and Performance of the World Bank Group* (World Bank 2010a) assessed some effects of decentralization. It found that the task team leader's (TTL) location is not significantly associated with a project's development outcomes, and there is no association between TTL location and IEG quality ratings at entry or of supervision. However, decentralization did improve Country Assistance

Strategy outcomes, especially when the country director is located in that country but not when the director is in a nearby hub.

2.2 *The Matrix System at Work: An Evaluation of the World Bank's Organizational Effectiveness* found that decentralization aggravated the silos between World Bank Regional sector units. The report concluded that decentralization created impediments to the flows of knowledge and expertise, and further decentralization would likely aggravate these problems if the underlying incentives and constraints that inhibited effective knowledge flows were not addressed (World Bank 2012).

2.3 *Knowledge Flow and Collaboration under the World Bank's New Operating Model* found that the World Bank operating model introduced in 2014 improved the World Bank's global orientation. It improved knowledge flow and staff mobility across Regions, mobilized expertise for clients, and sometimes deepened expertise in operationally relevant areas (World Bank 2019c). At the same time, the Global Solutions Groups, which pool and curate global and country-specific knowledge, still need to improve country office engagement, particularly the locally recruited staff. The Committee on Development Effectiveness, in discussing this evaluation, acknowledged that decentralization and delegation could add tensions to the organizational model and affect the way knowledge flows across the organization. The committee called on management to find the right mix between field presence, at both the country and regional levels, and technical solutions because the World Bank plans to decentralize further (World Bank 2019d).

2.4 IEG's 2017 evaluation, *The International Finance Corporation's Approach to Engaging Clients for Increased Development Impact* assessed some aspects of IFC's decentralization (World Bank 2017). According to the evalaution IFC's regional hubs have taken the lead in project processing and are empowered to make about 90 percent of investment decisions. The evaluation raised concerns about the development of regional silos and the deterioration in global knowledge and sharing of global experience. Another 2013 IFC review found decentralization had little impact on overall operation processing times and that the impact on commitment amounts per investment officer was less than expected (World Bank 2017).

2.5 There is some academic research exploring the impacts of structural reforms in aid agencies. One study focusing on the World Bank's decentralization reforms in 1997–2001 argued that decentralization reforms might have succeeded in increasing World Bank responsiveness because the prevailing organizational culture was favorable for such change. "The norms required to achieve the improved country focus were largely in place in what the Wapenhans Report called the 'approval culture' and the 'disbursement imperative'" (Nielson, Tierney, and Weaver 2006).

2.6 The data and evidence on decentralization's effects are thinner among the World Bank's own research. A series of World Bank studies examining the drivers of project performance did not consider the effects of decentralization (for example, Bulman, Kolkma, and Kraay 2015; Geli, Kraay, and Nobakht 2014). A 2019 study by the Development Economics Vice Presidency and Operations Policy and Country Services, which expanded previous work by Kraay and others, investigated the association between project quality and TTL location and recruitment type (local versus international). The study found that project quality is not significantly different for projects prepared or supervised from Washington, DC, or the field offices. However, there is a significant negative association if the TTL was based outside headquarters but only for the period before 2003. The study did not find a significant correlation between the staff's recruitment type and project quality.

3. Objectives and Audience

3.1 This evaluation aims to inform the World Bank's efforts to strengthen its global footprint by drawing lessons from past decentralization efforts. More specifically, it will (i) provide evidence-based lessons on the effects of decentralization on World Bank country program performance, (ii) contribute to a better understanding of the benefits and downsides of different decentralization configurations, and (iii) support World Bank management in developing a conceptual framework and metrics to track the progress in adjusting the global footprint to meet expected goals. The evaluation is part of IEG's work stream that assesses cross-cutting systemic, institutional issues in the World Bank to help it improve its development effectiveness. The primary audiences are the Board of Executive Directors and World Bank management.

4. Conceptual Framework

4.1 A preliminary conceptual framework (figure 4.1) is developed to guide the evaluation's design and show how the evaluation questions are tailored to investigate a set of issues that can usefully inform management's current efforts. The stated objective of global footprint strengthening is to improve the effectiveness of World Bank client country programs, especially in low-income countries (LICs) and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) and in countries affected by FCV. The expected benefits of increased field presence are to improve the World Bank's client responsiveness and enhance its performance.[2] By construing management's objectives of strengthening global footprint

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[2] The World Bank does not have a single strategic document that provides a clear statement of the global footprint approach's objectives and benefits. However, there are several statements and related documents releted to human resourecs strategies, including but not limited to, World

and deriving assumptions from the literature on the potential impact of decentralization measures, this conceptual framework describes the main variables and contextual factors that are essential for meeting those objectives.

