

Dear President Kim,

The World Bank Group Strategy published in October 2013 clearly states the Bank's two new goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity while emphasizing the importance of economic growth, inclusion and sustainability. The Strategy document speaks of inclusion as entailing "empowering of all citizens to participate in, and benefit from, the development process, removing barriers against those who are often excluded." Moreover, it states that the Bank - while working to build up government capacity - intends to increasingly focus on helping local communities and citizen-beneficiaries become active stakeholders in reducing poverty.

We cannot agree more. In fact, sustainable and inclusive growth can never be attained without strong civic engagement policies and practices that enable meaningful participation of people who are the first to be affected by development decisions and policies.

The World Bank defines 'Civic Engagement' as being "a set of conditions - often inter-related - that impact on the capacity of citizens and civil society organizations to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner, whether at the policy, program or project level. They include legal, regulatory and policy frameworks, and political, socio-cultural and economic factors. There are institutional factors within civil society that should be considered in thinking about this environment."

Meanwhile the World Bank Group has adopted a new model for country engagement that requires a Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) as part of the process for developing Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF) to govern the Bank's operations in a certain country within a period of 4 to 6 years. According to the Bank's documents, the SCD is an "analysis based upon available evidence. It includes a thorough discussion of the drivers of sustainable poverty reduction and the constraints the country faces in achieving the inclusive growth needed to attain a sustainable reduction in extreme poverty and increase shared prosperity." The SCD is also "not limited to areas or sectors where the WBG is currently active or where the WBG expects immediate country demand."

We, as a group of civil society organizations from around the world, thus believe it is imperative for the World Bank Group to include in its SCD - which according to WBG definition should be a neutral assessment of the most critical constraints to, and opportunities for poverty alleviation and shared prosperity – an assessment of the environment for civic engagement in the country for which the CPF is being developed. If the WBG truly believes in citizen engagement as an imperative factor to attain its two stated goals, this factor should be thoroughly analyzed and taken into account in identifying the opportunities and obstacles for inclusive and integrated development.

This analysis should include criteria to assess the basic entry points for citizen engagement in a country, which include enabling legislation including a law of association consistent with international standards, supporting institutions with a high degree of accountability and transparency, transparent and accessible government budgets, independent monitoring, open data support, enabling environment for civil society growth and participation, forums for national/sector dialogue, the ability of groups to peacefully protest and speak publicly about concerns, systems in place to prevent arbitrary arrest and detention of civil society members, or the use of private militias by government security forces or the use of government security forces by private sector companies against local communities, and access to a fair and efficient justice system. All those factors are crucial in determining whether the country in question has an enabling environment for citizen engagement, and thus affect the Bank's ability to achieve its development goals in those countries.

#### Signatories

##### **Egypt**

Egyptian Association for Collective Rights

Egyptian Center for Civil and Legislative Reform  
Egyptian Center for Social and Economic Rights  
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights  
Forum of Dialogue and Participation for Development  
General Association for Internal Migration and Development  
Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network (MENA)  
Knouz Sinai

**Tunisia**

The Tunisian Association of Transparency in Energy and Mines ATTEM

**Yemen**

Wedyan Association For Society Development  
Transparency Center for Democratic Development and Human Rights  
Min Haqqy – My Rights Organization for Development and Awareness  
Resonate! Yemen  
Yemeni Parliamentarians Against Corruption

**Kenya**

Jamaa Resource Initiatives

**United Kingdom**

Bretton Woods Project

**United States**

Bank Information Center (BIC)  
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)  
Friends of the Earth (FOU US)  
'Ulu Foundation

**International**

Human Rights Watch  
Oxfam International