



**THE WORLD BANK**  
IBRD • IDA | WORLD BANK GROUP

# Access to Information

**Annual Report  
Fiscal Year 2021**





Opposite page: Equipment near a railroad tracks, France.

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# Introduction



Records Center, Pennsylvania

Over Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21, covering the period from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect countries around the world, causing a global health and economic crisis unprecedented in scale and impact. The pandemic also limited significantly access to the Bank's physical records, but the Bank continued to provide uninterrupted access digitally, piloted a digital declassification review process and expanded the existing digitization program for analog records to facilitate public access requests.

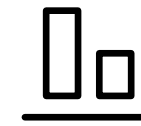
We encourage stakeholders to continue to use the Policy to mine the Bank's information for better development outcomes.

For more information and to submit public access requests for information to the World Bank, visit <http://www.worldbank.org/en/access-to-information>



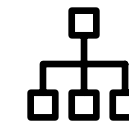
## Open Data

At the World Bank, the [Development Data Group](#) coordinates statistical and data work and maintains a number of macro, financial and sector databases. Working closely with the Bank's regions and Global Practices, the group is guided by professional standards in the collection, compilation and dissemination of data to ensure that all data users can have confidence in the quality and integrity of the data produced.



**Over 90  
Million**

Open Data  
page views



**Over  
13,000**

Development  
datasets, indicators,  
and visualizations



**Over 5  
million**

Open Data  
downloads

## Access to Records of the Board of Executive Directors

During FY 2021, despite the continued challenges brought on by the pandemic, six public access requests for historical records of the Bank's Board of Executive Directors were completed. The resulting public disclosures included 10 historical Board minutes and the disclosure of over 3,400 pages of verbatim transcripts related to 50 Board meetings. The transcripts ran through many decades of Board meetings, but primarily focused on the 1980s-early 2000s.



## Open Access

Digital object identifiers (DOIs) for a wider variety of Bank documents are now shared across our public repositories: [Open Knowledge Repository \(OKR\)](#) and [Documents & Reports \(D&R\)](#). These persistent identifiers, registered through CrossRef, are critical for pointing readers to versions of record and authority and assist in collecting data for the same documents across multiple platforms.

The OKR is the World Bank Group’s official open access repository. It is a curated repository that focuses on original academic research and formal publications from the Bank, as well as knowledge products that are of interest to the research. The D&R website is the official disclosure mechanism for the Access to Information Policy. The D&R website contains final and official documents and reports from 1946 through the present.

### Documents and Reports

**32,520,003**

Downloads FY21

### Open Knowledge Repository

**13,759,743**

Abstract views FY21

**24,058,623**

Downloads FY21

Carrier technician checking oscillator and receiver, Ethiopia. (Filename: 30239313-0009)



## General Inquiries

The general public can find public information about the World Bank on its website or submit specific questions through the [Public Inquiries Help Desk](#) platform. The requests are addressed in a timely manner by redirecting users to the public link where they can find the requested information. In 92% of the time the users were able to find the answers to the most commonly asked questions during their first visit to the website.

**14,950**

Page views

**1,295**

Unique users

**14,950**

First-time answers through the Public Inquiries help desk platform

**3,109**

Average answers per month

Switchboard operators, St. Ann’s telephone exchange, Jamaica. (Filename: 1724481-0003)



## Open Archives

### Access to historical information

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, which significantly limited access to the Bank's physical records and caused the temporary closure of the Archives Reading Room, the Bank continued to provide uninterrupted access to its historical information through the Bank's [Documents and Reports collection](#), the [Projects and Operations database](#) and the [World Bank Group Archives Catalog](#). In an effort to improve metadata in the Projects and Operations database, the Bank added project information for 489 historical dropped projects.

To ensure the continuous availability of the historical archives to external researchers during the pandemic, the Archives piloted a digital declassification review process and expanded the existing digitization program for analog records to facilitate public access requests. These initiatives were greatly appreciated by researchers who could access and review the digitized records at their convenience in a safe environment. In FY21, the Archives declassified just over 100,000 pages of historical records and proactively disclosed over 240 reports.

In FY 2021 researchers accessed 95,996 pages of archival records declassified under the Access to Information Policy.

Number of researchers

**22**

Number of pages researched

**95,996**

**101,764**

Pages declassified

**384,396**

Pages digitized

**225,764**

Archival record downloads

**248**

Reports proactively disclosed

## Digital Vault

The Archives continues to enhance the Digital Vault to manage and preserve the Bank's digital assets. The Digital Vault platform has been upgraded, a metadata integration with the content manager has made significant progress, and content ingest processes and procedures have been streamlined.