4.2 The key elements of the conceptual framework are the following:

- World Bank decentralization measures;
- The enabling conditions that are necessary to make it work and some factors that can influence the results;
- The intended changes in World Bank staff behavior and in the World Bank's performance and client responsiveness; and possible downsides that intended decentralization steps may cause in complex matrix organizations;
- The desired long-term impact on the World Bank's overall performance and results.

4.3 A literature review of organizational design and effectiveness depicts decentralization as an adjustment in an organization's delivery model driven by business needs. Decentralization can be one of the strategies that leadership could consider to adapt an organization to deliver its mission, strategy, and commitments better. An impetus to decentralize can be external (to respond to changing environments) or internal (to remain relevant and deliver services more effectively and efficiently). But the organization's mission, strategy, and commitments should drive such change.

4.4 The degree of decentralization, which can encompass deconcentration and devolution of decision-making authority, could vary (see box 1.1 for definitions). The World Bank's current decentralization effort, for example, centers primarily on placing more technical staff and practice managers in the field, especially in LICs and LMICs. This will strengthen technical capacity in the field and is likely to bring operational-level decision-making closer to the clients if technical staff in the field also has some decision-making powers, such as managing projects or programs.

4.5 To ensure that decentralization works as intended, it must be supported by structures and processes (such as distribution of decision-making power, costing and budget allocation, and workforce planning); systems (information technology and other

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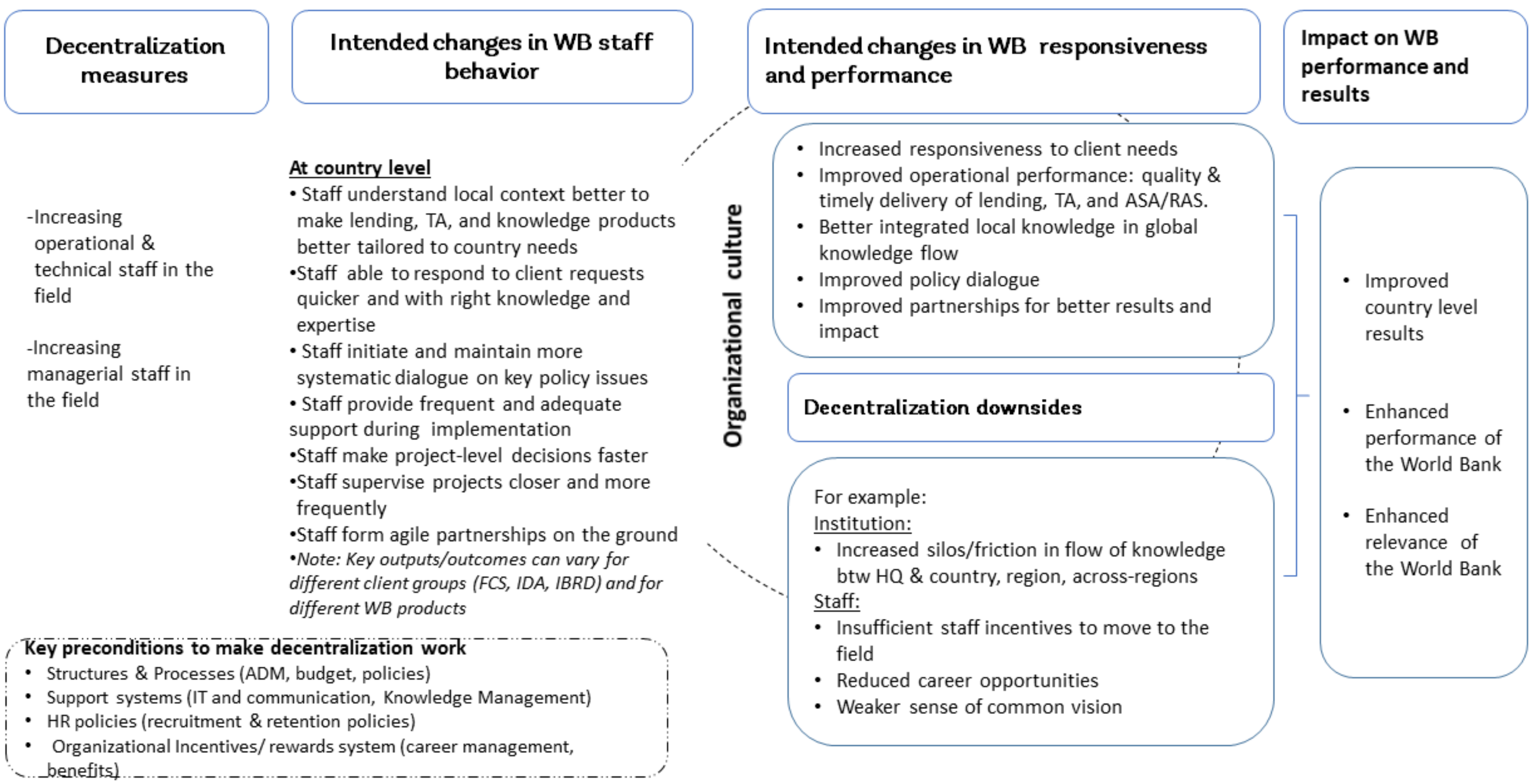
Bank 2019a and World Bank 2020 that articulate the global footprint objectives for the next few years.

