

Feb. 18, 2016

Dear Dr. Yahya,

Thank you for your messages alerting us to the difficulties you are facing in accessing Arabic translated documents on the World Bank website. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding, as we ourselves were digging deeper into the matter to see what the problem was.

After reviewing this in detail, we have found that these problems in navigating translated versions of our external website stem from technical issues with the automated utility that draws project names and abstracts onto the website. It is also exacerbated by the way in which different systems operating for the external site communicate with each other. We have, therefore, deployed a team from our IT, communications, the internal documents unit, as well as the MNA region to help develop a technical fix to this issue (which by the way affects not just Arabic but other translated pages). In the meantime, we will be working to manually convert abstracts and project titles for our MNA website so that you and your colleagues can have immediate access to these while the new technology solution is implemented.

Let me also take this opportunity to assure you that the World Bank remains fully committed to ensuring that key project documents and content are translated into local languages so that we are as transparent and accessible as possible – especially for those who are closest to and most affected by our work in member countries.

As you may have seen, over the last few years we have translated all country pages, key press releases, as well as blogs into Arabic. As a result, there were 2.3 million page views for Arabic content in 2015 --- an increase of 14% over the previous year. And directionally, you can see more and more people are taking advantage of multilingual content housed on worldbank.org: in FY15, almost one-third of our online audience (11 million people / 27% of total traffic) visited pages offered in 37 different languages (excluding English). And that's an increase of 24% from the previous year. Relatedly, about 45% of our online audience visits us from developing countries. Now that we have a mobile-responsive website, we're already seeing about 20% of our audience visit via mobile, with almost half of those visitors coming from developing countries.

Apart from the above, I wanted to share with you that in February of this year, we have issued an internal Policy and Procedure Framework (P&PF) to ensure that our key project documentation is translated into Arabic. This will include such documents as our Country Engagement Documents, Project Information Documents, and select Analytical Studies are translated into Arabic or French as appropriate, within 2 months of disclosure of the English versions. We will be tracking the implementation of this new directive on a monthly basis.

So we hope that with the above measures and with a resolution to the technical problem you and your colleagues have alerted us to we will be able to continue to improve the accessibility of information and documents from the World Bank in the future.

Sincerely,

Hafez Ghanem

Vice President

Middle East and North Africa Region