

Chapter 8

The Commission's Final Report: The International Response

The previous chapters looked at how creating a Commission based on broad representation and a process based on “good governance” principles established credibility for the WCD among a cross-section of agencies, movements, and interest groups internationally. We also looked at the trade-offs the Commission made between seeking consensus among its 12-member body and seeking to evolve a broader consensus among Forum members and networks of dam-related stakeholders. The question we address in this chapter is whether broad representation and a credible process were sufficient to ensure positive reception of the Commission’s final product, a report entitled *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-making*.

This chapter provides an overview of *Dams and Development*, and documents how it broke new ground in the international development discourse. We ask: What were the responses of the main stakeholder groups to the report? To what degree were stakeholders’ responses based upon their perceptions of representation on the Commission, and on their perceptions of the legitimacy of the knowledge-gathering process or the consensus-building process? Based on these responses, we reflect on the implications for dissemination, adoption, and implementation of the WCD’s recommendations.

Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-making

WCD Report Breaks New Ground

The Commission’s final report, *Dams and Development*, is a consensus report of 380 pages. All 12 Commissioners¹ signed it, and Medha Patkar wrote an additional “comment.” The report wraps together

the required outputs of the Commission: a global review of the development effectiveness of large dams; a framework for water resources planning; and guidelines for options assessment and dam building, maintenance, and decommissioning.

The Commission’s findings were much more than just a review of dams. Rather, they were judgments on the very governance and societal relations that underpin any major development project. The bulk of the Commission’s Global Review of Large Dams was dedicated to analysing the performance of dams based on the questions in its case studies and survey: What were the projected versus actual benefits, costs, and impacts of large dams? To what degree had dams delivered on developers’ promises or fallen short? The Commission concluded that large dams vary greatly in delivering predicted water and electricity services and related social benefits. Irrigation dams have tended to fall short of physical and economic targets. Hydropower dams “tend to perform closer to, but still below, targets for power generation, generally meet their financial targets but demonstrate variable economic performance relative to targets.”² The history of large dams reveals a “pervasive and systematic failure” by governments and developers to assess the range of potential negative impacts and to put adequate mitigation and compensation measures in place.³

In analysing the causes of these failures, the Commission pinpointed inequitable power relations within and among nations and closed decision-making processes. By normative standards, the positive contribution of dams—to irrigation, domestic and industrial consumption, electricity generation, and flood control—had been “marred in many cases by significant environmental and social impacts which when viewed

Box 8.1

The role of governance in dam-related conflict

“Some may feel this Report makes water use decisions even more difficult by raising the bar higher as we do, a government must exercise more energy and creativity to reach a sustainable result. But in truth we make those decisions easier, for we show clearly which, how, where and why decisions can either work well or fail to deliver.

For that reason, I assert that we are much more than a ‘Dams Commission.’ We are a Commission to heal the deep and self-inflicted wounds torn open wherever and whenever far too few determine for far too many how best to develop or use water and energy resources. That is often the nature of power, and the motivation of those who question it. Most recently governments, industry and aid agencies have been challenged around the world for deciding the destiny of millions including the poor, or even popular majorities of countries they believe to be helping.”

— Kader Asmal’s preface to
Dams and Development

from today’s *values*, are unacceptable” (authors’ emphasis).⁴ Chairperson Kader Asmal’s preface to the report further underscored the unacceptability of the decision-making processes behind much dam construction. (See Box 8.1.)

The Commission proposed using three United Nations instruments, on human rights and the right to clean environment and development, as a bridge between its evaluation of past mistakes and its prescription for the future. Specifically, the Commission evoked the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and its subsequent elaboration in the Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the UN General Assembly (1986), and the Rio Principles agreed at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992).

The link to UN instruments was highly strategic. The Commission had been tasked with creating “internationally acceptable” guidelines for the planning, construction, and maintenance of large dams. It turned to the values set forth by formal representatives of the people—the member states of the United Nations—to ground its recommendations.

As the product of a multi-stakeholder entity with no formal legal status, the Commission’s report

was destined to stand as an advisory, non-legal document in the international arena. Yet, by placing the United Nations instruments at the centre of the report, the Commission harnessed the dams issue to a prominent body of international soft law.

The Commission’s findings concerned the governance of development projects, writ large.

Looking back at the evidence in its Global Review of Large Dams, the Commission found that: “Governments, in constructing dams, have often found themselves in conflict with basic principles of good governance that have been articulated in the three international instruments [the United Nations covenants]. This situation still prevails today.”⁵

Looking forward, the Commission proposed mechanisms to improve natural resources decision-making and prevent breaches of basic human rights from occurring in the context of dams again. The Commission presented a “Rights and Risks” framework to identify which stakeholders should be involved or represented in decision-making. Stakeholders would be identified based on whether they had a legitimate claim and entitlement (under law, constitution, or custom) that might be affected by a development project. No rights should automatically be considered superior to others. When rights of various stakeholders might overlap or conflict, good faith negotiations would be required to reconcile stakeholder interests.⁶

According to the report, the risks (or “loss of rights”) of project affectees should be recognised and addressed in an explicit, open, and transparent fashion. Historically, the notion of risks had been applied to investors who risked financial capital on a project. The Commission broke new ground by highlighting the number of involuntary risk takers in both displaced and downstream communities as a result of dam building. Importantly, the Commission argued that the old-fashioned balance sheet approach that sought to trade off one person’s loss against another’s gain was unacceptable.⁷ The Commission discussed some alternatives for providing water and energy services—

options that stakeholders might consider instead of large dams. However, the Commission's treatment of alternatives was fairly general.

Based on the United Nations instruments, the Commission distilled a set of core values for water and energy related decision-making, and seven Strategic Priorities. (See Box 8.2.) The Strategic Priorities formed the basis for 26 guidelines for options assessment and the planning, financing, building, maintenance, and decommissioning of large dams. The recommendations caution that conventional cost-benefit approaches to decision-making are insufficient but must be part of a richer, multi-criteria approach. They are a mixture of "carrots" that reward good practice, such as performance bonds, and "sticks" to punish poor practice, such as the call for five-yearly evaluations of dams' performance.⁸

The Commission grounded its recommendations in three United Nations instruments.

The WCD was ahead of previous global public policy endeavours by siting human rights norms front and centre in the debate over large-scale infrastructure projects. But the WCD was not radical in this accomplishment either. As acknowledged in its final report, the international development discourse was already moving toward siting human rights at the centre of development more generally. The *UNDP Human Development Report 2000* shows how: "Human rights [constitute] the fundamental framework within which human development must be pursued."⁹

The human rights and right to development principles at the heart of *Dams and Development* were highlighted in the report's launch, in November 2001.¹⁰ The keynote speaker, former South African President Nelson Mandela, addressed the role of dams in alleviating hunger. A spokesperson for Mary Robinson, UN Commissioner on Human Rights, lauded the WCD for its attention to human rights.¹¹

The Commission Passes the Baton

At the launch of the Commission's report, Chairperson Kader Asmal presented the main findings and recommendations and declared the World Commis-

Box 8.2

The WCD's values and priorities

The WCD's Five Core Values:

equity, sustainability, efficiency, participatory decision-making, and accountability.

The WCD's Seven Strategic Priorities:

gaining public acceptance; comprehensive options assessment; addressing existing dams; sustaining rivers and livelihoods; recognising entitlements and sharing benefits; ensuring compliance; sharing rivers for peace, development, and security.

The full set of Strategic Priorities is summarised in Appendix 4.