communication means, and knowledge management systems); human resource policies (recruitment, rotation, and training); and organizational incentives or reward systems (monetary and nonmonetary rewards, including salaries, promotions, and career mobility). These measures need to be consistent with choices in other areas to reinforce each other and work best (Galbraith 2014; Burke and Litwin 1992; Weaver 2007; Lundberg 2012).

4.6 Decentralization aims to induce changes in World Bank staff behavior that would lead to better support to clients, systematic engagement, agile partnerships, and enhanced handholding during preparation and implementation of different World Bank products and services. All these should lead to improved World Bank performance in the field and increased client responsiveness. In the longer term, decentralization reforms are expected to deliver better country-level results, improve organizational performance and learning, and enhance the World Bank's relevance to its clients and shareholders.

4.7 The World Bank has a complex matrix structure and aims to be both global and local at the same time. The structural and decision-making changes that decentralization will bring must remain coherent with other parts of the organization. Therefore, when measuring the effects of decentralization, it is critical to pay attention to key areas where the organization might develop frictions and institute measures to mitigate those frictions. The prevailing organizational culture—the set of broader, institution-wide incentives, norms, and values—also affects the extent to which the decentralization's intended outcomes will be achieved.

Figure 4.1. Preliminary Conceptual Framework



Source: Independent Evaluation Group.
Note: ADM = accountability and decision-making; ASA = advisory services and analytics; FCS = fragile and conflict-affected situation; HQ = headquarters; IBRD = International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; IDA = International Development Association; IT = information technology; RAS = reimbursable advisory services; TA = technical assistance; WB = World Bank.

5. Evaluation Questions and Scope

5.1 This evaluation will answer the following questions:

- **EQ1**. What is the evidence about the links between decentralization and World Bank country program performance?
- **EQ2**. How did staffing and decision-making authority in the field help to improve client responsiveness and enhance performance?[3] How does this vary for different types of client countries? What factors explain variation in decentralization benefits and downsides?
  - **2a**. How did the World Bank staffing and decision-making authority in the field impact its early response and support to its client countries to fight the coronavirus (COVID-19)?
- **EQ3**. What are the lessons on how to balance the potential benefits and downsides of different decentralization configurations?
- **EQ4**. Going forward, how can the potential benefits and downsides of decentralization (as part of strengthening the global footprint) be measured?

5.2 The scope of this evaluation was defined in consultations with World Bank management leading the decentralization efforts and in interviews with key informants from the World Bank's Regions, Global Practices, and Global Themes. The conceptual framework also informed the scope. One key challenge for scoping this evaluation has been the extent to which the past decentralization waves can yield relevant lessons for the new efforts to expand the global footprint given the very different internal and external contexts and starting points. Establishing and maintaining a desirable degree of decentralization is contextual and depends on the business needs. Compared with the early 2000s, the World Bank is already significantly decentralized; it must deliver against larger commitments, has changed its approach to engaging in countries affected by FCV, and operates in a development field that is more crowded. Therefore, to get a more real-time understanding of the extent to which the World Bank's responsiveness and performance improved from a proximity to client countries, the evaluation focuses on the actual World Bank staffing patterns in the field, which are the result of several decentralization and reorganization waves over the years. Consequently, this evaluation will examine the FY13–19 period, but some issues, such as investigating broader effects of decentralization based on the literature, will benefit from covering a longer time fame.

[3] Staffing refers to the number of people, their skill mix, and their roles in an organization.

Concentrating on the FY13–19 period will also allow the use of World Bank client surveys to corroborate some of the evaluation findings.

5.3 This evaluation is limited to the World Bank; IFC is outside of its scope. However, the evaluation will provide a synthesis of findings and lessons from IFC's past decentralization experience, based only on existing self- and independent evaluations and key informant interviews.

5.4 Regarding conceptual boundaries, the evaluation will focus on expected changes in World Bank staff behavior and its client responsiveness and performance, as depicted in the conceptual framework in figure 4.1. To investigate these links, the evaluation team developed several assumptions (elaborated in appendix A, table A.1) about the benefits of decentralization for different World Bank client country groups (with nuanced focus on FCS countries). These assumptions are developed based on the preliminary literature review (appendix C, table C.1 provides a quick summary), World Bank strategic documents, and interviews with more than 30 current and former staff (country directors, country managers, regional directors, practice managers, program leaders and TTLs), and consultations with Board members' advisers.

