I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Côte d’Ivoire, with a GDP of about US$32 billion (current US$) and a population of 23.3 million in 2014, has the third largest economy and population in West Africa. As a result of the protracted socio economic crisis and outright conflict from 1999 – 2011, the Ivorian economy grew by only 2% a year on average over the period, well below the population growth rate of 3% per year. However, with the improved political and socio-economic context, Côte d’Ivoire’s growth performance has been impressive since 2012. Socio-political normalization, sound macroeconomic policies and structural reforms have supported strong economic growth, reversing a decade-long downward trend of per-capita income. GDP growth averaged 9.1 percent between 2012 and 2014 and is estimated to have increased by 8.4 percent in 2015.

All the main economic sectors contributed to GDP growth and employment during the 2012 -2015 period. Services grew at an annual rate of 10.1 percent in 2013. Agriculture grew by 6.9 percent and 12 percent respectively in 2013 and 2014 following a 2.7 percent contraction in 2012, supported by a good harvest and new incentives. This rebound in agriculture was driven by increases in cocoa,
cashew and other food-crop production (rice, plantain, cassava and corn), and cotton. The positive performance in agriculture explains the increase in exports in 2015 for the first time over 10% since the end of the crisis. Industrial production has increased across the board, reflecting the recovery, as did construction, driven by the resumption of major public infrastructure projects. Prospects are also favorable, with GDP growth projected around 7+ percent in 2016 and 2017, in response to reduced political uncertainties and the Government’s commitment to address remaining fiscal weaknesses (i.e., low VAT collection, stock of arrears, contingent risk in public enterprises and banks) and intensify structural reforms. The economy remains, however, vulnerable to external shock, notably to the variations in international prices of cocoa, cashew nuts, oil, and cotton – its major trading commodities.

The government has also adopted structural reforms to reform its still somewhat ‘dirigiste’ (state controlled) economic model, and set the stage for resilient and private sector-led growth. Some of the main reforms aimed at improving the business climate, ensuring financial stability and greater inclusion, and improving public governance and financial management. For example, Côte d’Ivoire was among the best 10 performers in the 2013 and 2014 Doing Business Report. In addition to establishing an appropriate macroeconomic framework and following prudent fiscal as well as monetary policy, the Government has dedicated significant resources in recent years to improve security and social cohesion. Ambitious initiatives such as “Free school for children under 16 years old” and “Universal Health Coverage” were launched by the authorities.

The main challenge for Côte d’Ivoire remains ensuring inclusive private sector-led growth. Despite the progress made since 2012, Côte d’Ivoire has only been moderately successful at reducing the incidence of poverty, which decreased from 48.9 percent in 2008 to 46.3 percent in 2015, after peaking to about 51 percent in 2011. Furthermore, Côte d’Ivoire continues to be ranked only 171 out of 187 countries in the 2014 UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). It is also clear that the rapid growth registered in recent years has not been accompanied by the creation of quality jobs. The labor market continues to be highly segmented with 2/3 or workers in self-employment or working in micro-enterprises.

The challenge of shared growth is also reflected by prevalent spatial disparities between urban and rural areas. The recently concluded Bank Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) shows that poverty is overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas and in the Northern parts of the country, while greater Abidjan is becoming ever more dominant in the country’s economy. Poverty rates are 69% in North versus 25% in the South (within the southern regions, poverty rates tend to increase from East to West). While spatial inequality worsened during most of the crisis period, the rural-urban divide continued to grow even during the recent recovery. Such unbalanced - mostly Abidjan centric - development is unsustainable; both economically, because it relies on too few sectoral and regional drivers and socially, because it does not tackle the roots of fragility in the country.

**Sectoral and Institutional Context**

Côte d’Ivoire continues to rapidly urbanize at a rate of about 5 percent per year, with about 20 percent of the country’s population living in Greater Abidjan. Greater Abidjan remains the economic engine of the country and generates about 50 percent of the country’s GDP and 80 percent of formal employment and 90 percent of formal enterprises. Beyond the overall challenges or urbanization in the country, excessive concentration in Abidjan has created unprecedented pressure on the delivery of social and infrastructure as well as on the job market in the capital. This trend is expected to continue in the near future, with the country’s urbanization rate projected to
reach approximately 70 percent by 2015.

