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July 15, 2024

IDA21 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND UPDATES ON BETTER BANK

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) IDA Forum on the IDA21 Strategic Directions and Updates on the Better Bank convened [50 organizations](#) virtually from Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen. Others joined from outside the region—China, Germany, Italy, South Africa, the UK and US.

The aim of the MENA forum was to inform civil societies about the proposed IDA21 strategic directions and obtain feedback and any input from them to feed into IDA’s policy dialogue, as well as update them on the progress the Bank is making in its evolution towards a better bank. To this end, IDA Director **Mr. Dirk Reinermann** made a presentation on the proposed [IDA21 Strategic Directions](#), while **Ms. Paloma Anos Casero**, Director, Operations Policy and Country Services presented on the [Better Bank](#). These presentations were the basis for the forum conversation.

The IDA Borrower Representative (alternate) from Yemen **Ms. Jeehan N. Abdul Ghaffar**, representing client countries in the MENA region in the IDA21 Replenishment, made remarks in the opening session, while **Mr. Stephane Guimbert**, World Bank Country Director for Egypt, Yemen & Djibouti gave closing remarks.

The event was moderated by **Ms. Nasma Jrondi**, a sustainability expert and Vice President, Mentor’Elles. The representative from UNITE Network in Morocco produced a [rapporteur’s report](#) capturing key points raised by the participants.

After the two presentations, participants shared their views on the proposed IDA21 [focus areas](#) of People, Planet, Prosperity, Infrastructure and Digitalization, and the proposed [lenses](#) of More and better jobs; Gender; Fragility; and Private investments, as well as the Better Bank updates.

Participants had several questions through which they also indicated their priority issues. Following are the inputs made:

FOCUS AREAS

PEOPLE:

- Emphasis on children in extreme poverty especially in fragile situations.
- Women’s empowerment, especially in agriculture – support women’s cooperatives.
- Support to single mothers – any specific ways IDA could do this?
- Food safety and urban sanitation are priorities in Djibouti

PROSPERITY

- Address corruption to reap the benefits of IDA support.

PLANET:

- Climate change is a priority.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

- Focus on transportation.

DIGITALIZATION:

- Support for boosting job creation through digital platform collaboration initiatives.

LENSES

More and Better Jobs:

- Support for a job creation strategy.
- There is competition for few jobs between refugees and hosts. World Bank should help create jobs, engaging family businesses and start-ups.

Gender:

- Women's impact in agriculture – how does IDA assess this?

Fragility:

- The geography of poverty is shifting – in fragile and conflict states interventions should be about reaching the most in need. In this regard, partnerships with not only governments but civil society as well could strengthen complementarity needed to reach the poor.
- Higher percentage of IDA resources should go to fragile and conflict settings.
- IDA financing should help people stay in their own territories.

Private investments:

- Strengthen technical and financial support to the private sector so that it can operate effectively and efficiently.

BETTER BANK

- Does the scorecard include citizen engagement (those who will be impacted by the project) since most countries suffer from closing civic space.
- Is the disaggregation significantly better that it will make a real difference?
- What are the real changes in the financial and operational models that the Bank sees will make a breakthrough.
- Importance of knowledge exchange among countries to address chronic challenges such as drought.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

- What is the criteria for IDA graduation.
- In graduation, what is the share of the Bank and share of the country in the success?
- How can CSOs benefit from IDA or access direct funding? Can they have a government guarantee if they propose a project?
- Citizen engagement is important.
- Can IDA integrate CSOs not only theoretically but practically as well—IDA should provide financial and technical assistance to NGOs and engage them throughout the project cycle.
- Will IDA be involved in the Loss and Damage Fund? If so, how?

Bank management provided overall management response to various issues raised.