5.5 A small, additional line of inquiry is added to the evaluation to provide lessons on the role of the World Bank's global footprint in providing early response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Details of this inquiry are provided in appendix E.

5.6 The evaluation will not explore the structures and processes, such as information technology and human resources solutions, supporting decentralization depicted in the conceptual framework because it is not intended to be a comprehensive assessment. Its emphasis on incentives and organizational culture will be indirect to the extent they contribute to or constrain the fulfilment of decentralization benefits.

5.7 The evaluation's scope will also exclude an analysis of the costs of decentralization.

6. Evaluation Approach and Methods

6.1 The evaluation will use a mixed methods approach and will conduct analysis at multiple levels. The evaluation will examine 20 countries to investigate the extent to which decentralization benefits (enunciated in the conceptual framework and table A.1) have materialized in those countries in the FY13–19 period and explore the array of factors behind their variation.

6.2 The team will conduct this analysis through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. It will comprise a review of the World Bank's country strategy documents and their self- and independent evaluations to extract information pertaining to decentralization (for example, staffing issues, manifestation of decentralization benefits and drawbacks, and so on); a detailed analysis of country office staffing and travel patterns; a review of project and operational documents; semistructured interviews with country directors and country managers, practice managers, program leaders, and clients; and a survey of TTLs working in or on those countries. Appendix B, table B.1, provides more details.

Selection of Countries

6.3 The team selected 20 countries from the universe of 126 low-income, lower-middle-income, and upper-middle-income countries for further analysis. The selection of countries was based on (i) different types of decentralization configurations, meaning countries with the country director in the borrowing country, countries with the country director in a neighboring borrowing country, and countries served from a third country, such as a hub or the headquarters; and (ii) the size of country programs, represented by the number of lending operations (table 6.1). Within these categories, countries were selected to ensure variation by income level (LIC, LMIC, and upper-middle-income countries), FCS status, and Region. Because the World Bank committed to improve its global footprint, especially in LIC and LMIC countries and FCS, countries from those groups were prioritized (table 6.2; appendix D). Additional considerations in selecting countries were to ensure that

- At least two countries from the same Region are selected, but they do not share the same country director;
- The World Bank has had a continuous engagement in a country since FY 2013;
- The sample includes at least one small state and at least one FCS country that is a non-family post;
- One country with protracted conflict (Afghanistan) is included.

6.4 It is important to highlight that other critical features of the World Bank's global footprint—such as the presence of managerial staff, operational staff (including fiduciary), and safeguard staff and the skill mix in the field—will be a part of the analysis in selected countries.

Table 6.1. Selected Countries by Decentralization Type

Country Program Size / Country Director location[a]	Group 1: Large Lending Portfolio, FY13–19	Group 2: Small Lending Portfolio, FY13–19
Cluster 1: Country director in borrowing country	Afghanistan, Nigeria, Vietnam	Argentina, Myanmar, Ukraine
Cluster 2: Country director out of borrowing country	Armenia, Central African Republic, Jordan, Liberia, Madagascar, Nepal, Niger, Tunisia, Uganda	Chad, Somalia
Cluster 3: Country director out in (part 1 country) hub or headquarters	Albania, Guatemala, Solomon Islands	——

Note: —— = not selected.

a. Cluster 1 = country director in a borrowing country—serving one country or multiple countries; cluster 2 = country director out, located in a neighboring borrowing country; cluster 3 = country director out, located in a hub (part 1 country) or in Washington, DC headquarters.

Table 6.2. List of Selected Countries

Region	Country	Income Level and FCS Status (FY20)	Lending Operations FY13–19 *(no.)*	Non-US-based Operational Staff (average) FY13–19 *(no.)*
AFR	Nigeria	LMIC FCS	61	42
AFR	Uganda	LIC	53	28
AFR	Liberia	LIC FCS	47	12
AFR	Madagascar	LIC	39	19
AFR	Niger	LIC FCS	38	11
AFR	Central African Republic	LIC FCS	26	4
AFR	Chad	LIC FCS	22	6
AFR	Somalia	LIC FCS	20	0
EAP	Vietnam	LMIC	113	84
EAP	Myanmar	LMIC FCS	18	24
EAP	Solomon Islands	LMIC FCS	21	4
ECA	Ukraine	LMIC	33	19
ECA	Armenia	UMIC	40	11
ECA	Albania	UMIC	32	10
LAC	Argentina	UMIC	51	38
LAC	Guatemala	UMIC	22	4
MNA	Tunisia	LMIC	37	10
MNA	Jordan	UMIC	31	3
SAR	Afghanistan	LIC FCS	70	43
SAR	Nepal	LIC	67	30

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

Note: Country director location was updated to December 31, 2019. FCS status reflects World Bank 2020 List of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. AFR = Africa; EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; FCS = fragile and conflict-affected situations; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; LIC = low-income country; LMIC = lower-middle-income country; MNA = Middle East and North Africa; SAR = South Asia; UMIC = upper-middle-income country.