Support to address these growing bottlenecks is necessary in Abidjan, and such support has been part of the Government’s plan, in close coordination with the World Bank. However, such effort has to be integrated in a global strategy that will seek to balance/manage the country’s economic development between urban and rural areas and in between Abidjan and secondary cities. Spatial rebalancing through the development of secondary economic centers like Bouaké and San Pedro will be an essential ingredient of this strategy.

The economic and employment potential in Cote d’Ivoire’s secondary urban agglomerations has been driven by two forces: (i) agriculture and its transformation, and (ii) the expansion of trading services. The levels of agricultural transformation remain, though, low in most agricultural value chains, though first-level transformation is relatively significant already in cocoa, and success stories are emerging at firm level. The future economic growth of secondary cities will therefore require a greater transformation of the country’s agricultural resources, which would lead to higher value added and create more qualified and better paid jobs. The expansion of trading services is one key feature of urban centers, as the proximity of markets and customers reduce transaction costs by creating economies of scale and reducing transportation costs. In Côte d’Ivoire’s secondary cities, this expansion occurred mostly through the informal sector given the unfriendly business environment, high barriers to formality, and few incentives to formalize. As a result, the overall productivity of the trading sector has been low, generating low paid employment opportunities. To improve its productivity, the informal trading sector will need both facilitation and incentives to professionalize. In turn, improved skills will increase the returns to fully formalizing, help the related workforce to secure and improve their revenues, and improve linkages of the trading sector with the rest of the formal economy.

Among secondary economic centers in Cote d’Ivoire, Bouaké and San Pedro have been expanding rapidly and have the potential to become two of the country’s engines of growth both because of their historical role and their economic geography. Bouaké, with a population of about 1 million, remains despite the crisis, the second largest city in the country. Crucially, it is also an important industrial center in its own right, a key regional trade hub at the junction of the North-South and East-West economic corridors, as well as a transit hub for Mali and Burkina Faso. This scale and geo-strategic location make it an ideal platform for agricultural transformation, including of cashews, cereals, fruits and vegetables products that transit through it, and for the development trade-related services. The planned revitalization of Bouaké’s wholesale market in particular, has been identified by the Government as a key catalyst for the city regeneration, repositioning it in its historical role as a trading platform and transit hub. A feasibility study completed in October 2015 estimates that the wholesale market has the potential to grow from current traded volumes of around 50k tons to over 650 k tons within the next 10 years. In the same vein, the accelerated transformation of agricultural products, notably cashew nuts, could help create jobs and help position this city as a light-manufacturing regional center. This potential for agro-processing was also confirmed by the value chain analyses and the demand study for an industrial park conducted under the Cote d’Ivoire Competitive Industries and Innovation Program (CIIP) initiative.

San Pedro, with a population of about 400 thousand, has been historically a regional gateway for the West of the country. The city derives most of its economic activities from its deepwater port, through which transit an import share of the country’s cocoa exports. There is today an existing industrial activity centered on large cocoa and palm oil transformation plants. San Pedro could scale
up its economy in the short term through, expanding the agro-industry in scale and scope and exploiting again its tourism potential, and in the longer term through the development of the mining project of the Great West.

The development of secondary economic centers is one key priority of the Government’s new “Plan National de Développement” (PND) for the 2016-2020 period, which will constitute the of reference plan for policies and programs/projects to promote the emergence of the country by 2020. This new plan emphasizes the need to accelerate economic growth by supporting the transformation of the national economy from an agricultural to an industrial economy, in particular through increased private sector investments and participation. In order to achieve the structural transformation of the economy, the focus is to create new opportunities by balancing the urbanization growth of the country between Abidjan and secondary cities, with a special focus on regional centers such as Bouaké and San Pedro. Such a rebalancing will require a greater attention on the provision of infrastructure development that directly and sustainably supports private sector investment and job creation in secondary cities. This includes upgrading and expanding infrastructure such as roads and industrial parks, but also improving basic social services, creating a business-friendly environment and developing appropriate skills for the local labor force.