Source: World Commission on Dams, *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making* (London: Earthscan, 2000).

sion on Dams formally disbanded, its work complete. He turned the report over to the World Bank and IUCN and other concerned stakeholders for earnest consideration and adoption.

Professor Asmal and his fellow Commissioners saw the WCD Forum members as among the most important ambassadors for the WCD's principles and recommendations. Not only were these institutions influential players in the dams industry and the broader dams debate themselves—whose actions could change the nature of the dams business—but they were also opinion leaders. They were institutions and individuals with far-reaching networks whose views on *Dams and Development* could influence the conventional wisdom about the report.

Responses to the Final Report

The high stakes for diverse groups in the dams debate and the high expectations for the WCD report created a tense atmosphere for its launch and dissemination, and pressure for major industry and NGO players to respond. The tone of the initial responses ranged from glowing to scathing, with the majority being cautiously receptive. But one generalisation is possible about the report's reception. Institutions and individuals around the world were reading it closely and felt compelled to respond publicly. In the words of one Forum member, "People are poring over it."¹²

In fact, it was not possible for most institutions to provide official responses at once. The timing of

official reactions reflected the nature of consultative procedures within institutions and networks and was also a function of the report's accessibility because of language and other factors. But even those organisations that did not make an immediate statement registered their interest in the report and their intention to form task forces to consider its implications.¹³

Because this assessment was completed only a few months after the release of the WCD report, it has been possible to capture only the first official statements and press coverage, and a sampling of individual comments.¹⁴ Precisely because of the changes to business as usual required by the report and the time taken for dissemination and adoption, it will require years for the report to be read, interpreted, operationalised, tested, and evaluated around the world, and its full impact measured.

Non-governmental Organisations

A majority of international NGOs welcomed the WCD's final report and called for immediate action by bilateral and multilateral institutions to implement its recommendations. Their demand for change in financial institutions reflected NGOs' interpretation of these institutions' make-or-break roles in the project cycle of most large dams. It also reflected Northern NGOs' demand for accountability for their tax monies that contribute toward these public institutions. (See Box 8.3.)

NGOs generally supported the findings in the WCD's Global Review, for they had obtained the normative judgement on poorly conceived and planned dam projects that they had sought. They voiced approval for the strong emphasis on negotiation, due process, and justice for dam-affected people in the WCD's forward-looking framework and recommendations.

In their advocacy efforts, international NGOs tended to focus more on the content of the report on its own terms than on the process of the WCD. Their approach tended to be: "The process was not perfect, but the product was surprisingly good."¹⁵ However, they did refer to the importance of the diverse stakeholder representatives on the Commission having reached consensus on the findings as a rationale for broader adoption and compliance.¹⁶ Regional groupings of NGOs and movement leaders who had access to the English language publication echo this initial NGO statement.

(Even several months after the WCD report's release, the summary had not been translated and fully disseminated and discussed at a grassroots level—see "*Peoples' Movements and Community-based Organisations*," below.)

A minority of advocacy NGOs and social movement leaders came out against the report. An article in the British press by one anti-dam activist was emblematic of this reaction. Philip Williams, the founder and former President of International Rivers Network, wrote that the WCD's failure to reject large dams technology altogether, by focusing instead on the weakness of decision-making processes, was "an unacceptable compromise for the global anti-dam movement."¹⁷

The report received an equally enthusiastic reaction from international environmental organisations, also among the first to respond. Such groups as IUCN and World Wide Fund for Nature welcomed the report's lengthy treatment of ecosystem management and recommendations for environmental flow releases. They supported the call for comprehensive and meaningful options assessment in water and energy planning.

IUCN's reaction bore a special significance, as it was one of the original convenors of the WCD as well as the world's largest conservation organisation. IUCN's Council passed a resolution at its Congress in early February 2001 to establish a task force to "define concrete avenues for implementation."¹⁸ Later that month, it announced that its Water & Nature Initiative, a major follow-on from the World Water Vision process, was to incorporate the WCD's framework for decision-making and selected recommendations. The significance of IUCN's role in promoting and implementing the WCD recommendations was sealed when outgoing WCD Secretary-General Achim Steiner was named as the incoming Director General of IUCN.¹⁹

Peoples' Movements and Community-based Organisations

As of this writing, only a small number of statements have been issued from community and dam-affected peoples' groups because of language issues and logistical difficulties of diffusion. Translations of the WCD's summary report into Spanish, Portuguese, French, Japanese, Chinese, German, Russian, and Hindi had been released by

Box 8.3

International NGO responses

A Call to Action

- ... Public financial institutions should immediately and comprehensively adopt the recommendations of the [WCD] and should integrate them into their relevant policies... In particular, as recommended by the WCD, no project should proceed without the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples, and without the demonstrable public acceptance of all those who would be affected by the project.
- All public financial institutions should immediately establish independent, transparent and participatory reviews of all their planned and ongoing dam projects...
- All institutions which share in the responsibility for the unresolved negative impacts of dams should immediately initiate a process to establish and fund mechanisms to provide reparations to affected communities that have suffered social, cultural, and economic harm as a result of dam projects.
- All public financial institutions should place a moratorium on funding the planning or construction of new dams until they can demonstrate that they have complied with the above measures."

—*An International NGO Coalition*^a

"The following steps need to be taken:

- That governments and the private sector apply the criteria and good practice guidelines outlined in the report and publicly commit to undertake comprehensive options assessments before proceeding with the construction of any dam...

- That OECD countries publicly commit to not construct any further large dams at least for the next two decades...
- That all interest groups pledge to not enter into construction of mega-dams (i.e. those over 100 metres in height...) as the social, ecological, and financial evidence necessitates a worldwide moratorium on such dams."

—*WWF International Position Statement, February 2001*

"The work of the Commission represents a fair and balanced assessment of both benefits and costs, with input from all constituencies through high-quality reviews, public hearings and thorough information gathering. The Commission has created a knowledge base that goes beyond what any individual organisation could possibly have compiled.

What the WCD has finally given to us is not a final verdict on dams. But it has opened up a new path, a new approach to build upon. As such, the Report of the Commission forms a landmark in the history of the development and operations of dams."

—*IUCN Position Statement, February 2001*

"The Commission, evading its main task of adjudicating the 'development effectiveness' of dams, emphasises that it is poor planning of past dams that has caused unnecessary harm. This contradicts critics' charges that it is the dams themselves, no matter how well planned, that inevitably create unmitigated social and ecological impacts... The World Commission on Dams was no 'truth commission,' but more of a 'peace process.'"

—*Philip Williams, anti-dam activist*^b

^a Excerpted from "A Call to Action," by International Rivers Network and the Berne Declaration, with 109 additional signatories from around the world, 16 November 2000.

^b Philip Williams, "Lies, Dam Lies," *The Guardian* (22 November 2000).

mid-2001. However, much of the process of discussion and mobilisation at the community level was just beginning.

The first statements, from dam-affected people in Brazil, Canada, Southern Africa, Nepal, and India, indicate that they found much in the WCD report to hearten them.²⁰ (See Box 8.4.) In particular, the Commission's recognition of the injustices perpetrated upon many displaced and project-affected people in the past was seen as a

vindication of their struggles. These dam-affected people seized upon the report's call for review of problem projects and also its call for obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous and tribal communities before a dam is built. If anything, dam-affected peoples' groups expressed disappointment that the Commission did not call for the free, prior, and informed consent of all people to be displaced by a reservoir, but instead used the less precise notion of "public acceptability."²¹

Box 8.4

Peoples' movements and community groups' responses

"The era of large dams and its [sic] grievous social and environmental impacts has come to an end. The era of dams built against the will of dam-affected people has come to an end. Brazil needs to move forward to this era. No new dams should be built in Brazil without the 'demonstrable public acceptance' of dam-affected people."