6.5 **In-depth case studies.** The team will select four of the 20 identified countries for in-depth evaluation. Because of pandemic travel restrictions, missions to these four countries are not possible in the time frame of the evaluation. To the extent possible, the team will mitigate this serious restriction on field-based data collection by reaching out to key informants in these four countries by phone or teleconferencing. Wherever possible, the team will also use the help of local consultants to reach out to more stakeholders, such as development partners and sector-level clients, as was planned initially, with because of their focus on pandemic-related work.[4] The purpose of the in-depth case studies is to obtain more contextualized findings, to learn the perspective of a wider range of World Bank stakeholders at the country level, and to investigate the factors further (including staff incentives and organizational culture) that could explain the variation in decentralization benefits and drawbacks.

6.6 The sampling of these countries will be utilization focused, with an objective to select cases that maximize learning. These cases will be selected after a preliminary screening of 20 countries. Within case study countries, the team will also select one or two sectors for in-depth examination of the causal links between the presence in the field and client responsiveness and the World Bank's performance in those areas (for example, project performance, analytical work, sector dialogue, and so on).

6.7 At this level, the team will conduct the analysis through qualitative methods, relying primarily on interviews with country-level stakeholders. It will conduct interviews with operational, technical, and managerial staff in a Country Management Unit and its supporting hub, along with client country representatives, key development partners in the field, civil society, the private sector, and academia.

6.8 In addition, the evaluation team will conduct a desk review of the experience of the Center on Conflict, Security, and Development (Nairobi hub), which served a group of African FCS countries from 2011–16, to distill lessons on what has worked and what has not worked, and why.

6.9 To complement case-based analysis, the evaluation will analyze World Bank decentralization effects in the last 20 years using quantitative methods**.** The intention is to contribute to broadening and deepening the available quantitative evidence on the relationship between decentralization and different dimensions of the World Bank's project- and country-level performance and client responsiveness.[5] Several key

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[4] The possibility of having limited access to the right level of decision makers because of the pandemic situation applies to all 20 countries.

[5] Several World Bank studies assessed quantitively the effect of staff type and location on project performance, as described in section 2 of this approach paper. The evaluation team studied

assumptions about the possible effects of decentralization, distilled from the literature on organizational effectiveness and particularly relevant in the World Bank context, will be refined in consultation with IEG's methods team, and tested. The evaluation team will also explore an opportunity to conduct such quantitative analysis jointly with the Development Economics Vice Presidency. The team will use World Bank staffing data (such as location, grade and contract type, level of expertise, functions, and mobility); country, operational, and project data; and the available client survey results.

6.10 In summary, data collection and analysis for this evaluation (elaborated in appendix B, table B.1) will include (i) a structured literature review, (ii) document reviews, (iii) key informant interviews, (iv) data analyses related to human resources, budget, and country program portfolio, and (v) surveys.

- **Structured literature review:** The evaluation team will conduct a literature review focused on drivers of effectiveness in decentralized organizations, the effect of decentralization on organizational performance, and key performance indicators. Expert consultations will complement this literature review.

- **Document reviews:** The evaluation team will review Bank Group strategy documents and analytical and self-evaluation reports pertaining to past decentralization waves, such those presented to the Board or Board Committees addressing the World Bank's previous decentralization efforts.[6] It will also include country strategy, project, and other operational documents for the selected country cases.

- **Key informant (semistructured) interviews:** The evaluation team will interview current and former World Bank and IFC staff and managers from Regions, relevant Global Practices, and Country Management Units; client country representatives; development partners in the field; and representatives of the private sector, civil society, and think tanks.

- **Surveys:** The evaluation will mine the data from World Bank client surveys, the Country Opinion Surveys, and project-level client surveys (two-minute surveys). The team will also conduct a survey of TTLs.

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carefully all the past research and evaluative work to ensure that it does not duplicate but rather broadens or deepens the available evidence on decentralization effect.

[6] These documents include, but are not limited to, periodic strategic staffing updates from the World Bank Human Resource Analytics unit, World Bank 2011a, and the *World Bank Quarterly Business and Risk Reviews*.

- **Data analysis from internal World Bank sources:** The team will use human resource data (such as data on the distribution of World Bank staff over time, by location, and by contract type; and deployment of practice managers and technical staff) and data on operational and country program performance.

