

Dear Civil Society Leaders,

Thank you very much for your letter dated June 6, 2016 addressed to Dr. Kim in which you raise important concerns about the future of Access to Information (ATI) work at the World Bank.

The World Bank remains fully committed to the implementation of access to information in client countries, notwithstanding internal organizational changes that you refer to. ATI is an essential part of our overall focus on ensuring good governance, fiscal transparency, sound public financing management, and citizen engagement in the development process. We see these as being important contributors to achieving our twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity, and essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 16.

Citizens' access to information and participation in projects funded by government and donors is crucial. The World Bank is doing its part to contribute to this on two fronts:

- 1) We have introduced, as you well noted, an important **access to information policy governing all of our projects**, including the publication of basic project information such as the project appraisal

documents (PADS), legal agreements, and our implementation status and results reports (ISRs). These are all now publicly disclosed and are available for global public scrutiny.

2) In 2014, we also introduced a **Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations**, which calls for the inclusion of citizen engagement across all WBG supported operations in order to improve their development results. In addition, the WBG set the goal of incorporating beneficiary feedback in all Bank-supported investment projects where there are clearly identifiable beneficiaries no later than June 30, 2018.

As part of our effort to strengthen implementation capacity at the country level, we have reviewed the arrangements for the implementation of ATI work programs over the past months. Regional units (as compared to central units) now have greater responsibility for supporting country-level reforms including fiscal transparency and ATI. At least 80 staff in the Governance Global Practice, with varying levels of specialization in ATI and fiscal transparency, support operations. Some of these staff, and additional colleagues, also work to advance

citizen engagement and open government, assisted by consultants and external expertise where needed.

Access to information is part of our portfolio of loans, technical assistance and analytical work. In Africa alone, the World Bank is implementing 20 active operations worth over \$540 million that include components or subcomponents that focus on ATI, as well as varied analytical work and technical assistance. Similar projects totaling over \$170 million are in the pipeline. Similar operations exist in our other regional portfolios.

Finally, we remain actively engaged in global programs that promote ATI and citizen engagements:

- 1) The **Open Government Partnership** is an important area in which the Bank continues to collaborate with global partners, and ATI commitments are prominent in the vast majority of National Action Plans (NAPs). The World Bank is an active member, and currently has 47 governance activities (15 projects and 32 TA activities), in 11 OGP countries, where the areas of thematic focus intersect with OGP commitments in NAPs. We will be further strengthening our collaboration with OGP, including on ATI, in the coming months.

2) The Bank also hosts the [Global Partnership for Social Accountability](#), which provides 3-5 year grants to CSOs of US \$500,000 to US \$1 million to undertake social accountability activities. The grants aim to strengthen performance and accountability of public programs and policies in key sectors of concern to the citizens, in collaboration with governments, and global and local civil society. The GPSA is also advancing global knowledge on a range of themes including ATI, through diverse learning programs.

The Bank's overall commitment to transparency, open government, and citizen engagement, as well as access to information, remains strong, and will continue as we focus our work on in-country programs and implementation.

We appreciate your commitment and dedication to ensure that people across the world have access to information. We trust that we can count on your continued engagement and collaboration as we strive to support countries to achieve open governance, greater citizen engagement and prosperity for all.

Sincerely,

**Jan Walliser**  
**Vice President**

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