The recent experience in Côte d’Ivoire and other developing countries has shown that strategic planning is crucial for balancing economic growth between regions as well as across urban and rural areas. Building from these lessons, the Urbanization Review carried out by the World Bank in August 2015, recommends a range of actions for Côte d’Ivoire that includes: (i) planning – this, which entails implementing effective land use planning and building regulations—including adequate land reserves for future development—and increasing access to basic infrastructure affordable housing; (ii) connecting, improving intra-city mobility for residents to reach jobs and services, as well as intercity connectivity for firms and producers to access markets and export facilities; (iii) greening, through improved livability, reduced pollution and GHG emissions in urban and rural areas, and increased resilience to risks natural disasters and climate change; and (iv) financing, by aligning delegated responsibilities with technical capacities and fiscal resources, and identifying sources for anticipated investments in infrastructure and services as cities grow.

The Ivorian authorities aim to achieve economic diversification and improved access to markets, both domestically and regionally, through strengthened economic competitiveness. As part of its urbanization strategy, with the objectives to close the spatial disparities, the Government envisions the sequential development of secondary economic poles – starting with Bouaké and San Pedro, which are respectively the 2nd and 3rd largest cities in the country. This strategy will combine the provision of: (i) transport, industrial and trade infrastructure to enhance competitiveness and inclusion; and (ii) direct support to develop the capacity of the local private sector and, so, promote agriculture processing value chains and revitalize trade. Such support would target key urban infrastructure, and agricultural value chains already identified as having a high potential for local processing and/or marketing (cashews, cereals, fruits and vegetables, cassava/yam etc.). In addition, the support would extend to the informal sector for greater professionalization, including in trade, small processing and other services.

**Relationship to CAS**

The proposed intervention is fully aligned with the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) and Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Côte d’Ivoire, adopted respectively in June and September 2015. The SCD identifies the expansion of agro-processing and other manufacturing
activities as one of the priorities for Côte d’Ivoire future economic growth and job creation. Such opportunity will require a comprehensive effort to improve trade and transport logistics, develop industrial land, upgrade labor skills, and facilitate access to finance. The CPF comprises three pillars of intervention: (i) accelerate sustainable growth, driven by the private sector; (ii) build human capital for economic development and social cohesion; and (iii) strengthen the management of public finances and responsibility. It also includes two cross-cutting themes: governance and spatial inequalities, with the latter being at the center of the proposed project through the development of secondary cities.

The proposed project, which supports the spatial development of major secondary economic centers and private sector-led growth in agriculture and other value chains, is consistent with the strategic direction of the CPF. The project would address priority constraints identified in the CPF, including strengthening of economic infrastructure, the improvement of the business environment and access to finance, and the development of skilled workforce.

The project will leverage the existing Bank portfolio and planned operations under the CPF which supports the Government strategy to balance economic development, improve competitiveness and promote job creation. In this regards it will complement ongoing or planned projects focused on the urban infrastructure rehabilitation and access to basic services (PRICI), on transport industry modernization/professionalization, market failures and distortions induced by inadequate regulations (Regional DPO and Freight Transport TA). It will also complement projects addressing agriculture development (PSAC), employment (PEJEDEC) and social protection (Safety Net Project). In addition, the project will aim to leverage synergies with IFC investment and advisory programs in support of investment climate, infrastructure and agriculture value chains, for example the work on Warehouse Receipt Systems for cashews and other crops. Besides, to maximize its impact, the project is designed to complement and be implemented in synergy with activities funded by other development partners, including: i) the French Agence Francaise de Développement (AFD) project under preparation aiming to finance urban upgrading in the center of the city of Bouaké (including rehabilitation of the central market and select urban roads); and ii) The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) project (in pipeline stage, to be confirmed) for the rehabilitation/widening/upgrading of the first section of the national road (about 30 km) between Yamoussoukro and Bouaké.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)
The proposed PDO is to increase investments in key economic and social infrastructure and enhance the business environment for private sector investment in the targeted secondary centers of Bouaké and S. Pedro.