—*Brazilian Movement of Dam-Affected People*^a

"As a direct result of the inequity between those communities who pay the costs of large dams and those who benefit from these same dams, we strongly urge for affected communities to be direct beneficiaries of existing dam projects."

—*South African communities and non-governmental organisations*^b

"As peoples who have been dispossessed and devastated by the adverse biophysical, socio-economic and cultural effects of water and energy projects, we call upon international financial institutions to refuse funding to all water and energy projects for which the consent of the peoples or communities affected has not been obtained."

—*James Bay Cree Nation and the Pimicikamak Cree Nation*^c

^a Brazilian Movement of Dam-Affected People, "The Brazilian Movement of Dam-affected People (MAB) and the World Commission on Dams (WCD)," 9 February 2001.

^b Southern African communities and non-governmental organisations, "Southern African Call to Action," 23 November 2000.

^c James Bay Cree Nation and the Pimicikamak Cree Nation, "Statement of the on the occasion of the release of the World Commission on Dams final report," Undated.

At a more profound level, dam-affected people and their supporters had hoped that the spirit of Commissioner Medha Patkar's "comment" to the WCD report²² would have underpinned the entire report. In her note, Ms. Patkar calls dams "a symptom of the larger failure of the unjust and destructive dominant development model... Addressing these issues is essential in any attempt to reach an adequate analysis of the basic systemic changes needed to achieve equitable and sustainable development and to give a pointer towards challenging the forces that lead to the marginalisation of a majority through the imposition of unjust technologies like large dams."²³ For example, the Brazilian Movement of Dam-affected

People (MAB) lamented that the WCD had failed to go beyond the recognition of dams' economic, social, and environmental problems "to unmask the private interests moving the dam industry around the world."²⁴

In spite of these reservations, dam-affected and community-based organisations have indicated that the WCD report is something they can work with. In two of many such examples, MAB has called on Brazilian national stakeholders to convene a national commission on dams—in the spirit of the WCD—to assess Brazilian dam performance and planning and address outstanding reparations issues. The WCD report has invigorated a range of community-based organisations and NGOs in Kenya, which have begun pressing for its recommendations to be implemented in current dam projects in their country, especially as regards stakeholder participation in options assessment and project planning. (See Box 8.5.)

Multilateral Development Banks

The World Bank's reaction to the WCD report was intensely anticipated by a wide range of stakeholders, not least because it was a convenor of the Commission. By the time the WCD report was released the World Bank was involved in only 1 percent of large dam-building internationally²⁵ but its agenda-setting power in development discourse and its continuing leverage with client governments gave it considerable opportunity to influence the "international acceptability" of the WCD's recommendations.

The initial response from President James Wolfensohn at the London launch of the WCD report was warm and congratulatory. He was non-committal about the likelihood of the World Bank's adopting the recommendations. He emphasised that the report must be debated by the World Bank's Board and client governments before defining a way forward. But he nonetheless suggested that the World Bank would find many opportunities for adoption of the recommendations.

As months passed and the World Bank's internal evaluation progressed, its position seemed to harden against taking major action. A "progress report" delivered by Senior Water Advisor John Briscoe at the WCD's third Forum meeting indicated that the prospects for significant change

Box 8.5

Responses at a country level: Kenya

"Over the years the majority of Kenyan contenders in the dams debate were just whispering. Having read the Commission's report we are convinced that the Kenyan stakeholders had some things to tell the Commission regarding the experiences of dams in the country. Fortunately the Commission listened. The Commission told its story. And that has made all the difference. The various interest groups in Kenya are more than whispering now; they are dashing fully into voice. For this [hope] to be realised there is urgent need to develop a clear policy framework on stakeholder participation and mechanisms that not only facilitate but also ensure involvement of stakeholders.

The success of the WCD report in Kenya also largely depends on whether the policymakers will give the dams debate top priority; actively promote an enabling environment through adopting legal, political, economic, social, financial, and economic measures, etc. Besides, the country's development partners such as the donor agencies will have to demonstrate their commitment to the principles captured in the WCD report...

Due to the rising power of NGOs on the local scene, the influence and impact of *Dams and Development* in the decision-making process has a great impetus... The fact that the WCD has shifted the centre of gravity in the dams debate to focus on options assessment and participatory decision-making has had ripples in the implementation of proposed dam projects in Kenya."

Source: Excerpted from Josphat Ayamunda, "Dams and Development, Kenyan Perspectives on the World Commission on Dams." Draft Research Report for the WCD Assessment, January 2001.

within the Bank were fairly remote. The World Bank evaluation team, led by Dr. Briscoe and a senior official of the division for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development, had toured seven client countries to harvest official reactions to the WCD report.²⁶ As related in Dr. Briscoe's statement, World Bank contacts in Southern governments approved the core values of the WCD report but balked at the specific recommendations, demanding no new conditionalities on dam building. (See "Governments Agencies," below.)

Based on this feedback, the World Bank's evaluation team proposed a modest suite of follow-up activities. The World Bank said it would create a resource unit to gather information about good dams practice in line with the WCD recommendations and to "consider" how the WCD report might

inform the World Bank's water resource sector strategy, then under development.²⁷ The significance of these steps was difficult to assess at the time, since each one had the potential to develop into a strong follow-up to the WCD or to wither away. But the overall message was that the World Bank would rely upon the interest of individual project managers in the institution and client governments to demand the skills and information to pursue the WCD's recommendations. Without the political will of senior World Bank officials to operationalise the recommendations, there is no reason to assume that, by themselves, these actors would have the incentive to do so. The burden for promoting compliance would fall once more to the World Bank's civil society monitors.

There were several ironic twists in these developments. The first lay in the World Bank's use of Southern government reservations as a rationale for its unenthusiastic response. When it convened the Gland meeting and supported the WCD process, the World Bank had focussed the stakeholder identification exercise on international interest groups in the dams debate, rather than focussing on its client governments. In other words, the World Bank had gone to the international NGOs, academic experts, businesspeople, and quasi-governmental development authorities to seek ways to break the deadlock in the dams debate. However, in the latter stages of the WCD's process and in the post-launch evaluation, the World Bank stated that client governments' responses to the WCD report would be the "acid test."²⁸

There was also, to the outside world, an opaque relationship between the World Bank and its clients regarding who set the agenda. The World Bank sought guidance from client governments on how it should move forward. It readily accepted their proposals for no new conditionalities, although in the past it had not been shy about imposing multiple conditionalities. Simultaneously, these governments emphasised their appreciation of the World Bank as an honest broker in dam-related dialogue, but only, apparently, if national sovereignty remained supreme.²⁹ The decision to make few changes to business as usual apparently suited both sides.

The World Bank's response initiated criticism from an international coalition of NGOs and social movements that stated in an open letter to President Wolfensohn: "If the World Bank does now not

feel committed to this [the WCD's] consensus, it indicates that the multi-stakeholder approach was not meant to effectively resolve the problems which brought about its creation, but to deflect opposition or to buy time. If the World Bank does not effectively adopt and implement the WCD's recommendations, NGOs may be less inclined to engage in future multi-stakeholder dialogues with the World Bank.³⁰ These developments coincided with the World Bank's revision of its resettlement policy, a policy with obvious implications for the dams arena. The revised policy drew fire from an even broader cross-section of international NGOs and social movements for lack of clarity, and for failing to learn from lessons of the past decade.³¹

The World Bank's response elicited widespread criticism from civil society.