7. Engagement and Communication

7.1 Throughout the evaluation process, the evaluation team will systematically engage with technical counterparts designated by World Bank management. This will involve regular consultations at key stages of the evaluation with an aim to create ownership in the evaluation and make its focus and findings more relevant and useful for the intended users. In addition, the team will explore the opportunity to conduct a joint survey of staff (TTLs, for example) with Operations Policy and Country Services. IEG's senior leadership will communicate regularly with World Bank management on the evaluation's process, findings, and dissemination.

8. Expected Outputs

8.1 This evaluation will take a modular approach and will have a series of separate but related outputs and engagements. The team will share some of the intermediate evaluation outputs with key stakeholders once they are completed, such as the findings from the quantitative analysis. The team will prepare a final synthesis report at completion and will deliver it in October 2020.

9. Team and Budget

9.1 Under the direction and guidance of Galina Sotirova (manager, IEG Corporate and Human Development) and Oscar Calvo-Gonzalez (director, IEG Human Development and Economic Management), the core team includes Anna Aghumian, senior evaluation officer, TTL; Anis Dani; Elisabeth Goller; Gus Greenstein; Basil Kavalsky; Andres Liebenthal; Santiago Ramirez Rodriguez; Aline Weng; and Yezena Yimer. Rasmus Heltberg will provide strategic advice. Qihui Chen and Estelle Raimondo will provide methods advice.

9.2 This evaluation will go through IEG's regular quality assurance process. Peer reviewers for this evaluation are Marcus Cox, Agulhas Applied Knowledge; Dan Honig, Johns Hopkins University; Atul Mehta, IFC (retired); and Onno Ruhl, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat.

9.3 The estimated budget for delivering this evaluation is $575,000.

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Appendix A. Decentralization Benefits for Different Client Country Groups

Table A.1. Decentralization Benefits for Different Client Country Groups

	Importance for Client Country Groups				
Decentralization Benefits	**LIC**	**LIC and LMIC FCS**	**LMIC**	**UMIC**	**Who Needs to Be in the Field?**
1. Better understanding of local context to better tailor World Bank products and services Assumption: More staff in the field with the right skill mix would lead to better-tailored World Bank support.	High	Very high	High	High, medium	CD/CM, TTL, program leader, or senior technical expert
2. Responding to client requests quicker and with high-quality knowledge and expertise Assumption: More staff in the field with the right skill mix would lead to better-tailored World Bank support.	High	High	High	High	CD, CM, program leader, or senior technical expert
3. Improving policy dialogue Assumption: The presence of senior-level staff would enable better quality engagement and policy dialogue.	High	High	High	High	Requires presence of senior operational staff, CD, or CM; sector dialogue would require presence or proximity of senior technical staff, TTLs
4. Stronger handholding during (project, ASA) preparation and implementation Assumption: Having more technical staff in the field would allow provision of more frequent, day-to-day support that countries with low capacity need.	High	Very high	Medium (some handholding may be needed)	Low (but high for small states)	TTL and procurement, financial, and safeguards specialists TTL (PM?) TTL
5. Faster operational-level decision-making Assumption: The presence of staff with a decision-making role would help in making agile, real-time project-level decisions.	High	Very high	Medium	Medium, low	TTL/PM

Decentralization Benefits	Importance for Client Country Groups: LIC	LIC and LMIC FCS	LMIC	UMIC	Who Needs to Be in the Field?
6. Better supervision • More frequent travel inside the client country to supervise projects • More efficient connection, travel from hubs to the country Assumption: Having more operational staff in the field would lead to better project supervision.	High	High	Medium	Low	TTL
7. Improving partnerships in the field Assumption: Having staff with a decision-making role would enable formation of agile partnerships with key actors to achieve better and long-lasting results.	High	Very high	Medium	Low (but can be different for UMICs affected by FCV) More convening services	Strategic, technical, and operational-level decision makers (CD, [PM?] PL, TTL)

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.
Note: ASA = advisory services and analytics; CD = country director; CM = country manager; FCS = fragile and conflict-affected situation; FCV = fragility, conflict, and violence; LIC = low-income country; LMIC = lower-middle-income country; PL = project leader; PM = project manager; TTL = task team leader; UMIC = upper-middle-income country.