Key Results (From PCN)
PDO-level outcomes expected are:

- Increased number of jobs: formal and informal;
- Increased investments by supported firms;
- Improved urban mobility in central districts of Bouake and San Pedro
- Increased trade volumes in the Wholesale Market;
- Direct and indirect Beneficiaries, of which women.
Intermediate results indicators for the project include:

- Km of roads constructed/rehabilitated;
- M2 of facilities (e.g. market, slaughterhouse) constructed rehabilitated, and/or newly equipped;
- Reduction in transit time from urban expansion areas and rural areas to economic center(s);
- Beneficiaries (number of firms) with access to rehabilitated road or facilities;
- Improved business environment indicators: time to register a new agro-processing plant in the Wholesale market or designated industrial areas; number of agencies faced in the process of starting a new agro-processing plant.

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

As part of its National Development Plan (PND) priorities, the Government is developing a compact to support emergence of ten secondary economic poles to: (i) support organized urbanization trends, (ii) address the spatial economic imbalance between urban centers; and (iii) offer new business opportunities to private operators. Building on the WBG SCD and CPF findings and that of the preliminary review and assessment by the project team, the top two poles that come out are Bouaké and San Pedro which are respectively the 2nd and 3rd largest cities in the country. However, between the two, Bouaké is ahead in terms of readiness because it has already received support (under the PRICI) to restore the basic infrastructure base needed to support a competitiveness strategy and because it has prepared an Urban Development Master Plan which includes a vision and a priority investment plan. Bouaké’s Master Plan vision for the 2030 horizon is articulated around key objectives including repositioning Bouaké as an economic hub in the region – enabling increased trade flows between Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Burkina Faso – and revitalizing the local/ regional economy, with a particular focus on the agribusiness. Therefore the project will support a sequential development of the two economic poles – infrastructure developments and direct support to SMEs will be concentrated in Bouaké, with preparatory work centered on developing a sound development master plan for San Pedro that will pave the way for implementation through investments at a second stage.

Proposed activities should include a combination of (i) economic infrastructure and basic social services; and (ii) direct technical and financial instruments to address key constraints in the business environment and support private investments and jobs creation in these cities.

The following criteria have been considered to select and prioritize proposed activities: (i) direct return on investment/economic and social impact; (ii) readiness (ease and timeliness of implementation); and (iii) leverage effect on public and private investments. Given the importance of Bouaké as a trading hub, as well as the emerging potential of agro-transformation, especially through SMEs, the focus there will be on connecting infrastructure on one hand and integrated support to SMEs, in particular in agro-transformation, on the other hand. The persisting high level of informality means specific support also needs to be directed at that segment, for the project to achieve its inclusion objectives. In San Pedro a lot of planning is still needed, in terms of basic infrastructure and services in the city itself, as well as the integration of the various identified potentials of the area: tourism to the West, agro-industry and trade to the North, as well as the longer-term potential of mining and related developments at the port.
Accordingly, the proposed project could be structured as follows:

Component A: Development of socio-economic infrastructure in Bouaké (estimated costs US$85 million)

Sub-component A1. Economic and social infrastructure (estimated cost – US$60 million)
This sub-component will focus on developing adequate socio-economic infrastructure in the metropolitan area of Bouaké. This will include primarily supporting the development of the wholesale market within the city and its connections to the national, regional, and international trading networks. Revitalizing the market is urgently needed to improve the city’s competitiveness and help it restore its place as regional trading hub, especially from and towards the Northern Ivory Coast, Mali and Burkina Faso. The market has been the main driver of the city’s economic prosperity in the past, and is still ideally positioned to take advantage of the more recent agricultural and agro-industrial developments, especially around cashews, cereals and food crops, which are grown around and/or converge to the city. Currently, the market operations are hindered by: (i) poor access and connectivity to logistic chains; (ii) inadequate storage capacity for dry and wet goods; and (iii) lack of services and facilities for onsite agricultural processing. The lack of an easily accessible and well-endowed wholesale market in Bouaké has contributed to limit the development of transformation activities by increasing transport costs from rural areas to the city’s center and by preventing the emergence of many industrial plants. Those constraints have limited job creation and particularly impacted on women’s groups, currently organized into cooperatives.

