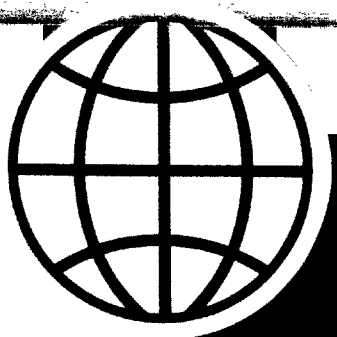




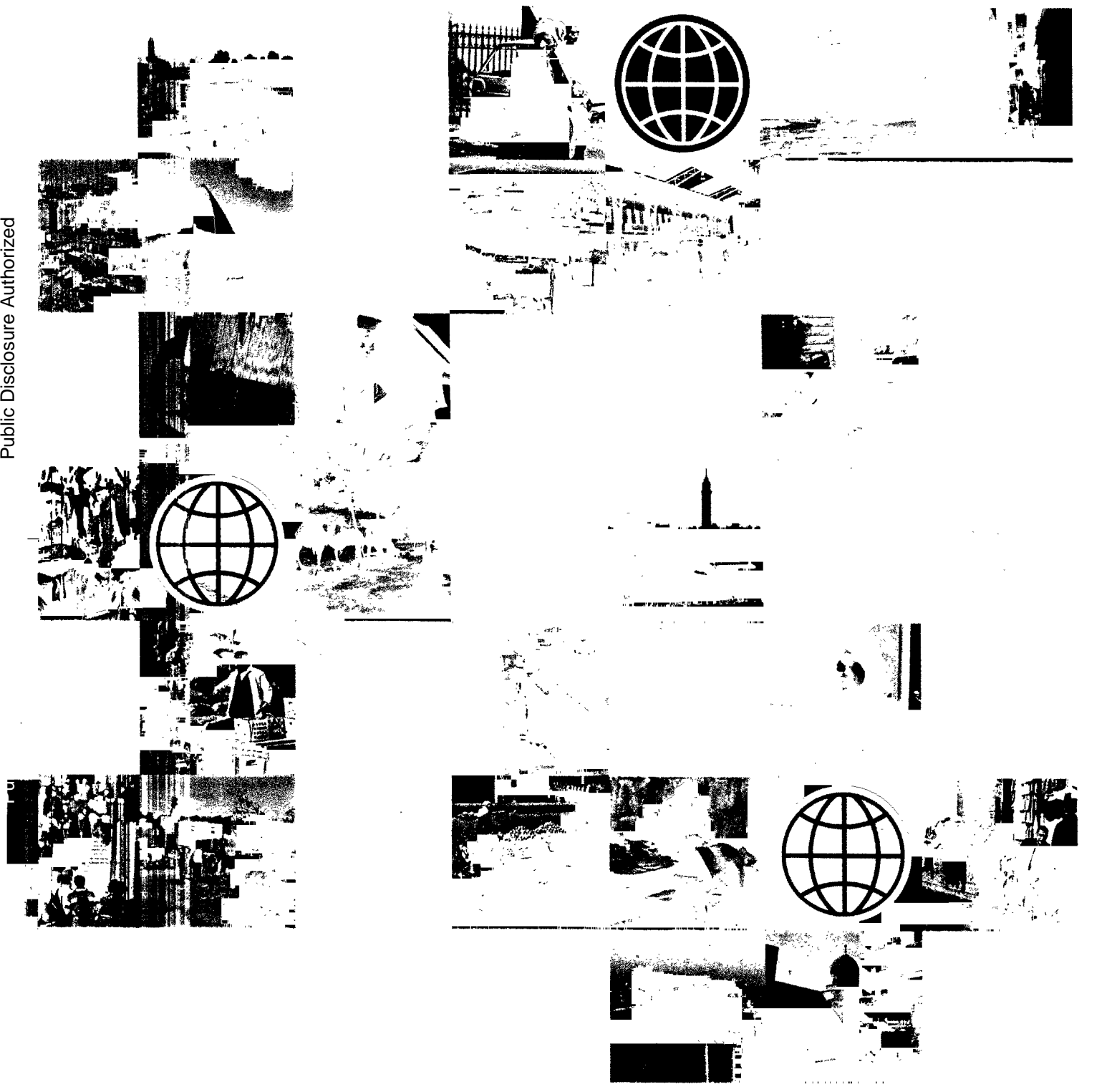
Outreach



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE WORLD BANK GROUP, CAIRO OFFICE

December 2005

37114



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Outreach is published quarterly by the World Bank Group office in Cairo.