Appendix B. Evaluation Design: Methods and Data Sources

Table B.1. Evaluation Design: Methods and Data Sources

Key Questions and Scope	Data Collection and Analysis Methods	Data Sources
EQ 1. What is the evidence about the links between decentralization and World Bank country program performance? Scope: 2000–19 period	• Structured literature review • Experts consultations • Quantitative analysis	Human resources data Academic literature or organizational effectiveness Project portfolio data Country-level data World Bank Country Opinion Surveys
EQ2. How did staffing and decision-making authority in the field help to improve client responsiveness and enhance performance? 2a. How does this vary for different types of client countries? 2b. What factors explain variation in decentralization benefits and downsides? Scope: FY13–19	• Document review of • Statistical analysis • Structured review of CPF, PLRs, and CLRs • World Bank perception surveys results analysis • TTL survey (headquarters and field) • Semistructured interviews with World Bank staff, country client counterparts, other partners • Operational data analysis	Human resources data Country strategy documents World Bank staff Other country data (for example, CPIA ratings) Project portfolio data World Bank Country Opinion Survey Client survey (two-minute surveys) Operational data (procurement, operational travel)
EQ3. What are the lessons on how to balance the potential benefits and downsides of different decentralization configurations? Scope: FY13–19	• Document review • Statistical analysis • TTL survey (both headquarters and field) • Structured review of CPF, and PLRs/CLRs • World Bank perception surveys results analysis • Semistructured interviews with World Bank staff, country client counterparts, other partners • Operational data analysis	Human resources data Country strategy documents World Bank staff Other country data (for example, CPIA ratings) Project portfolio data World Bank Country Opinion Survey Client survey (two-minute surveys) Operational data (procurement, operational travel)
EQ4. How can the potential benefits and downsides of decentralization (as part of strengthening the global footprint) be measured?	• Structured literature review • Experts consultations • Semistructured interviews	World Bank staff Literature on organizational effectiveness Academia

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.
Note: CLR = Completion and Learning Review; CPF = Country Partnership Framework; CPIA = Country Policy and Institutional Assessment; PLR = Performance and Learning Review; TTL = task team leader.

Appendix C. Benefits and Downsides of Decentralization: Insights from Preliminary Literature Review

Table C.1. Benefits and Downsides of Decentralization: A Summary from Preliminary Literature Review

Aspect	Potential Benefits	Potential Downsides
Trust and team cohesion	**Improved communication, trust, and efficiency.** Deconcentration may lead to better communication between previously separated project team members and between an organization and its clients. This can improve trust, which may speed up negotiation processes, cut transaction costs, and enhance cooperation (Diallo and Thuillier 2005).	**If increased turnover → decline in quality of communication.** Deconcentration may increase turnover through an organization's peripheral units and project teams, which can disrupt communication between team members and between an organization and its clients (Diallo and Thuillier 2005; Cohen and Levinthal 1990).
Information and decisions	**Faster decision-making, more innovation, more bandwidth in headquarters.** When decision-making powers are devolved from headquarters to distributed units, decisions that can be made in the field happen more quickly, increasing overall effectiveness and encouraging innovation. This may also reduce information overload in headquarters, which can also speed decision-making there (Pollitt 2007).	**More people involved in any given decision → slower decision-making.** When decision-making powers are devolved from a central body to distributed units, more actors may become involved in any given decision, which could lead to more deliberation and debate → "decision-making becomes more complex" (Pollitt 2007).
	Increased knowledge of local context. With deconcentration, more organization personnel are close to their respective contexts, which can lead to more integration of local knowledge in operations, increasing overall effectiveness and the ability to tailor projects for clients (Argyres and Silverman 2004; Alderman 2002; Pollitt 2007).	
	Improved organizational learning potential (absorptive capacity). If deconcentration increases the diversity of knowledge and experience of personnel in an organization's peripheral units, it may facilitate those units' abilities to learn and improve in areas in which they gained expertise (Cohen and Levinthal 1990).	
Autonomy	**Increased agent motivation** (1). Devolution of authority from a principal to their agent may mean that the agent has a greater chance to work on their own idea and see it come to fruition. With this increased potential private payoff, the agent's motivation may increase, improving organizational effectiveness (Aghion and Tirole 1997; Honig 2018; Rasul and Rogger 2018).	Impingement on client autonomy. Deconcentration of relatively powerful World Bank personnel may enable the World Bank to more strongly negotiate for its preferences in project design and implementation (versus those of the client), which may decrease clients' sense of autonomy (Swedlund 2017).

Aspect	Potential Benefits	Potential Downsides
	Increased agent motivation (2). Deconcentration may increase a decentralized employee's sense of belonging in a smaller organization, which may increase motivation and identification, improving organizational effectiveness (Pollitt 2007).	Agent "capture." Agents placed in the field through organizational deconcentration may develop deeper relationships with and empathy for local actors, who may have preferences that differ from the agent's principals. Because of these relationships, agents may increasingly seek to further the local actors' interests to the detriment of their own organization's goals (Hawkins and Jacoby 2006).

Source: Independent Evaluation Group.