This sub-component will thus include the following activities:

- Rehabilitation of basic urban services and urban road infrastructure. This sub-component includes development of a ring road to improve access to the whole sale market and create a by-pass of the city center for trucks. Intra-city connectivity would also be increased through improvements for pedestrian safety and mobility along targeted roads and between employment and residential zones. Such rehabilitation will help improve connectivity within the city and the development of the wholesale market as a central platform for trade by addressing current congestion and safety issues. In the medium/longer-term, there it will be developed a multimodal platform around the wholesale market to boost transit, import and export by road, rail, or even air. In case of availability of additional resources (the project team has requested US$ 100 million from the IDA Scale Up Facility), this multimodal and logistic platform would be included in the project activities.

- Rehabilitation and construction of key market infrastructure, including market buildings, municipal slaughterhouses, cold-storage rooms, additional storage rooms, and parking. This basic infrastructure is today missing or non-adapted to current and future demand, given population growth projections and current trends in production levels, preventing the extension of the market and related services and manufacturing activities.

- Improved transport logistics to supply the market. The optimization of the transport logistics supporting food distribution, to better supply the market. A truck parking/station complementing AFD’s investments is planned.

- Raising the institutional profile of the Municipality: Based on a request from the municipal authorities, the project may also consider financing the rehabilitation of the old Town Hall building.
of Bouaké, which would contribute to the institutional reinforcement of the municipality.

This component will also include the development of studies to facilitate the Government’s decision-making process and prepare the ground for implementation of further activities. Below is the list of potential studies:

- Techno-economic feasibility study to identify the best PPP financing and management model adapted to the conditions of the wholesale market to improve its governance;
- Development of a strategic plan to expand the wholesale market while improving the provision of basic services, using land already available and in possession of the market;
- Study of the conditions for development of processing units compatible with the wholesale market;
- Market study for the creation of a new Industrial Zone, including the optimal location and the activities to develop.

Sub-component A2. Support to MSMEs in the agribusiness and trading value chains (estimated costs: US$ 25 million)

This component aims at strengthening the competitiveness of targeted economic activities in Bouaké. This agglomeration is already the host of several agro-processing activities, including of cashews, cereals, fruits and vegetables, and cassava/yam. These activities have been emerging in recent years, through the combination of international investments (for example from India in cashew nuts) and the development of small and local investors. It is also key to note the prevalence of female workers in both these agro-processing activities (especially cashew nuts transformation, whether manual or industrial, as well as smaller scale activities in fruit transformation such as mango juice making etc.) and the prevalent trading activities in the city.

However, these developments have been restrained by the existence of several constraints, including:

- Low agro-industry productivity. Low productivity has been observed in agricultural processing in the Bouaké area, especially for SMEs, because of deficiencies in their workforce skills, management capabilities, low access to external financing, and the use of inadequate equipment.

- Inability to procure agricultural goods in adequate quantity for agro-industry. There is an inadequate supply of agricultural goods for agro-processors in the Bouaké area in particular. It is hard to obtain working capital financing, which means even relatively productive firms, especially SMEs, may not be able to function at their full potential. There is also an issue of price information, as SMEs in agro-processing face a significant information imbalance compared to (usually much larger) exporters, because of the absence of a well-functioning market information system.

- Market access. The ability of agro-processing firms to sell their production will depend on their market access, which in turn is influenced by the quality of their products and their relations with customers. Most SMEs in the Bouaké area are deficient in all those aspects, and need support to reach quality standards for regional or international exports, to market themselves in those markets, and to offer innovations that can differentiate them or position them in higher-value segments, is crucial for their development.
Prevalence of the informal sector. Finally, the informal sector in and around the greater area of the city of Bouaké constitutes represents the overwhelming majority of the local economy, and is characterized as expected by very low productivity and low wages. Improving the overall competitiveness of Bouaké therefore requires specific assistance for greater professionalization of the informal sector, starting with firms already close to formalization.

Based on the above assessment the project will consider selective support to the following potential range of activities:

- Cross cutting reforms in the business environment leveraging the role of the wholesale market. This would include support for the improvement of business/market information exchanges and strengthening of market management practices based on automated systems in the wholesale market, in conjunction with the infrastructure support planned under subcomponent A1. The "single window" system available on site can be utilized and improved for that purpose. The activity would help streamlining registration procedures, regrouping municipal fees and levies, integrating/ coordinating national and local level procedures etc., building on existing IFC programs.