The World Bank's response contrasted with that of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The ADB held a meeting in February 2001 with government representatives from "countries with substantial hydro resources for water and energy uses" as well as development consultants, NGOs, and regional institutions to discuss the WCD report and implementation issues.³² The ADB compared its own internal review of large dams in Southeast Asia with the WCD's findings and found the economic, technical, social, and environmental failures of large dams to be largely similar. Although the ADB's consultation with its client governments showed there was a long way to go before governments would adopt the spirit of the WCD's findings,³³ the ADB nonetheless told WCD Forum members how it intended to close the gaps between its existing guidelines and the WCD's recommendations.³⁴ At the final Forum meeting, the ADB called upon Forum members to enter into a good faith dialogue about the responsibility of multilateral development banks to address compensation issues.³⁵

The WCD report also received a spirited response from the African Development Bank (AfDB), although the AfDB had not undertaken a consultative process like the ADB's as of this writing. The AfDB's President wrote to Professor Kader Asmal congratulating him on the Commission's achievement and stating that the AfDB intended to

incorporate the WCD's recommendations in its own Integrated Water Resources Management Guidelines.³⁶ (See Box 8.6.)

Export Credit Agencies and Bilateral Aid Agencies

The Commission had foreseen a strategic role for international financial institutions, particularly for export credit agencies (ECAs), as levers in the dam-building process. The WCD Secretary-General had made a special presentation to the OECD working group on ECAs, and the WCD report was subsequently taken up for discussion at that forum.

In the United States, the Export-Import Bank was quick to scrutinise the WCD report and incorpo-

Box 8.6

Multilateral development bank responses

"Once we 'get the elephant out of the room' (no new conditionalities) then there are a host of ways in which countries are anxious to engage with the many good ideas in the WCD report, and to work with the World Bank (and others) in improving practice.

How the Bank plans to build on the WCD Report? The Bank will use it as a valuable reference to inform its decision-making process when considering projects that involve dams. The Bank will continue to support dams that are economically well justified and environmentally and socially sound."

—John Briscoe, World Bank^a

"We feel that this report represents a major milestone in the assessment of economic, technical, and environmental performance of large dams. The report has been based on an exhaustive review involving broad stakeholder participation resulting in sound conclusions and recommendations."

—Oumar Aw, African Development Bank^b

"The WCD Report provides a roadmap to move from the present, often-unsatisfactory process for planning, design, construction, and operation of dams, to a more equitable and sustainable one."

—Preben Nielsen, Asian Development Bank^c

^a Statement at the third Forum meeting, 25–27 February 2001.

^b Letter to Prof. Kader Asmal from Oumar Aw, African Development Bank President, 26 January 2001.

^c Statement at the third Forum meeting, 25–27 February 2001.

rate elements of its recommendations into draft guidelines for environmental and social impact assessment.³⁷ However, progress toward actual reform of the guidelines was somewhat dependent on ongoing discussions with other OECD export credit agencies, as the United States and its counterparts wished to keep their industries on an even, competitive keel.

Many bilateral agencies were actually represented on the WCD Forum or had made financial contributions to the WCD. Therefore, they demonstrated a sense of significant investment in the process and subsequent interest in implementing the final report.³⁸ Donor representatives from Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway attended the third WCD Forum meeting. At this meeting, they were uncharacteristically forthright in expressing their support of the Commission's report and their views on appropriate follow-up mechanisms for dissemination, compared to their modest profile during the WCD process itself.

Bilateral aid donors received the WCD report with concerns similar to Southern government officials: Would the WCD recommendations be compatible with their existing policies and regulatory frameworks? However, given that most new dams will be built in the South, Northern officials tended to articulate a more flexible view about how the recommendations would be used. (See Box 8.7.) They emphasised the complexity of their existing guidelines and typically voiced support for adapting and adopting the WCD recommendations as appropriate.³⁹ An official of Britain's aid agency said: "The process is devalued if there is no discussion and debate. It goes back to the basis on which we were supporting the WCD (in the first place)—global public policy that supports national policies."⁴⁰

United Nations Agencies

United Nations agencies provided a warm response to the WCD report (see Box 8.8), which is significant given that the WCD report places a set of UN norms at the heart of its analysis and forward-looking framework. The UN agencies, many of which had partnerships of some kind with the WCD during its process, expressed appreciation for the usefulness of the WCD's framework to all types of development, not just dams. Overall, their approach was constructive and

Box 8.7

Bilateral agency and export credit agency responses

"We plan to use elements of the report as guidance in our guidelines. We don't advocate endorsing the report completely or ditching it completely because of one flaw... It'll be recognised for years to come. People will build on it."

—Official of the U.S. Export-Import Bank, speaking in his personal capacity^a

"The final report of the Commission contributes to rational discourse on large dam projects."

—Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Minister for Development Co-operation, Germany^b

^a Interview with U.S. Export-Import Bank senior official, 7 March 2001.

^b BMZ—Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, "Wieczorek-Zeul begrüßt Bericht der Weltkommission 'Staudammprojekte,'" Press release, Berlin, January 2001. Authors' translation from the German.

indicated a willingness to promote the recommendations in their ongoing development work and in their dialogues with governments. The head of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Dr. Klaus Töpfer, both welcomed the report's contribution to development debates and offered to host the WCD's follow-up body—the Dams and Development Unit—in UNEP offices, to facilitate dissemination to government stakeholders.⁴¹ The World Health Organization (WHO) praised the WCD report for acknowledging the myriad and often complex effects of dam-building on public health and recognised the rights-and-risk framework as a "leap forward in development planning" overall.⁴² The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) faulted the WCD for under-stating food security concerns but promised to carry forward the recommendations in a forthcoming international multi-stakeholder dialogue on Water, Food, and the Environment.⁴³

International Industry and Trade Associations

International industry, which had proved the most organised segment of the private sector in their involvement with the WCD, provided a mixed response to the final report. (See Box 8.9.) Industry had sought, above all, clearer rules of engagement for its involvement in dam-related projects.

Box 8.8

United Nations agency responses

"The [WCD] report deserves a strong endorsement by the relevant UN specialised agencies... It has laid the foundations for a new approach to development in the coming decade, taking the Rio principles beyond their original scope into a more comprehensive and more participatory framework. If the report meets with broad support from all development stakeholders, then the scene is set for truly sustainable development in the 21st century."

—*World Health Organisation*^a

"Large dams are required in some cases. We cannot afford to disregard any option to increase food supply in food deficit countries. But decisions to build dams must be taken in a responsible manner. It is in this spirit that we welcome the report of the WCD. We understand it as a framework for responsible decision-making, not as a verdict on dams."

—*Food and Agriculture Organization*^b

"Controversy centring around the construction and operation of dams shows that, although the concept of sustainable development aims at balancing socio-economic development and environmental management, the international community is yet to develop an appropriate policy framework for reaching the goals of sustainable development. Equity, governance, efficiency, transparency and accountability based on open dialogue among all stakeholders can only be furthered by a serious consideration of the Commission's findings by all policy-makers."

—*Klaus Töpfer, United Nations Environment Programme*^c

^a World Health Organization, "Risks, Rights, and Negotiated Agreements." Response to the WCD's final report, 30 November 2000.

^b Statement at the WCD's third Forum meeting, 25-27 February 2000.

^c United Nations Environment Programme, "UNEP chief welcomes new report on impacts of dams as major contribution to future energy and water resource policy-making." News Release No. 00/129, 17 November 2000.

