The Committee on Development Effectiveness (CODE) met to discuss the Knowledge-Based Country Programs: An Evaluation of World Bank Group Experience (CODE2013-0022; /1) and Draft Management Response (CODE2013-0025).

The Committee welcomed both IEG’s evaluation—which assessed knowledge-based activities in nine country programs selected from 48 knowledge-intensive programs supported by the WBG—and Management’s draft response. Members also appreciated the constructive engagement between IEG and Management. The Committee agreed with the recommendations and findings, including that relevance to client concerns, technical quality of results and reference to local policy context drive successful knowledge services; programmatic approaches and consistent engagement achieve better outcomes; stronger results monitoring measures real progress on agreed outcomes; and enhanced staff incentives to promote knowledge activities foster staff commitment. The Committee found the evaluation timely and useful in the context of the ongoing conversation on the Bank’s knowledge work, particularly on how knowledge is positioned within the institution’s overall strategy in the medium and longer term. Members noted that a core determinant of the Bank’s development effectiveness is the extent to which it can combine lending with knowledge and, hence, achieve results and find solutions. In this regard, members underscored that the Bank needs to ensure that knowledge services are more impactful on development outcomes at the country level—and hence, Management must promote appropriate staff incentives in respect of knowledge work.

Members noted IEG’s findings that results were very similar for free services and Reimbursable Advisory Services (RAS). Yet regardless of the type of knowledge service the Bank provides, members agreed that there needs to be clarity on the objective of a knowledge engagement in a client country, on the value it adds, and on the results framework that underpins its work. This would necessitate a clear understanding between the Bank and the client to ensure knowledge services are aligned appropriately. While it was recognized that RAS is a small part of the Bank’s knowledge services, members reinforced that the institution’s engagement in RAS should be in line with its overall strategy for a country. Members asked Management to ensure the appropriate criteria are in place.

Members appreciated that Bank Management intends to continue to strengthen and align staff incentives to achieve excellence in knowledge services. Members acknowledged that Management agreed in principle with the recommendation to move to a budget framework that better balances incentives for lending and knowledge activities, but accepted that Management could not commit to specifics at this time since the budget process is under review to align it to the new WBG strategy.

* This report is not an approved record.