

YEMEN GOVERNMENT-CSOs PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Partnership for Development Knowledge Conference

“Supporting Constructive Engagement between Government of Yemen and CSOs”

Sana’a, Yemen / (3 day event) March 4-6, 2014

Objective: To allow high-level decision makers and CSOs in Yemen learn from each other and international experiences in supporting constructive engagement between government and CSOs during political and economic transitions. The enabling factors that supported these partnerships and the roles played by each stakeholder in improving development results will help Yemeni stakeholders better understand and contextualize the challenges and opportunities for partnership for development in the Yemeni context. Over 120 participants are expected, mostly from Yemen.

EVENT CONTENT

Day 1: During **Session 1**, the Conference will draw lessons from countries outside the region – **Indonesia, Ghana, India, and Brazil** - nations that have supported efforts towards more open societies to reap the benefits of a more inclusive and sustainable growth pattern anchored in fostering constructive partnerships between government and CSOs. Issues such as: legal and regulatory framework to enable a vibrant civil society, institutional specificities to achieve citizen’s direct involvement in service delivery, and capacity building for a more responsive and transparent public administration will be discussed.

Day 2: The morning will highlight experiences from the Middle East and North Africa Region, from **Palestine** and **Yemen** drawing on the CSO self-regulation experience and National Dialogue and Access to Information legislation respectively. Conference participants will then be organized into Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) around thematic areas that would contribute to a more conducive environment for government-CSO partnerships. These working groups will have facilitated discussions based on lessons learned from Day 1. The regional experience with ANSA-Arab World will be presented. Themes will include:

- Roles that CSOs play in development: advocacy, service delivery, M&E and action research
- Enabling environment: political, social, legal and institutional
- Building CSO capacity and internal governance

Day 3: Based on the outputs from the TWGs during Day 2, Conference participants will explore opportunities, challenges, and possible risk mitigation measures to support specific Government – CSO partnerships in Yemen.

Conference discussions will be documented, translated into Arabic and disseminated widely after the event to benefit a wider audience among Government and CSO representatives in Yemen. Additionally, a note summarizing the international and regional experiences will be produced and disseminated in Arabic.

Day 3 will end with a presentation about the **Way Forward and the Partnership Framework**, that will involve CSOs in policy making and build the technical and professional capacities of CSOs.

Knowledge Forum: A Knowledge Forum will be set up throughout the 3 day event from each participating country, ANSA-Arab World and from the World Bank and other donors aimed at sharing knowledge and experiences. An online discussion through the web and social media will also be conducted, as well as dissemination of publications case studies and lessons learned and multimedia with face-to-face conversations with experts on these topics.

BACKGROUND

A cornerstone of the change process towards sustainable government-CSO partnerships is learning from international and regional experiences in the countries that have undergone similar transitions. The Government-CSO Partnership Project will facilitate interactions across different stakeholder groups which have traditionally been limited in Yemen, contributing to a certain lack of trust and collaboration. Bringing different groups together towards a common objective will help break down barriers and facilitate spaces for dialogue. Lessons learned from Indonesia, Brazil, India, Ghana, and Palestine will share how they have successfully put in place government-CSO partnerships for development, and will serve to inform the discussion to foster Government-CSO dialogue in Yemen.

Supporting Government-CSO partnerships and constructive engagement: One of the key pillars of the World Bank's support in the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA), and in Yemen specifically, consists of strengthening the governance framework, both on the supply and the demand side. The supply side of governance focuses on supporting *government responsiveness*, and on issues such as strengthening the rule of law, anti-corruption measures or public financial management. The demand-side focuses on fostering a more *engaged citizenry* through mechanisms that open government to the people, strengthen the enabling environment for civic participation, use information and communications technology for governance and development, and monitor service delivery.

Implementing Government-CSO partnerships as a means to strengthen the social contract between state and non-state actors: Citizens across Yemen – spanning a diversity of ideological, demographic, religious and ethnic lines, have been demanding a more representative Government, an end to elite capture and political and economic marginalization, and establishment of a new social contract between the Government and its citizens. The Government of National Reconciliation (GNR) and international donors are supportive of an augmented role for CSOs in effective service delivery, participation, and decentralization programs. In the Riyadh conference in September 2012, the GNR and donors reaffirmed their commitment to work with CSOs as key development partners. This was specifically mentioned as one of the pillars in Yemen's Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF), which also emphasized the need to focus on women and youth in both economic and governance realms. These developments signal an increasing recognition among the GNR and the donor community that CSOs' constructive engagement, particularly in areas that impact women, youth as well as other marginalized groups, will contribute to a peaceful and successful transition and to more inclusive and sustainable development in Yemen.

Coordination with UNDP Leading the MAF Task Force on Government-CSOs Partnership: UNDP are leading the work to create a partnership framework between CSOs, government, and donors. This is one of thirteen priorities identified in a high-level donors meeting held in Sana'a, Yemen, on June 19 to discuss progress on the Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF). Specifically, UNDP prepared in September, a document that serves as a compact between CSOs, government and donors led by a Task Force comprised of MoPIC, MoSAL, the Prime Minister's and the President's Office, CSOs, and INGOs. The compact would describe the nature of the relationship between CSOs, GoY and donors and would develop an action plan to operationalize this partnership. The World Bank team has liaised with UNDP and is coordinating closely with their team during this process as the Government-CSO Partnership Project complements the work on the CSOs-GoY-Donors partnership building under the MAF.

Specifically, in terms of civil society support the MAF aims to: a) bolster the culture of public participation, and strengthen the principles of democracy; and b) build CSOs capacities and improve their professionalism to enable their effective participation in the partnership through i) establishing a Supreme Council to review the laws and the bi-laws relating to CSOs and recommend new provisions; ii) involve CSOs in policymaking; and iii) build the technical and professional capacities of CSOs. The coordination with UNDP on the planned Partnership for Development Knowledge Conference aims to support the Government of Yemen in the donor community to facilitate engagement with CSOs through awareness raising and learning from countries that went through similar transitions. This will help create space for a constructive dialogue between Government of Yemen and CSOs.