Moreover, it hoped these new rules could be quickly implemented, so as to provide minimal interruption to projects—and not so rigorous as to halt projects altogether. Industry's main questions had been: Under what circumstances would it have *carte blanche* to proceed with dam projects? Under what conditions would proposed dam projects raise significant social or environmental problems that were bound to elicit civil society protest? Industry's colleagues in international financial institutions held similar priorities: they hoped the

WCD would provide straightforward criteria, compliance with which would usher projects through the pipeline with minimal conflict.⁴⁴

The majority of corporations and trade associations expressed disappointment that the WCD had not provided such a straightforward solution. They perceived that the WCD report introduced uncertainty in timing and outcomes to the water resources development process. In particular, they singled out the recommendations for stakeholder dialogue on options and full negotiation between dam developers and project-affected people as introducing risks and uncertainties for project developers.⁴⁵ Kader Asmal vehemently contested this notion; he argued that the Commission's recommendations were intended to reduce the high transaction costs that accompanied the current conflicts over dam projects.⁴⁶

But even beyond the project level, it was clear the WCD's proposed measures in their entirety would require significant time to be taken up by the responsible parties—especially national governments—and translated into action. By identifying bad governance as the root of poorly conceived and implemented dam projects, the report cast to societies the ongoing challenge of reconsidering their decision-making procedures. Corporations had clear roles to take, but they were also reliant on slow-moving political processes. The host societies were to define in large part the appropriate modes of participation and negotiation. Given the range of stakes and responsibilities held by private companies in dams projects, the degree of involvement of international companies and investors in identifying and negotiating with other stakeholders, once dams were chosen as the preferred option, was not entirely clear.⁴⁷ This element of uncertainty perplexed all but the most progressive companies.

Industry members on the Forum were also discontented with the final stages of the WCD's process, for they felt the lack of consultation with Forum members during the process of report preparation had weakened the quality of the report.⁴⁸ As our discussion of the political and practical trade-offs of full transparency revealed (*see Chapter 7*), it is highly unlikely that industry representatives would have settled for small editorial changes in the late stages. They would likely have sought far-reaching changes in the content of the report⁴⁹ and even, further research to change the tenor of the find-

Box 8.9

International industry and trade association responses

"The report itself is not balanced. The benefits of dams are largely under-estimated or simply ignored, particularly as regards electricity supply. Concerning affected people, the Report speaks of resettlement, but there is no mention of stabilisation of the lives of people by providing them with water and power. The authors make sweeping generalisations about deficiencies of dams, based on a very small sample of large dams."

—Raymond LaFitte, *President, International Hydropower Association*^a

"We consider the WCD report simply as a useful document to generate further discussion, but absolutely inadequate, as it stands, to find the required sustainable solutions. We do not accept the unbalanced judgement on the role of existing dams. The 26 WCD guidelines as they currently stand are considered unrealistic for application."

—Felix Reinders, *International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage*^b

"As Nelson Mandela stated in his London address, many people suffer from hunger, thirst, lack of running water, sanitation, and electricity. ICOLD believe [sic] that the WCD recommendations will create an unacceptable level of uncertainty to the development process. ICOLD fear that public and private developers and financial institutions will view these delays as too time consuming and costly, and will stop water and energy development entirely, thereby compounding the human suffering referred to by Mr Mandela... ICOLD favours a balanced approach to dam and project development, giving a stronger voice to affected people and communities... Each country should consider the WCD recommendations and the ICOLD guidelines. However, each country must also consider its prevailing conditions, traditions, laws and needs."

—C.V.J. Varma, *President, International Commission on Large Dams, ICOLD*^c

^a Letter to the Editor, *Hydropower and Dams*, Issue Six, 2000.

^b Statement at the third Forum meeting, 25 February 2001.

^c Open letter to Prof. Kader Asmal, 30 November 2000.

ings. Industry representatives on the Forum were also distressed by the handling of the launch and the "leak" of the final report (as described in Chapter 7). The leak had given NGOs an upper hand in the public relations stakes, while at the same time, industry groups were at a disadvantage when asked to respond to journalists' queries.

Industry representatives on the Forum also reflected, behind the scenes, on opportunities they had missed for skilled engagement with the WCD. They noted that industry had been late to recognise the significant impact the WCD could have on the dams business. Several companies were aware of the process at the time of the Gland meeting, but did not devote attention or resources until much later. As a result, they felt that they had been out-manoeuvred by NGOs and peoples' movements in their engagement with the Commission. Moreover, some industry representatives noted that, as a block, industry had been slow to co-ordinate in presenting its interests to the Commission. Industry representatives also regretted their misfortune in being represented on the Commission by the CEO of a company—Asea Brown Boveri (ABB)—that withdrew from the large dams business halfway through the WCD process.⁵⁰

Industry had hoped for guidelines that would be easy to implement.

Indeed, as with NGOs and other concerned groups, the international dams industry was far from being a monolithic block with similar interests and comparative advantages. The different stakes of the companies and trade groups in the dams debate had provided a challenge to their co-ordination throughout the process. Likewise, the potential impact of the final report on their bottom lines, and their subsequent responses to the report, were mixed.

Energy services companies that were sufficiently large and flexible to switch out of hydropower or companies with only a small portion of their portfolio in dams tended to give a level reaction to the WCD report. For instance, one project manager for a global power company comprised of generation, distribution, and retail supply businesses reflected this position when he said, "we don't care if we do hydro or not, we just want to undertake good energy projects."⁵¹ ABB was a model of such a multi-service transnational corporation.⁵²

Some companies even expressed support for measures that rewarded efficiency, effectiveness and good performance, recognising an opportunity for them to claim the competitive edge. For

instance, Sweden's Skanska Corporation announced at the WCD launch that it would endeavour to follow the WCD's recommendations. "We find the Commission's work...represents a major stride for sustainable development, with open and transparent processes in which all affected parties can participate."⁵³ At least two corporations, the Nam Theun II Consortium (constructing a hydropower dam in Laos) and AES Corporation (constructing the Bujagali Hydropower Project in Uganda), evaluated their projects for WCD compliance after the report was launched.⁵⁴ They publicised these mostly favourable findings to Forum members and concerned NGOs. By contrast, engineering companies with vested interests in the production of dam-related technologies perceived the report's criticism of dams' past performance and its call for critical options assessment as fundamental threats to their business.

Professional dam industry associations provided a mixed, somewhat negative reaction to the WCD report. This was not surprising given that their institutional mandates called for the promotion of dams technology. In a statement, three international trade associations (the International Commission on Large Dams, ICOLD; the International Hydropower Association, IHA; and the International Committee on Irrigation and Drainage, ICID) expressed disappointment with the Global Review for failing to give adequate recognition to large dams' contribution to water supply, food security, and global energy needs.⁵⁵ Their main criticism was that the WCD had failed to compare dams' performance with the no-project option. In other words, the Commission had not analysed which development benefits would have been foregone without large dams. These critics were reluctant to cede conventional cost-benefit methodology to the normative framework adopted by the Commission.⁵⁶ It is worth noting that a significant proportion of ICOLD's membership comprises engineers and technocrats from dam-building government agencies in the South. In this regard, there has been significant overlap between the responses of ICOLD chapters to the WCD report, and Southern governments' separate official responses. (See "Government Agencies," below).

*Responses from Government Agencies*⁵⁷

The WCD's recommendations anticipate a pivotal role for national governments in implementation.

