

Date: Dec. 5, 2015

Dear Members of the World Bank Group Board of Executive Directors

We, the undersigned representatives of civil society organizations from Arab countries who participated a regional convening held in Beirut from September 18-20, 2015 under the title "The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Enhancing Accountability of International Financial Institutions," wish to commend the various efforts made by the World Bank, especially the Middle East and North Africa Regional Department, to communicate and engage with civil society organizations in the region. We would also like to welcome the new strategy announced by the Bank for the Middle East and North Africa region, which emphasizes the importance of effectively engaging with stakeholders in the region, including with civil society groups.

Since the availability of information is the first step of any effective partnership or engagement, we greatly appreciate the effort of World Bank management to provide relevant documents and information for many of the projects and programs financed by the Bank in our region in Arabic. In the absence of effective, well-implemented right to information laws in many of our Arab countries, the World Bank's website is often the only source for us to access information about development plans in our countries. We are aware and proud that the Middle East and North Africa is the only regional department at the Bank that has officially committed to provide translated Arabic documents for all projects in the region. This commitment was made in response to a complaint filed by the Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights about the lack of Arabic-language information for an institutional reform program which was funded by the Bank in Yemen in 2007. This new obligation, laid out in the 2009 Enhanced Action Plan for the MENA region, reflected the commitment of the Bank to support the effective participation of citizens and civil society as development stakeholders in the MENA region.

Now, 6 years after this commitment was made, we would like revisit this issue because unfortunately, the effort and resources that are spent to provide these documents in the Arabic language have not

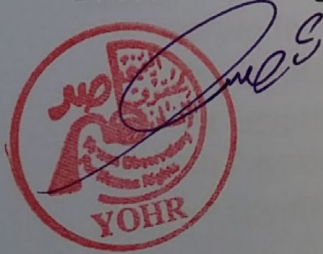


come to fruition for a very simple reason. Access to these documents through the Bank's website requires first passing through two lists: a list of projects, and a list of documents available for each project, both of which are only available in English. This represents a serious obstacle for any citizen who is not fluent in English and who would like to access the Arabic documents provided by the Bank. We would like to invite you to use the external World Bank website to check these difficulties - among other shortcomings in accessibility - yourselves.

The translation and availability of these project and document lists in the Arabic language would require much less effort and resources than what is spent on the translation of the project documents, which remain trapped behind the two lists. We have raised this issue on many previous occasions with a number of Bank staff and officials, and while we often received a promise to look into the issue, no action has been taken so far.

We, the undersigned representatives of civil society organizations from Arabic-speaking countries, would like to request your diligence in continuing to raise this crucial but simple issue of access with parties inside the Bank until it is resolved to ensure that time, effort, and resources spent on the translation of these documents bear the desired fruit.

Yours faithfully,  
Dr. Yahya Saleh Mohsen  
Executive Manager of YOHR



**The names of the civil society organizations signatory to this request:**

**Yemen:**

- Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights;
- Studies and Economic Media Center;
- Min Hakki (My Rights) for Awareness and Development in Hodeida Governorate;
- Democracy School;
- Resonate Yemen

**Iraq:**

- Displaced Children Organization in Misan;
- Al-Noor (The Light) Universal Foundation;
- Al-Inbithaq (Emanation) for Development & Economic Development in Waset Governorate;
- Women and Children Affairs Organization;
- The Defense of Freedom of the Press Association;

**Tunisia:**

- L'Association Tunisienne de Droit de Développement ;
- Association Tunisienne de la Transparence dans L'Energie et le Mines;
- Touensa Eveil et Vigilance;
- Observatoire Tunisien de la Citoyenneté Participative OTCP;
- Forum pour Carthage pour la Securite et le Développement;

**Egypt:**

- Forum for Dialogue and Participation for Development ;
- The Egyptian Association for Collective Rights;
- The Egyptian Center for Civil and Legislative Reform;
- The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights;
- The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights.