## Other Highlights

### Records Management Roadmap

Recognizing that a strong internal records management program enables effective implementation of access to information / freedom of information policies, the World Bank Group Archives launched a [Records Management Roadmap](#). The Roadmap aims to help organizations in our client countries to plan and design an effective records management program: one that any organization can support and maintain over time. The primary audience for this Roadmap is governments, organizations, or other agencies around the world that wish to develop and improve the management of their organizational records or other sources of documentary evidence. Well managed records and information can be more easily discovered, accessed, and reviewed for future disclosure. The Archives hopes that the Roadmap will help our member countries to lay a solid records management foundation to enable transparency and accountability via access to information / freedom of information policies. The Roadmap is available in [English](#) and in [French](#) and will be soon published also in Spanish. Since launch, the website has been accessed in 132 countries and 774 cities covering all regions and the Roadmap documentation has been downloaded 3,614 times.

### Email Alerts

Email Alerts ([alerts.worldbank.org](mailto:alerts.worldbank.org)) continued to gain subscribers and add functionality to its client-centric daily emails. In the fall, following the June 2020 inclusion of procurement alerts, Email Alerts launched four multilingual interfaces (Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian) joining the existent English and French sites. The addition of the microdata resource, revision of the Follow-a-Project functionality, and general site enhancements helped streamline and add value to the user experience. By June 2021 there were over 6,700 subscriptions, more than triple the amount at the end of FY20. The system sent an average of 2,500 emails daily to subscribers worldwide.

## Redesigned website

To facilitate greater discoverability of content by the public, the [WBG Archives](#) launched a redesigned suite of websites and online discovery tools that feature fluid and seamless navigation through common headers, footers, banners, and design. The [Archives home page](#) and [Archives Catalog](#) are completely redesigned with the user in mind. The Archives' [Historical Timeline](#), [Oral History](#), and [Photo Catalog](#) sites now feature common navigation tools and design elements.

### Country Director Database

The [Country Director Database](#) contains country director data from Oct. 1, 1972, when the position was created as part of a Bank-wide re-organization, to May 20, 2020. Users can browse or search by country director name or country and filter by country director, country, date range, or gender.

### Historical Timeline

The Historical Timeline has been updated to include key events from the tenure of President Jim Kim through the arrival of President Malpass in April 2019. Information and resources relating to 11 new events have been added, including the Bank Group's first funding for the Ebola response, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the launch of IDA's inaugural bond.

### 75th Anniversary of World Bank Articles of Agreement Ratification

Following commemoration events marking the [75th anniversary of the Bretton Woods Conference](#) in FY20, the Archives produced a number of online products marking the 75th anniversaries of the ratification of IBRD's Articles of Agreement and the opening of the institution's doors. Resources include exhibits, a video, and historic profiles of the Bank's earliest member countries

### Archives video productions

The Archives produced three complementary videos that endeavor to introduce researchers to the "treasures" of our holdings and guide them through the process of first exploring the resources of the Archives and then digging deeper into the archival holdings.

- [Uncover the Treasures of the World Bank Group Archives](#)
- [Explore the Resources of the World Bank Archives](#)
- [Dig Deeper into the World Bank Archives](#)

### Guide to the Archives

The [Guide to the Archives](#), published in both physical and electronic formats, provides a survey of the vast collection of records, oral histories, photographs and other materials preserved and made accessible by the World Bank Group Archives. The publication also highlights the many ways these resources are made available to researchers and includes fonds-level descriptions of the dozens of collections described in our Archives Catalog.

# World Bank Group Archives

The Archives preserves the institutional memory of the World Bank Group and provides public access to records of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA).





## Access to Information Requests Handled\*

Fiscal year in which the AI request was created	Number of AI requests Handled	Number of AI requests Closed	Percentage of AI requests Closed	Number of AI requests which remained Open
FY2021	589	525	89	64
FY2020	38	27	71	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>75</b>

\*Handled – The request was created in FY2021 or was carried over from previous fiscal years as an open request pending completion.

Burying cement pipe, Egypt. (Filename: 1721055-0035)



## Requests Fulfilled (in Whole or in Part) or Denied

Of the 552 requests closed in FY2021, 388 requests provided sufficient information and were handled by the AI system. Of these, 372 requests were fulfilled in whole or in part, and 16 requests were denied without fulfilling any part of the request.

The manner in which the remaining 164 were handled is described in in the table titled “Manner in Which the Remaining Cases Were Handled”.