In the Commissioners' view, the good faith of all actors is required for negotiating acceptable outcomes. But above all, governments are required to create the enabling environment for such meaningful dialogues and interactions to occur. Furthermore, the consequences of adoption—or non-adoption—of the WCD's recommendations are of greatest import for the direct beneficiaries of water and energy development: societies and their governing institutions.

*Many governments claimed
their laws already followed
the spirit of the WCD's
recommendations.*

The WCD had been initiated by the providers of international capital and their watchdogs under sustained pressure from transnational civil society and local social movements. The WCD's recommendations included a call for governments and their citizens to determine when and under what terms big capital should be mobilised for large dam projects. For all of these reasons, the reaction of governments—and Southern governments in particular—to the WCD was closely watched.

As with other sectors or interest groups, it is difficult to generalise about the responses by Southern governments to the WCD report. But perhaps more critically, it is important to distinguish the differences in response and motivation of the different ministries and interest groups within these governments and their bureaucracies. It would not be surprising, for instance, to learn that there were differences in reaction between environment and water ministries, or between departments for women's or indigenous and tribal people's affairs and finance ministries.⁵⁸

Few official Southern government responses to the WCD report had been issued at the time of this writing. The sample size is small and it is biased toward water ministries whose comments have been the most widely disseminated. Often, these ministries are the agencies with a vested interest in the construction of new dams. These initial official comments do not necessarily reflect the richness of debate possible in legislatures and within and among political parties and congresses as the WCD report is further disseminated in these countries.

With these caveats in mind, the responses of Southern governments can be characterised as largely defensive in nature. This defensiveness stemmed partially from a misreading of the WCD's recommendations for governments. The considerable length and occasional lack of clarity in the report may have added to the confusion.

Several Southern governments, such as Brazil and Nepal, praised the core values of the WCD—equity, efficiency, participatory decision-making, sustainability, and accountability—and noted that these norms were already making their way into national policies and procedures.⁵⁹ The WCD was explicit that governments should begin national dialogues and review legal, policy, and institutional frameworks to establish opportunities for mainstreaming the WCD's recommendations. National governments nonetheless argued that they could not import the recommendations wholesale.⁶⁰ Indeed, many governments said that their existing laws and policies—such as requirements for environmental and social impact assessments—were already in line with the Commission's recommendations. (See Box 8.10.)

Southern officials based their opposition to the recommendations partly on national sovereignty issues and charges of Northern hypocrisy. They interpreted the Commission's highlighting of unmitigated environmental and social problems and dams' economic underperformance as an argument against future dams—a contravention of their perceived national imperatives. They found inadequate recognition in the report of dams' role in resolving food security, water, energy, and the overall development needs of their countries. They also suspected that the WCD had been an attempt by Northern governments and financing agencies to impose standards upon developing regions that the North had not followed when they had completed the majority of their dam building.⁶¹

Southern governments' objections underscored the long-time tensions over Southern dam building that had provided the very *raison d'être* of the WCD. The WCD's objective had been to develop a new consensus around dam-related decision-making to break the costly deadlocks and bitter debates of the past and set the stakeholder groups off on a more constructive footing. By asserting that their policies were consistent with the WCD's recommendations, these governments denied the gaps between policy and practice that had formed

Box 8.10

Government agencies' responses

"In Nepal's case, most of the procedures put forward by WCD are already in place in the form of several acts and rules. Adopting a new set of guidelines as mentioned in the WCD report, with its contradictory statements and yet to be polished prescriptions, would create confusion and chaos."

—Government of Nepal^a

"The Commission's 'data base' is questionable, it is misleading... Even while applying the concepts of equity and participatory decision making, WCD has restricted its attention only to the groups which are adversely affected by a dam. It has failed to appreciate that there are much larger sections of society for whom the dam and the water supply flowing from the dam are nothing short of a life line... WCD's obsessive concern for preserving the rights of affected local people makes it distrust the entire public set up, even the legal framework of the country to which these people belong."

—Government of India^b

"Nowadays the need for proper compensation and the rights of the people for development and decision[making] are enshrined in the national constitution and social and environmental impact assessments are a must in any small and large project implementation."

—Government of Ethiopia^c

^a Government of Nepal, "Preliminary Official Comments on the WCD Report." Submitted to the World Bank, February 2000.

^b Government of India, Central Water Commission, "Final Report of the World Commission on Dams, Comments by Mr Gopalakrishnan, WCD Forum Member," February 2001.

^c Government of Ethiopia, "Comment on Dams and Development... The report of the World Commission on Dams, Country Comment: Ethiopia." Submitted to the World Bank, February 2001.

a significant cause of friction in the first place. Furthermore, suspicions of the WCD's being driven by a Northern agenda belied the spirited contribution that Southern dam-affected peoples' movements had provided to many aspects of the WCD's process throughout its life, as well as the 50 percent representation of Southern stakeholders on the Commission itself and leadership of the Commission by a Southern government minister.

The governments of India, China, Nepal, and Ethiopia based much of their criticism on complaints about the WCD's process and methodology

(the contours of which we have described in Chapters 4 and 5). For instance, Ethiopia criticised the WCD for choosing too few dams for its sample and for selecting case study dams that were too old and did not incorporate new practices implemented in their regions in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶² Ethiopia charged that the picture provided by the WCD failed to reflect the dynamism of evolving best practices in large dam building of the past two decades. The Government of India complained that official data on large dams provided to the WCD was not acknowledged in the WCD's studies or final report.⁶³ The Indian government noted that a global commission such as this should have undertaken far more intensive negotiations with such dam-building "giants" as India, China, and the United States in the early planning stages to avoid such missteps in the later process. In other words, early reactions from Southern governments explicitly faulted the WCD for a lack of credible process. The roots of this unease also lie in the inherent inability of a multi-stakeholder process, such as the WCD, to represent all viewpoints within and among governments.

Based on their unease with the WCD's process and product, some Southern government officials first took an "all or nothing" approach. They rejected the whole report on the basis of one statement or guideline that they considered incompatible with their circumstances. Such was the response of China, which called the WCD's emphasis on negotiated outcomes contrary to its established, and more democratic, decision-making procedures.⁶⁴ A Forum member seemed to articulate the Southern dilemma well when he said, "There's a fundamental tension between: Do we take the WCD report as is or do we move into dialogue, move toward better practice? There's an issue around going to the lowest common denominator to get any dialogue."⁶⁵

However, this proclivity to reject the recommendations outright was already tempered in discussions among Southern government and NGO participants at the third Forum meeting of the WCD.⁶⁶ Participants agreed that policy reviews at the national level were necessary. Policy reviews would establish where governments were in compliance with WCD's recommendations and where they were not. They would provide an opportunity to identify gaps and form the basis of discussions for moving forward. Hence, a slow progression occurred in the dialogue within just the first few

months of the report's dissemination, indicating that the Southern governments' initial responses might be moderated by time, reflection, and the slow evolution and adoption of the new norms by countless other actors. In one example, the South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry co-operated in mid-2001 in a joint congress with IUCN, the South African Committee on Large Dams, and the Environmental Monitoring Group (an NGO) to put in place concrete measures for bringing forward the WCD's recommendations in the South African context.⁶⁷

In the North, governments tended to respond to the WCD report in the context of their development aid and export guarantee activities, not in their roles as domestic dam-builders and operators. Norway was an exception. The Government of Norway praised the WCD report but cautioned that it may have "gone too far in the direction of consensus-based decision-making systems." It noted that when weighing different development needs, decision-making can often end in disagreement and that the "superior competent authority"—in the case of dams, the Norwegian legislature—should make final decisions on behalf of the community as a whole. As with other national governments, Norway noted how many of its existing policy and legal frameworks already accommodated the WCD's recommendations for social and environmental impact assessment. Norway also referenced the body of international law on indigenous peoples' rights that it observes.⁶⁸

The Third Forum Meeting and Institutional Follow-up to the WCD

A final meeting of the WCD Forum took place three months after the report's launch, for stakeholders to share their reactions to the report and plot a course for following up on the WCD. As the Commission had already disbanded, the Forum convened in the role of a loose decision-making body, much as the original Reference Group had done in Gland in 1997.