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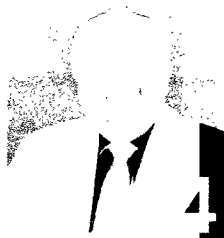
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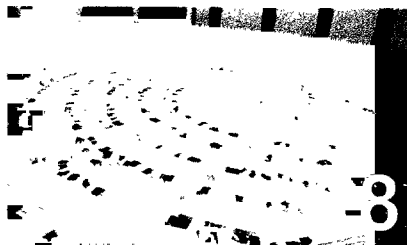
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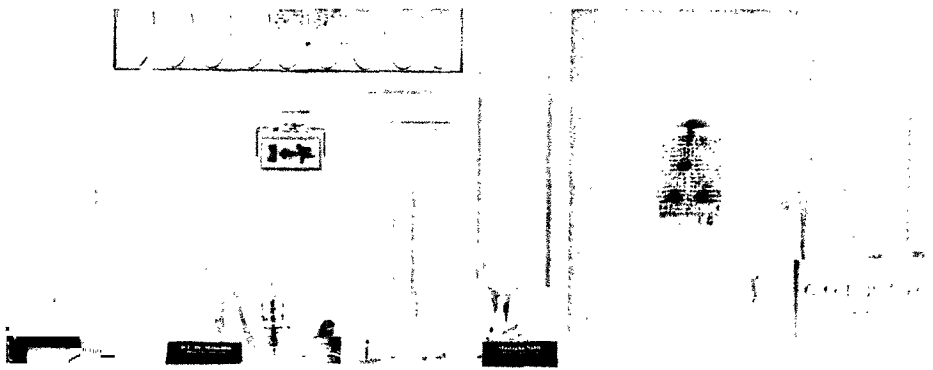


9 Reducing Poverty and Human Development in MENA



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Pic Egypt



Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, H.E. Minister Moheï El Din, Mr. Mustapha Nabli and Mr. Michal Rutkowski during the conference

The challenge of job creation in MNA requires a cross-sectoral approach to reform based on a conducive investment climate, improved labor market outcomes through better education and training, and employment policies that promote equitable growth and job creation.

World Bank MNA Regional Conference on Job Creation and Skill Development concludes:

On December 4th, growth and job creation are the critical economic challenges for all countries of the MNA region. Ministers and policy makers from 16 countries across the region were joined by representatives from the private sector, civil society and international organizations at the 3-day MNA Regional Conference on Job Creation and Skill Development that was hosted by the World Bank Office in Cairo with support from the UK Department for International Development.

World Bank estimates that, over the next 20 years, some 90 million new jobs have to be created to meet the demand of an increasingly young and educated labor force in MNA countries. Not surprisingly, governments in the Middle East and North Africa Region (MNA) have identified employment creation as the single most important development challenge over the coming decade, though the specific policy concerns may vary by country. In order to meet this challenge, the current rate of economic growth as well as the number of jobs in the region will need to double over the next two decades.

"The agenda of this conference deals with a high-standing priority for MNA countries. We need to, among others, examine the relevance of the informal sector to the job creation agenda and determine how we can effectively harness the potential and resources within the sector to support our goals," stated Emmanuel Mbi, Country Director for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti in his welcoming address to participants. *"We also need to assess the impact of ongoing reforms on youth capacities, opportunities and challenges as they cope with global and regional competitiveness. And finally we need to ensure that gender issues are effectively dealt with as we discuss the employment challenge,"* he further added.

From Egypt, H.E. Dr. Moheï El Din, Minister of Investment, delivered a statement on behalf of the Prime Minister where he shared key features of the Egyptian reform program and its relevance to the job creation agenda. *"To ensure the sustainability of job creation, a reform agenda needs to have a lasting impact on building human capital, creating an invest-*

ment climate and capturing opportunities for equitable growth that can be offered by sound labour, social and economic policies," Minister Moheï El Din said.

Labor Market Outcomes: An Expanded Agenda for MNA

MNA's labor market shares many structural features with other regions of the world. Nonetheless, MNA's labor market dynamics vary due to many coexisting rigidities that are compounded by a rapidly expanding labor force. In addition, poor labor market outcomes such as unemployment and low earnings are driven largely by: (i) constraints in the investment climate which inhibit growth and job creation, especially in the private sector; (ii) lack of alignment between the education and training systems and the labor market, and (iii) labor market policies that reduce the flexible deployment of the labor force.

Despite variations across the MNA countries, challenges brought forth by integration into the world economy are creating a significant impact on labour market outcomes. The conference agenda offered a new departure for examining labour market outcomes beyond labour issues. *"We expanded the agenda to include issues that have a bearing on the capacity of the economy to create more jobs, the ability of job seekers to perform these jobs and the nature of employment programs and policies that can facilitate labour mobility as the economy adjusts and creates winners and losers,"* said Mr. Christiaan Poortman, Vice President for the MNA region in his concluding statement. *"This high level representation from the MNA region offers opportunities for the formulation of a comprehensive development program where the Bank can be of assistance in moving this critical agenda forward,"* he further added.