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Appendix D. Country Sampling Strategy

Twenty (20) countries are selected purposefully from the universe of 126 low-, lower-middle, and upper-middle-income countries for the analysis (table 6.2). The goal is to have a sample of countries that represent different types of decentralization configurations and capture the diversity of World Bank country engagements varying by income level, fragile and conflict-affected situation status, and Region.

To arrive at typology of the World Bank's decentralization configurations, the team followed multiple steps:

As a first step, the team grouped the countries by the location of a country director. This resulted in three distinct types of decentralization configurations:

Cluster 1 = country director *in* a borrowing country—serving one country or multiple countries

Cluster 2 = country director *out*, located in a neighboring borrowing country

Cluster 3 = country director *out* located in a hub (part 1 country) or in Washington, DC headquarters.

Next, the number of lending operations, to represent World Bank country program size, is used as a criterion to group these countries within each of the three clusters. This aimed to ensure that in selected countries, the World Bank has a sizable portfolio (except for small states) that would require having some operational presence and different skill mix in the field. Thus, countries in each of these three clusters were further divided into two groups: countries with a large number of lending operations (above the average number of operations in their cluster) and countries with a smaller number of operations (below the average number of operations in their cluster; table 6.1).

After mapping all 126 countries to these categories, the team selected countries for evaluation based on the following criteria:

- Low- and lower-middle-income countries and FCS countries were prioritized because the World Bank committed to improve its global footprint especially in countries that belong to those groups. This naturally led to overrepresentation of countries from the Africa Region.

- At least two countries from the same Region are selected, but to avoid bias, it was ensured that they do not share the same country director.

- The World Bank has had a continuous engagement in a country since FY13.

- The sample includes at least one small state and at least one fragile and conflict-affected situation country that is a non-family post.
- One country with protracted conflict (Afghanistan) is included.

It should be noted that there could be different ways to categorize global footprint arrangements of the World Bank. However, the two criteria that were applied—(i) different types of decentralization configurations, meaning countries with the country director in the borrowing country, countries with the country director in a neighboring borrowing country, and countries served from a third country, such as a hub or the headquarters; and (ii) different sizes of country programs—allow the team to select countries with sufficiently distinct decentralization features and global footprint needs, which will be useful to maximize learning from these decentralization experiences. It is also important to highlight that other critical features of decentralization, such as the presence of managerial staff, operational staff (including fiduciary), and safeguard staff, and the skill mix in the field, will be a critical part of the analysis in selected countries.

Appendix E. The World Bank's Global Footprint and the Coronavirus Pandemic Response

To use the opportunity for real-time learning on the role of the World Bank's global footprint at times of crisis, a small, additional line of inquiry is added to this evaluation. As part of the main evaluation question 2, the evaluation will also assess this question: How did the World Bank staffing and decision-making authority in the field affect the World Bank's early response and support to its client countries to fight the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

This question aims to explore the role of the World Bank's global footprint in providing early support to client countries amid the pandemic. The pandemic is a serious challenge, but it also presents an opportunity to obtain real-time evidence about the nimbleness of the World Bank's global footprint. A number of evaluations and self-evaluations distill lessons on how the World Bank responded to crisis situations in the past. However, none of them looked at the role of the World Bank staff and decision-making in the field in getting speedy and quality responses. What difference, if any, did World Bank staffing and decision-making in the field make to providing an early response to the pandemic in these countries? How might have different organizational arrangements related to decentralization influenced the way the client countries were able to tap into the World Bank's support?

Scope of the assessment: This assessment will cover all 20 countries in the evaluation (table 6.2). Most of these countries, as of May 2020, have already either benefited from the COVID-19 Fast-Track Facility's support or had a quick project restructuring to support the fight against the pandemic.

Evaluation approach and methods: As part of the qualitative assessment that the team will carry out in 20 countries, additional interview questions will be posed to country directors, country managers, relevant program leaders, and clients on the pandemic response experience to understand these questions: (i) How responsive and nimble has the World Bank been to support the country to fight against COVID-19? (ii) Did the presence of World Bank staff in the country make a difference in the speed and quality of the response, and in what way?

The success in the short term (for example, within the next four to five months, in the time frame of this evaluation) can be measured by the extent to which the client demand for support was met (the degree of client satisfaction) and the speed of project restructuring or preparation.

In four in-depth case study countries, the team will expand this inquiry to development partners, a larger number of clients, and task team leaders. To the extent possible, within these case study countries, the team will also select health sectors for in-depth examination of the causal links between the presence in the field and client responsiveness amid the pandemic. However, this is subject to the limitations noted in section 6, Selection of Countries.

Additionally, the location of task team leaders, other key staff members, program leaders, and practice managers for countries that received such support and countries that did not will be surveyed to see if there are some patterns.