Indicator	Requests Fulfilled in Whole	Requests Fulfilled in Part	Total Number of Requests Fulfilled in Whole or in Part
<b>Total number</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>39*</b>	<b>372</b>
<b>Percent (%) of total</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Of the 39 requests that were fulfilled in part, the outcomes were due to the following reasons:

- The information was restricted by the “Attorney-Client Privilege” exception (two requests)
- The information was not in custody of the World Bank (five requests)
- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception (one case)
- The information was restricted by the “Corporate Administrative Matters” and “Deliberative Information” exceptions and part of the request was unreasonable (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Information provided by Member Countries or Third Parties in Confidence” and “Deliberative Information” exceptions (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception and information was not found in the custody of the World Bank (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception and by the Bank’s Prerogative to Restrict Access (two requests)
- Part of the request was handled through the Development Data Initiative (24 requests)
- Part of the request was handled through the Remittances Data - KNOMAD (one request)
- Part of the request was handled through the carbon pricing dashboard (one request)

## Requests Denied (in Whole or in Part)

Of the 388 requests handled by the AI system and closed in FY2021, 16 requests were denied without fulfilling any part of the request.

Indicator	Requests Denied
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>16</b>

Of the 16 requests that were denied in whole or in part without fulfilling any part of the request, the outcomes were due to the following reasons:

- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception (eight requests)
- The information was restricted by the “Personal Information” exception (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “the World Bank’s prerogative to restrict” (two requests)
- The information was restricted by the “Safety and Security Information” and “Deliberative Information” exceptions (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Safety and Security Information” exception (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Corporate Administrative Matters” exception (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Attorney-Client Privilege” and “Deliberative Information” exceptions (one request)
- The information was restricted by the “Deliberative Information” exception and records were not found in custody (one request)

## Manner in which the Remaining Requests were Handled

As mentioned previously, of the 552 requests closed in FY2021, 388 were handled by the AI system and a response was provided. The remaining 164 requests were handled as follows:

Indicator	Numbers of Requests
Information Covered by AI Policy Exception -Information Restricted Under Separate Disclosure Regimes and Other Investigative Information	14
Referrals to IFC or IMF	9
Records not Found in World Bank Custody	27
Additional Information Needed, Unresponsive Requester or Unreasonable Requests	36
Referral to Doing Business, Development Data and Climate Change Knowledge Portals	76
Unresponsive Requestor; Records Not in Custody	1
Unresponsive Requestor; Referral (exception Information Restricted Under Separate Disclosure Regimes and Other Investigative Information.) IEG	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>

## Timeliness of Requests Closed

The Bank acknowledges receipt of written requests for information within five working days, and endeavors to provide a more comprehensive response within 20 working days.

Indicator	Number of Requests	Percentage of Requests (%)
Requests closed within 20 working days	470	85
Requests closed after 20 working days	82	15
<b>Total number of Requests Closed</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>100</b>



## Appeals Concluded by the Access to Information Committee (AIC)

Case number and information requested	Violation of AI Policy	Public Interest	Upheld or Reversed World Bank decision to Deny Access	Applicable Exception(s)
<a href="#">Case No. AI6799</a> Historical Monthly Loan Disbursements (Decision dated July 10, 2020)	X	X	Dismissed	Not Available/Refusal of the Request*
<a href="#">Case No. AI6479</a> Tanzanian Statistics Act (Decision dated July 29, 2020)	X	X	Partially Reversed	Deliberative Information, Attorney-Client Privilege, Information Provided by Member Countries or Third Parties in Confidence
<a href="#">Case No. AI6723</a> Full Name of Task Team Leaders (Decision dated July 29, 2020)	X		Dismissed	Not Available/Refusal of the Request*
<a href="#">Case No. AI7115</a> Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Decision dated October 22, 2020)	X		Dismissed	Not Available**
<a href="#">Case No. AI6359</a> Lithuania Lease Tender (Decision dated November 18, 2020)	X	X	Upheld/Dismissed	Bank's Prerogative to Restrict Access
<a href="#">Case No. AI6929</a> Kenya Supplier Contracts	X	X	Upheld/Dismissed	Bank's Prerogative to Restrict Access
<a href="#">Case No. AI7183</a> West and Central Africa Air Transport Project (P083751) (Decision dated November 24, 2020)	X	X	Upheld/Dismissed	Bank's Prerogative to Restrict Access