- Support to the Ministry of Industry and Mines’ initiative to finalize the design and develop a Technical Support Centre, with a focus on cost-effectiveness and sustainability. This would mutualize for SMEs in the agro-processing sector the cost of: (i) getting the needed equipment and technologies; (ii) training personnel on the use of the latest techniques; (iii) testing their products. This could be combined with initiatives to develop agricultural research partnerships with universities, especially in nearby Yamoussoukro, as well as laboratories specialized in testing and quality certification.

- Financial support for new, productive investments, for working capital financing, and for Business Development Services to improve labor and management practices. Guarantee mechanisms could be explored in partnership with the IFC, building on the example of the Risk-Sharing Facility developed jointly in the Benin Cross-Border Tourism and Competitiveness Project (P149117). Business plan competitions could be used to incentivize innovative ideas to develop linkages between the agricultural, agro-industrial and trading sectors, especially to include smaller businesses and facilitate supplier-financing. An impact evaluation could be designed to learn from these mechanisms, especially the relative impact on female workers (in particular employment prospects and wage levels). Alternative financing solutions (e.g. "venture funds", etc.) would be mobilized to plug key SME financing gaps, especially for new businesses/in the initial high-growth phase. Priority would be given to agro-processing activities planned in the wholesale market and in designated industrial areas.

- Specific support to help organize export services and improve marketability. This could include the packaging and upgrading of product standards, and the marketing through trade shows/ exhibitions and trade missions abroad etc., by contributing to the implementation of the Strategie Nationale d’Exportations, and building on activities of APEX-CI, INIE, and other agencies.

- Support professionalization of the informal sector. The activity could include BDS to improve basic accounting and management practices, financial literacy, information on and support for registration, tax mediation, e.g. using lessons from the pilot “Entrepreneur” regime introduced in
Benin under the OHADA system, which both reduces the cost of compliance and provides incentives (financial and non-financial) to professionalize and ultimately formalize. An impact evaluation could also be envisaged for this component, using the work already being done in Benin. This could also be developed in synergy with existing initiatives in Cote d’Ivoire, such as the professionalization program supported by the Côte d’Ivoire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI - CI), which has focused on gender development.

Component B. Support to the economic development of San Pedro (estimated costs - US$10 million)

This component will include activities designed to support investment planning in San Pedro, as follows:

- Preparation of urban development master plan and techno-economic feasibility and planning studies targeting the economic agglomeration of San Pedro (building on earlier CIIP findings), to determine and promote the strong economic potential of the agribusiness, tourism and, in the longer run, mining sectors. This could include support for master plans, land use plans, land reserves for industry & infrastructure etc.; and

- Preparation and implementation of targeted, vital minor socio-economic infrastructure activities, as feasible with the available resources. This could include the following type of activities; (i) basic necessities, such as improvement of road access to key the tourist areas; (ii) improved drainage in water-logged parts of the city along major road corridors; (iii) improvement of wastewater treatment systems; and (iv) improvement of secondary urban roads within central San Pedro.

Component C. Institutional support (estimated costs – US$5 million)

This component will include support to the project management – in coherence with the fiduciary standards of IDA-financed projects, as well as a strengthening of more general institutional capacities. Taking into account the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the project (with multi-sectoral interventions, public and private investments, the role of Central and local authorities) effective institutional coordination is crucial to ensure an efficient implementation of the project. The activities identified under this component would include the following:

- Support to fiduciary management and coordination necessary for a proper execution of the project;
- Strengthening of institutional capacities and the establishment of a platform for collaboration and strong cooperation with the private sector; and
- Support to local and regional institutions.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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VI. Contact point

World Bank
Contact: Maiko Miyake
Title: Head
Tel: 5331+3417 /
Email: mmiyake@worldbank.org

Contact: Hatem Chahbani
Title: Sr Transport. Spec.
Tel: 202-458-7022
Email: hchahbani@worldbank.org

Contact: Mahine Diop
Title: Senior Municipal Engineer
Tel: 5331+3423 /
Email: mdiop4@worldbank.org

Borrower/Client/Recipient
Name: Ministry of Economy and Finance

Implementing Agencies
Name: Ministry of Economic Infrastructure

Page 11 of 12
Email:

VII. For more information contact:
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 473-1000
Web: http://www.worldbank.org/projects