Summary of Oral History Transcript

Wapenhans, Willi A.

Interview conducted by Professor William Becker and David Milobsky, on 1993-08-19

This interview addresses the report reviewing the Bank's portfolio, "Effective Implementation: Key to Development Impact", commonly referred to as the Portfolio Management Task Force Report. Mainly, the events which led then President Preston in early '92 to give Wapenhans the responsibility to produce such a report, the background to the report, the creation of a special task force, the workings of the task force; its findings, conclusions and recommendations, the reaction both internally within the Bank including that of Management and the Board as well as externally, and Wapenhans' thoughts on effective implementation of the report.

Wapenhans sums up with his own personal opinion on the Institution with the following: "There is a declining trend in project performance, highly concentrated in IDA countries and the Bank is contributing to it because of the presence of an approval culture. To remain the leading and preeminent institution that it is, it needs to reverse, and it can reverse to its earlier emphasis on performance. It should not resort to more bureaucracy, to a further invitation to promote compliance. It should not invite its staff, including its managers, to protect their rear. Such an emphasis would further foster risk aversion, not only of staff but also of managers. If not contained, it could retard development."