

Addressing Global Challenges

An Interview with Ayanda Dlodlo, Executive Director: EDS25, The World Bank

EDITORS' NOTE Ayanda Dlodlo, a South African National, serves as the World Bank Group Executive Director for Angola, Nigeria, and South Africa since November 2022. She served as Alternate Executive from April to October, 2022. Prior to this appointment, Dlodlo served in the Cabinet of the Republic of South Africa as Deputy Minister of Public Service and Administration, Minister of Communications, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of State Security, and Minister of Public Service and Administration. Dlodlo was also elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) since 2009 until her resignation in March 2022. She also served as South Africa's National Focal Point for the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and was named as the Special Envoy representing South Africa as a founding Member State at the Open Government Partnership (OGP). She is a former member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ruling party, African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, where she also served as the Chairperson of the Legislation and Governance Sub-Committee. She served as the Secretary General of the uMkhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans Association from 2007 to 2012 and was also the Head of Department (HoD) for Safety and Security in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. In addition, she headed the Strategic Operations at the Directorate of Special Operations (Scorpions). Dlodlo has vast experience in the private sector and that of state-owned enterprises including Public-Private Partnerships having worked for the Associated British Ports, Transnet (South African Rail and Port Authority), New Jersey Ports Authority, Telkom, and Sanlam. Dlodlo holds a master's degree in business administration, a postgraduate diploma in business management, and a higher certificate in shipping and transport management.



Ayanda Dlodlo

Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?

I sit on the Board as Executive Director of The World Bank, International Financial Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and have been Executive Director since November 1, 2022. Prior to that, I was Alternate Executive Director from April 2022 for a period of six months. I represent Angola, Nigeria, and South Africa which constitute a large portion of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP and economy.

Executive Board Members have a dual role as Executive Director, which is a fiduciary responsibility, and a responsibility to the countries they represent – in my case, Africa Group 3. My fiduciary responsibility is to ensure that the Bank takes decisions that are in the best interest of countries in an equitable and transparent manner. Added to that, we have a responsibility to ensure the bank stays afloat, is fit for its purpose, is sound in its financial position, and is striving to achieve the goals it has set.

We also receive projects, reports, and country partnership frameworks from management which are proposed for implementation in countries to analyze and review for approval and, in rare occasions, to abstain or object to. We scrutinize and evaluate lending requests and technical assistance programs for countries – usually borrowing countries – represented at the Board by the 25 Executive Directors. We also ensure that we do not impose an unnecessary burden to borrowing countries that request funding or technical requests to the Bank.

The Board of Directors also has a responsibility to provide guidance on the policies of the Bank on their appropriateness or direction required to achieve its vision and mission for greater impact. We must always ensure that these policies do not unduly prejudice and/or favor any member country at the expense of others. Added to this, we also approve, review, and monitor the implementation of policies that have to do with the prudent stewardship of the finances of the World Bank Group and all policies that impact people and culture – human resources management and development.

I am the Chairperson of the Board's Human Resources Committee and serve as the Vice Chairperson of the Integrity Committee. One of the main focus areas of this collective that I belong to is to lead the WBG's evolution process and engage with other stakeholders in this process like civil society organizations, think tanks, and staff, among others.

What interested you in joining The World Bank and made you feel it was the right fit?

The Bretton Woods Institutions and the broader United Nations system have always been what I had wanted to graduate to from serving a single nation or sovereign entity to that of being of service to the people of the world in many and diverse capacities. At some point, I felt there was nothing more I could offer in national, regional, or continental politics and public services and that the time had come for me to cast my net wider and contribute at a global level and to impact programs and people at that level. Serving humanity and ensuring the economic and social growth and development

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INSTITUTION BRIEF With 189 member countries, staff from more than 170 countries, and offices in over 130 locations, the World Bank Group (worldbank.org) is a unique global partnership: five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.

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of those that rely on the UN System and Bretton Woods institutions for this was a wish I needed to fulfill.

Having worked at the national, regional, and continental level on matters of security, public administration, and stakeholder management, and acquitting myself fairly reasonably in those roles, I know that I possess the skill, aptitude, and attitude to add impetus to the global developmental agenda that the World Bank Group drives including the sustainable development goals that are covered in our vision and mission.

Will you outline The World Bank's purpose and mission?