The meeting highlighted the divergent opinions about the WCD report in the stakeholder community. A minority of hard-line dam proponents declined to discuss follow-up to the WCD at all, but the majority of Forum members expressed their organisations' willingness to adopt the recommendations in some degree. The Forum

meeting made clear that although dams remain a bitterly contested issue, the WCD had created a precedent for opposing parties to begin a dialogue and had delivered a report that provided a platform for future discussion. The facilitator of the Forum meeting⁶⁹ remarked that the level of dialogue that took place at this meeting would have been unimaginable only three years earlier.⁷⁰

With few exceptions, meeting participants recognised that some form of institutionalised follow-up to the WCD was required at a global level to facilitate dissemination of *Dams and Development*. Members agreed that a small Dams and Development Unit (DDU) should be set up to replace the WCD Secretariat and to operate for at least one or two years. The future Unit would place a premium on reaching out to governments, and to support this goal it would be hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Representatives from the World Bank, IUCN, International Rivers Network, the Lesotho Highlands Development Project, Struggle to Save the Narmada River, and Harza Engineering volunteered to act as a steering group to oversee the establishment of the DDU. They were voted in to this role under considerable time pressure. This hasty arrangement caused discomfort among members of the larger Forum,⁷¹ who had differing views on whether and how the WCD's findings should be promoted. They saw the potential influence of the WCD report as being tied to the potency and mandate of the DDU, and hence under the full control of the steering group. Members from the larger Forum argued strongly for greater Southern government involvement in the WCD's follow-up activities.⁷² In a concession to this point, the steering group pledged to add a UNEP representative to better reflect governmental interests.

Several aspects of the follow-up activity to the WCD constituted tacit acknowledgement of the process' strengths and weaknesses. The emphasis on reaching out to governments and the explicit harnessing of the DDU to a UN agency were acknowledgements that the WCD process had not involved governments as much as it should have. The appointment of a steering committee that broadly represented the political and sectoral categories on the Forum was a recognition of the general acceptability of the Forum's composition.

Conclusions

In the short term, Commissioner consensus did not translate into a broader stakeholder consensus. Indeed, initial reactions suggest a hardening of the positions that existed before the WCD. However, a closer look at these reactions suggests stakeholder willingness to grapple with the report, compare recommendations to existing policies and situations on the ground, and potentially put in place some ideas embedded in the report. If broad consensus lies in the future of the dams debate, it will be forged through a longer-term process initiated by, rather than concluded by, the WCD. As the WCD itself recognised, "...all concerned parties must stay together if we are to resolve the issues surrounding water and energy resources development. It is a process with multiple heirs and no clear arbiter."⁷³

In the short term, Commissioner consensus did not translate into broad stakeholder consensus.

Could an immediate consensus among all stakeholder groups feasibly have been forged? The reactions to the report provide a basis for extrapolating what each group might have looked for in such a consensus. Based on their reactions, NGOs and social movements would likely have sought a more direct indictment of broader development processes. Industry groups would likely have rejected any articulation of a rights and risks framework that empowered affected communities to negotiate with industry on a time-consuming case-by-case basis. Various governments might well have focussed on issues of specific relevance to their national circumstance. Had the government and industry views prevailed, NGOs and social movements might not have continued their engagement with the process at all.

Hence, it is likely that an immediate, broad consensus among all stakeholders would not have been a viable goal. If anything, a process of stakeholder negotiation over the content of the WCD report might well have produced a report that only moved incrementally beyond the status quo. Arguably, such a report would have had a greater chance of being adopted wholesale by multilateral institutions, governments, and industry in the

short term. However, it would almost certainly have lacked the support of NGOs and the social movements, and might have inspired even greater citizen protest. By focussing on forging a consensus among a smaller number of Commissioners, the WCD has produced a more aspirational text, but one at which dam-building nations and

industries have balked. The promise for implementation depends largely upon ongoing constructive engagement by civil society groups with governments, international agencies, and the private sector, and the growing democratisation of national and global politics.

Endnotes

1. There were originally twelve members on the World Commission on Dams, plus one non-voting member, Secretary-General Achim Steiner. Halfway through the process Commissioner Shen Guoyi of China withdrew, and her employer, the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources, declined to provide a replacement. Hence, there were only 11 voting members. Achim Steiner's status on the Commission grew over time, and he subsequently signed the final report with the status of full Commissioner.
2. World Commission on Dams, *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision-making* (London: Earthscan, 2000), Executive Summary, xxxi.
3. World Commission on Dams, 2000, xxxi.
4. World Commission on Dams, 2000, Commissioners' Foreword, ix.
5. World Commission on Dams, 2000, p. 202.
6. World Commission on Dams, 2000, pp. 205-6.
7. WCD press release, "World Commission on Dams Launches 'Landmark' Final Report," 16 November 2001. Online at: www.dams.org/press/ (28 September 2001). See also World Commission on Dams, 2000, pp. 208-9.
8. Interview with Commissioner, 19 March 2001.
9. World Commission on Dams, 2000, p. 203.
10. At London's Canary Wharf, 16 November 2000.
11. Message to the Commission from Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Delivered by Mr. Ahmed Fawzi, London, 16 November 2000.
12. Interview with Forum member, 27 February 2001.
13. Such as the press statements by the International Hydropower Association and International Committee for Irrigation and Drainage at the London launch event; general statements made by World Bank President James Wolfensohn, who noted that the report had to be submitted to the member countries of the World Bank's Board for consideration.
14. For detailed reactions to the final report, see www.dams.org/report/followups.htm (28 September 2001). This site is updated on an ongoing basis, and includes new material that has been posted since the authors completed this assessment in May 2001. All of the responses described in this chapter are posted on www.dams.org/report/reaction.htm except as noted.
15. For instance, the headline to an article by Himanshu Thakkar in *Himal* magazine refers to *Dams and Development* as "a surprisingly refreshing consensus report." Himanshu Thakkar, "Large Dams under the Microscope," *Himal* (1 April 2001). Online at www.himalmag.com/apr2001/report.html (28 September 2001).
16. Himanshu Thakkar, "Large Dams under the Microscope," *Himal* (1 April 2001).
17. See Philip Williams, "Lies, Dam Lies," *The Guardian* (22 November 2000). Online at: <http://society.guardian.co.uk/societyguardian/story/0,7843,400894,00.html> (28 September 2001).
18. IUCN Position Statement, "Working with the WCD Report." Released at the third Forum meeting, February 2001.
19. IUCN Press Release and website, www.iucn.org, February-March 2001.
20. For example, Narmada Bachao Andolan (Struggle to Save the Narmada River), "World Commission on Dams Report vindicates unjustifiability of large dams," 20 November 2000. See also references in Box 8.4.
21. Personal communication with Brazilian academic and liaison with the Brazilian Movement of Dam-affected People, 8 February 2001.
22. World Commission on Dams, 2000, pp. 321-2.
23. World Commission on Dams, 2000, p. 321.
24. Brazilian Movement of Dam-Affected People, "The Brazilian Movement of Dam-affected People (MAB) and the World Commission on Dams (WCD)," 9 February 2001.
25. Interview with World Bank Senior Advisor, 8 March 2001. See also John Briscoe, "Responding to the WCD Report: A Progress Report from the World Bank." Presentation to the WCD's third Forum meeting, Cape Town, 25 February 2001. "Message #5: Great concern [by developing country governments] about the apparent exit (prior to the WCD) of the World Bank from the dam business..." Online at: www.dams.org/events/f3_wb.pdf (28 September 2001).
26. Briscoe, 2001.
27. Briscoe, 2001.
28. According to a personal communication with a senior World Bank official, 29 July 2001. The official stated that President Wolfensohn made the terms of this "acid test" clear in his April 2000 meeting with the Chairperson and Secretary-General.
29. According to John Briscoe's presentation; personal communication with a senior World Bank official, 29 July 2001.
30. Berne Declaration and South Asian Network on Dams, Rivers, and People letter to James Wolfensohn of 19 March 2001, signed by 85 additional groups.
31. See, for example, World Rainforest Movement, "New World Bank Resettlement Policy Is Flawed." Bulletin 43, February 2001. Online at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/43/WB2.html> (28 September 2001); Dana Clark, "World Bank Resettlement, The Legacy of Failure." Bank Information Center Issue Briefing, August 2001. Online at: www.bicusa.org/ptoc/pdf/clark_reset.pdf (28 September 2001).
32. ADB Regional Workshop: Dams and Development. ADB Headquarters, Manila, Philippines, 19-20 February 2001. Summary of Proceedings, Draft of 2 March 2001.
33. Ramaswamy R. Iyer, public letter to Professor Asmal on the proceedings of the ADB consultation with client governments in Manila, 22 February 2001.
34. "ADB's ongoing and planned responses to the WCD's strategic priorities, best practices, and institutional responses," Internal ADB draft, February 2001.
35. Preben Nielsen, speech at the WCD third Forum meeting at Cape Town, 25-27 February 2001.
36. Letter to Prof. Kader Asmal from Oumar Aw, African Development Bank President, 26 January 2001.