Case number and information requested	Violation of AI Policy	Public Interest	Upheld or Reversed World Bank decision to Deny Access	Applicable Exception(s)
<a href="#">Case No. AI7157</a> Cameroon Transport Project (Decision dated December 3, 2020)	X	X	Upheld/Dismissed	Bank's Prerogative to Restrict Access
<a href="#">Case No. AI7146</a> DRC Ebola Audit and Evaluation Documents (Decision dated January 27, 2021)	X	X	Upheld/Dismissed	Deliberative Information
<a href="#">Case No. AI7128</a> Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) (Decision dated April 21, 2021)	X		Upheld/Dismissed	Deliberative Information, Bank's Prerogative to Restrict Access
<a href="#">Case No. AI7336</a> Mozambique – Cyclone Idai and Kenneth Emergency Recovery and Resilience Project (P171040) procurement information (Decision dated May 26, 2021).	X	X	Upheld/Dismissed	Deliberative Information; Information Provided by Member Countries or Third Parties in Confidence; Bank's Prerogative to Restrict Access
<a href="#">Case No. AI7461</a> Sierra Leone Procurement Contract (Decision dated May 26, 2021).	X	X	Upheld/Dismissed	Bank's Prerogative to Restrict Access

**Dismissed** means that the appeal is not considered on its merits and is, therefore, rejected, because (a) the requester failed to file the appeal within the required time; (b) the requester failed to provide sufficient information that would reasonably support the appeal; or (c) the requester appealed a matter that the AIC does not have the authority to consider (e.g., decisions by the Board).

**Reversed** means that the AIC has decided to provide access to the information, overturning the World Bank's initial decision to deny access to the information.

**Upheld** means that the AIC has confirmed the World Bank's initial decision to deny access to the information.

\* The Bank's exercise of its right to refuse a request is not a denial of access subject to appeal (Access to Information Directive/Procedure, at Section III.D.1.a.(iii))

\*\* The appeal was filed before the Bank denied access to the information (Access to Information Directive/Procedure, at Section III.D.1.a)

## Appeals Concluded by the Access to Information Appeals Board (AIAB)

Case number and information requested	Upheld or Reversed AI Committee's decision upholding World Bank Decision to Deny Access	Applicable Exception(s)
<a href="#">Case No. AI6479</a> Documents concerning amendments to the Tanzanian Statistics Act (Decision dated September 4, 2020)	Dismissed	Not Available**
<a href="#">Case No. AI6479</a> All documents concerning amendments to the Tanzanian Statistics Act (Decision dated May 4, 2021)	Upheld/Reversed	Attorney Client Privilege, Information Provided by Member Countries or Third Parties in Confidence, Deliberative Information
<a href="#">Case No. AI7115</a> Documents concerning Institutional Review Board (IRB) Documents (Decision dated June 3, 2021)	Dismissed	Not Available**

**Dismissed** means that the appeal is not considered on its merits because (a) the requester failed to file the appeal within the required time; (b) the requester failed to provide sufficient information that would reasonably support the appeal; or (c) the requester appealed a matter that the AIAB did not have the authority to consider (e.g., decisions by the Board).

**Reversed** means the AIAB has decided to provide access to the information, overturning the AIC's decision to uphold the World Bank's initial denial of access to the information because there was no violation of policy.

**Upheld** means that the AIAB has confirmed the AIC's decision to deny access to the information on appeals alleging a violation of the policy; thus, the AIAB confirms the World Bank's initial decision to deny access to the information.

\*\* The appeal was filed before the AIC issued a decision on appeal (Access to Information Directive/Procedure, at Section III.D.1.a)



### Documents & Reports

is the official disclosure mechanism for more than 390,000 documents starting from the 1940s that enables sharing of the institution's extensive knowledge base and implementing its access to information policy.



### The World Bank Group Archives

offers a variety of online historical resources and information products, such as ISAD(G) finding aids, transcripts of oral history interviews, and exhibits featuring the Archives' collection and World Bank history.



### Projects & Operations

provides access to basic information on all of the World Bank's lending projects from 1947 to the present.



### The Open Knowledge Repository

is the Bank's official open access repository and is interoperable with other open access repositories. It offers a robust range of usage statistics, including those by title, series, country, and author.



### The Open Government Partnership

is a multilateral initiative that secures concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens and fight corruption.



### World Bank Group Finances

makes data related to the WBG's financials available to everybody in a social, interactive, visually compelling, and machine readable format.



### Open Data Initiative

provides free and open access to thousands of development data indicators.



### International Aid Transparency Initiative

is a global campaign to create transparency in the records of how aid money is spent. The World Bank is an IATI member and publishes data on a quarterly basis.