
The Committee welcomed IEG’s evaluation and assessment of the technical and financial constraints to reaching universal electricity access. They recognized that the WBG has made progress in expanding access to electricity but noted that to achieve universal access by 2030, a major shift had to be made. Members endorsed the recommendations and called for the WBG to increase its support to countries with low-access to electricity, asking the Bank and IFC to engage decisively and step up their engagements. They were pleased to learn that by having targets on FCS, IFC was not ex-ante foreclosing its engagements across low-access countries; they were hopeful that the new Energy Access Global Solutions Group and the Energy Access Global Lead would provide a clearer vision on how the WBG could maximize its efforts. Members noted the importance of securing government ownership and commitment to achieve universal electricity access. Management reiterated its strong concurrence with the report’s recommendations and noted its commitment to developing a comprehensive action plan.

Members queried whether the WBG possessed the skills in-house to reach the targets and the ambitious goals. Noting that the WBG will not be able to deploy the needed $33 billion to meet the 2030 goal, the Committee encouraged the WBG to use its convening power to mobilize resources from other donors and the private sector. Members highlighted that there was space to scale up renewable energy and put an emphasis on non-conventional renewable energy in poor rural areas. Members agreed that the WBG should move from a predominantly project-by-project approach to a sector-wide approach to include generation, transmission, and distribution investment and asked that the institution work closely with governments to set appropriate timing and sequencing. Management cautioned about the need to maintain a flexible approach at the country and sectoral context level. The Committee was pleased to learn that the tracking framework that integrates documentation from both governments and development partners is fully rolled out and will be updated approximately every two years. Management explained that the multi-tier framework had recently been presented to Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative and that it was now being socialized with government and donors who will ultimately be responsible for implementing the agreed M&E framework. The Committee welcomed the Bank's commitment to apply and promote the SE4ALL multi-tier framework and encouraged IFC to also apply it.

Members commented on the scope of the evaluation, noting that it would have benefited from addressing underlying problems (e.g. price distortions from fuel subsidies; poorly functioning power sectors, level of Government commitment); assessing how WBG interventions have impacted electricity tariffs; including investment advisory services and public finance management; and discussing private, public and joint ownership of assets. Members expressed their interest for Management to continue its full Board engagements on sustainable energy.