37. The WCD report launch coincided with the U.S. Export-Import Bank's requirement to revise its guidelines. The Environment Division, which had been represented on the WCD Forum, took the lead in incorporating elements of the WCD report. However, as of this writing, progress on the revisions was stalled by the Export-Import Bank's Board of Directors' decision-making process and talks with other OECD export credit agencies.
38. For example, interviews with British, Swiss, and Norwegian aid agency representatives, 28 February 2001.
39. For example, interview with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation official, January 2001.
40. Interview with aid official, 27 February 2001.
41. United Nations Environment Programme, "UNEP chief welcomes new report on impacts of dams as major contribution to future energy and water resource policy-making," News Release No. 00/129, 17 November 2000.
42. World Health Organization, "Risks, Rights, and Negotiated Agreements." Response to the WCD's final report 30 November 2000.
43. Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. Statement at the third Forum meeting, 25-27 February 2000.
44. Interview with IFC officials, 27 September 1999.
45. Interview with industry representative on the Forum, 28 February 2001.
46. Opening and closing remarks by Prof. Kader Asmal at the WCD's third Forum meeting, Cape Town, 25 February 2001.
47. That, at least, was the view of several corporate executives, who said the Commission "has gone too far and also not far enough" in defining corporate obligations.
48. See, for example, the response of the International Hydropower Association, February 2001. "However, the overall tone of the report is undoubtedly negative as regards the role of reservoirs, which undermines the constructive elements. The opportunity was not taken to use the Forum as a sounding board ahead of publication of the final report, despite the claim in the overview that the Forum was consulted throughout the process, which could have helped set the right tone."
49. Personal communication with former Secretariat staff, August 2001.
50. Interview with industry representatives on the WCD Forum, 27 February 2001.
51. Interview with project manager of international energy corporation at the third Forum meeting, 26 February 2001.
52. For instance, ABB plans to increase its share in alternative energy technologies to US\$1 billion in the next five years. Announcement at ABB news conference, London, 7 June 2001.
53. Public statement of Axel Wenblad, Vice President of Environmental Affairs, Skanska.
54. AES Nile Power, "Appreciation of the WCD Report." Presentation to the third Forum meeting, 25-27 February 2001.
55. Letter and accompanying statement of ICOLD President, IHA President, and ICID President to World Bank President James Wolfensohn, "Joint Major Comments of ICOLD, ICID, IHA on the Report of the World Commission on Dams," February 2001.
56. Such as Honorary ICOLD President Jan Veltrop, who served on the WCD. Also, the British Dams Society, a member of the International Hydropower Association and ICOLD, was praised by the WCD Secretariat for its serious commitment to dialogue throughout the WCD process.
57. We concentrate this section on governmental responses from Southern governments, as the vast majority of future dam building is planned for the countries of the South. Most reactions from Northern governments are given in the aid and export credit agency context, in the section on international financial institutions, above.
58. For instance, the contrast between the negative and dismissive reaction to the WCD report provided by the Minister of Industry and Handicrafts of Lao PDR at the Asian Development Bank's meeting to discuss the WCD report, February 2001; and the positive response to the report provided by staff of the Science, Technology, and Environment Agency of Lao PDR in consultations with the authors in April 2001.
59. For example, the Nepalese government stated: "We are proud to note that we have been able to adopt these standards of international norms in our development process." Government of Nepal, "Preliminary Official Comments on the WCD Report." Submitted to the World Bank, February 2000.
60. Such was the response of the Chinese and Nepalese governments, Government of Nepal, 2000. The Commission wrote that its guidelines were not intended to be a "blueprint," but instead the basis for discussions and serious revision of current practices by all actors. World Commission on Dams, 2000, p. 313.
61. For example, Government of India, Central Water Commission, "Final Report of the World Commission on Dams, Comments by Mr Gopalakrishnan, WCD Forum member," February 2001. Similar views were expressed by Indian government officials at the National Consultation on the World Commission on Dams Report, 24-25 May 2001, and the WCD India Meeting, 26 May 2001, as documented by Ramananda Wangkheirakpam and Lakshmi Rao in their background papers for the WCD Assessment.
62. Government of Ethiopia, "Comment on Dams and Development...The report of the World Commission on Dams, Country Comment: Ethiopia." Submitted to the World Bank, February 2001.
63. Government of India, Central Water Commission, February 2001.
64. Government of China, Ministry of Finance, "China position on the WCD report." Memo to the World Bank, 9 February 2001.
65. Interview with Forum member, 27 February 2001.
66. Cape Town, South Africa, 25-27 February 2001.
67. WCD press release, "South African Symposium Endorses WCD Recommendations," 24 July 2001. Online at: www.dams.org/press/ (28 September 2001).
68. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Norway's Comments on the Report of the World Commission on Dams," June 2001.
69. Professor Anthony Dorsey, who had facilitated the original meeting of the stakeholders at Gland. Prof. Dorsey's "Facilitator's Sense of the Meeting," a useful

- documentation of this last Forum meeting, is contained in a publication by the Secretariat entitled "Final WCD Forum: Report, Responses, Discussions, and Outcomes," May 2001.
70. Personal communication with Gland workshop organiser, 28 February 2001.
 71. Interviews with Forum members, 27-28 February 2001.
 72. Plenary session of the third Forum meeting, 27 February 2001.
 73. World Commission on Dams, 2000, p. 319.