We are a multilateral organization that was founded post-World War II to assist mostly European countries in financial and economic distress in the aftermath of the war. This was to ensure the reconstruction and development of economies, infrastructure, and social security systems post-war. The Bank was mandated by the founding countries to offer cheap money under favorable terms over an extended period of time to ensure Europe was enabled to reconstruct and develop without the burden of short-term loans so as to give them ample time and space to grow their economies rather than immediately facing an unparalleled debt burden. Basically, they were rightly favored with concessional finance that had extended payment terms making it easier to concentrate on the task of rebuilding their economies and reconstructing from the ravages of war instead of worrying about the repayment of debt in the short-term.

Today, we are faced with a different kind of war that has no guns or artillery pieces, but has many flanks that need to be covered and that war is defined as the war on extreme poverty and its attendant tentacles. As a result of this realization, the WBG adopted a vision and mission that was designed to respond to the increasing needs related to the eradication of poverty and the creation of shared prosperity. We call these the twin goals. On the other hand, we are also faced with fragility, conflict, and violence in certain countries and also have to contend with climate change which is a global challenge. In Africa, more than 600 million people have no access to electricity which also translates to a lack of pace in

the development of economies in poor countries as they face energy poverty. Dealing with poverty also means you have to deal with many more challenges that arise as a result of poverty such as poor health and stunted growth of children owing to malnourishment, the net effect of which is underdeveloped human potential and human capital.

How is The World Bank evolving to effectively address these challenges?

The WBG has embarked on a Board-led process to respond appropriately and in greater scale and pace to the many challenges and multiple crises that have undermined and frustrated our resolve to positively impact the lives of those served in our work, while also contributing our piece to saving the planet from the ruinous effects of climate change.

The WBG's evolution spans many decades from its inception as an organization established for Europe's post WW2 reconstruction and development to one that looks into eradicating poverty and promoting shared prosperity, to the evolution that we have now started to move towards since the WBG/IMF annual meetings last year where the governors of the WBG instructed the Executive Directors to take the lead to ensure that the Bank evolves to one that is alive to the challenges of today and that transforms the WBG into an entity that is fit for its purpose. As a collective, we are enjoined to scale up action, reverse the erosion of economies, reduce poverty, and ensure investment in human capital development.

The challenges of today are multifold given the fact that the development agenda is under severe threat of having very little, if any, impact. Poverty levels are on the increase, inequality is increasing, many poor countries are in a debt trap with very little prospect of escaping this, and many more global citizens and countries are faced with burdens of disease and the effects of climate change.

This evolution process and new roadmap has yielded proposed changes to the vision and mission, the operating and financial models, defining the global public goods and global challenges to enable us to deal with and understand the magnitude of these challenges, prioritize them, and enhance our knowledge systems for greater impact, reach, and scale. A report on

how far we have traversed in this journey was handed to the Governors of the WBG and the process to enhance, modify, and move towards finalization for presentation to the Governors at this year's Annual Meeting in Marrakech in October is well underway with management and the Board of Directors working in overdrive to deliver a credible and convincing body of work.

This process has been clearly articulated through concept notes and discussion documents and defines what the global challenges and global public goods are and their implications and their selection. For example, on our list we have looked at climate change, pandemic preparedness, fragility, food security, energy and water access/security, addressing learning losses, digitization, and trade integration. So basically, the challenges of today and those of the future have been discussed and included in our evolutionary roadmap body of work. The UN Secretary General's report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals paints a very grim picture that identifies that many countries are not on track to realize the objectives behind most of the goals. For example, the World Data Lab which tracks poverty and carbon emissions on its respective clocks, also sketches dismal performance and regression in a lot of countries that has completely put most countries off track. The net effect of tardy implementation, as a result of many factors, remains too ghastly to contemplate with dwindling ODA, backtracking by developed countries on commitments and pledges made to finance climate mitigation, tight fiscal spaces within which to maneuver in the developing countries, and many competing priorities.

Therefore, this evolution process needs to consider a number of things from balance sheet optimization and a sounder financial model, adopting an operating model that enhances impact and scale without breaking the bank, and a capital increase to fund what cannot be funded with all the fancy footwork we can muster.

What are your specific priorities in your role?

Our priorities as a constituency office are, among others, the prosperity of Sub-Saharan Africa, financing for economic and social infrastructure at concessional rates, energy access for all, and financing for adaption and the just energy transition with greater emphasis on the just component of this transition.

What attracted you to a career in public service?

The injustices of the past and present injustices, both from an administrative justice perspective and also from the perspective of crimes against humanity such as apartheid being declared by the UN, drove my interest in public service.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

Build as many contacts as you can of people who will help you grow in your career. Show up and always be the best version of yourself. ●