Understanding Regional Labor Markets Characteristics and Policies

In a Roundtable Discussion, Ministers of Labour, Education, Economic Policy, Planning and Finance, Industry, Social Affairs, Education and Higher Education/Training from MNA countries presented their experiences within the scope of global and regional economic and labor market trends. An analytical

framework for looking at current labor market dynamics, unemployment, job creation and skills development was introduced. The discussion focused on the review of a number of issues within the regional context (i) the manpower planning debate and comparison with labor market analyses; (ii) the informal sector in MNA region; (iii) the role of migration in regional labor markets; (iv) the specific case of labor adjustment in the face of privatization, restructuring of state-owned enterprises, and civil servant reforms; (v) the needs of women and other vulnerable groups in the labor market, such as the disabled, low-skilled, and/or young workers; and (vi) the data and measurement issues.

"Experiences from different regions revealed that often labor policies are seen in isolation of other social policies that address broader issues of vulnerability and risk management. Understanding these linkages is important as some objectives are better served either by social, or by combinations of labor and social policies that supplement each other," said Michal Rutkowski, Sector Director of the Human Development Group in the WB MNA region.

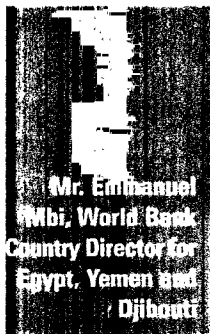
Setting the Stage for Job Creation:

3 Fundamental Themes:

The 3-day conference set the stage for discussions among a highly diverse group of policy makers, ministers, private sector and civil society. Approaching the unemployment challenge from a cross-sectoral lens offered an opportunity for decision makers to reveal concerns and challenges relating to investment climate, institutional coordination, market regulations and quality of education.

In his opening address, Dr. Mustafā Nabli, Chief Economist of the World Bank MNA region defined "three critical themes" for managing this cross-sectoral approach. *"Establishing an investment climate conducive for job creation and SME development is a theme that needs to be fostered by liberalizing economic environments,"* he said. *"The second theme relates to workforce development through education, skills and training policy in order to effectively accommodate the demand growth and deliver employable trained workers. The third theme relates to employment policies and institutions,"* he further added.

(Continued on page 12)



An Interview with Emmanuel Mbi

For Emmanuel Mbi, the World Bank Country Director for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti, the year 2005 was a year of change, challenge and new opportunities. In December 2004, Emmanuel assumed his new position based in Cairo. Inspired by transitions, reforms and results, Mr. Mbi keeps an overly busy schedule that is driven by a determination to deliver and an ambition to contribute to sustained alleviation of poverty.

During his previous assignment as Country Director for South Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Mbi took on one of the most challenging assignments in the Bank; with a modest portfolio which ultimately expanded to US \$ 3 billion by the end of his term. Before arriving to Egypt, Emmanuel presided a Consultative Group (CG) meeting with representatives from 21 countries and 20 international organizations during which nearly US\$ 6 billion (a record in Africa) were pledged for the reconstruction and recovery of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Q: How would you describe your first year as Country Director in the Middle East and North Africa Region?

"In my previous position, I was pleased to be part of a transition in several countries where I managed the Bank's program in many post conflict situations: reconstruction, rehabilitation, recovery and reform were squarely on the agenda. In Egypt, I am pleased to be part of an ongoing transition that is based on the Government's proactive style in implementing a reform agenda. In Yemen and Djibouti, poverty challenges are of a different nature and magnitude. While political contexts may vary, transition processes in all cases involve people at its core and our role as a development institution is to contribute to making a sustainable impact on the lives of people: working with government, societies, private sector development partners and other stakeholders."

Q: What are the opportunities and challenges of the Bank's agenda in Egypt?

Earlier this year, the Bank's Board of Directors discussed the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS 2006 - 2009) for Egypt. The Board acknowledged the major strides that the government undertook over the past two years to reform the economic, financial and social sectors. This CAS is a new and very different type of CAS for Egypt. The nature of activities: lending and non-lending, and the highly participatory process that led to their identification represent new features of our cooperation and partnership with the government, the private sector, donors and most importantly members of society. The challenge over the next few years will be to be able to accommodate the pace, knowledge, experience and support requirements within the resources available to the country program, country team and country office.

Q: How do you plan to address these challenges?

Let's take the case of the Country Office. Over the past year, the Country Office has gone through a transition to become a full "Regional Hub". Many functions that were traditionally based in our headquarters are handled from here or shared with headquarters. We have staff working here who are working across the MNA region and beyond. This is part of the Bank's decentralization efforts. We are currently increasing our team (Country Office and HQ) resources in order to meet the needs of our expanding portfolio and ensure that -as much as possible- the expertise required is available at the Country Office to ensure swift responses to the client.

Q: How does the Egypt portfolio respond to the development priorities of a middle-income country?

Our CAS says it all. The agenda of middle-income countries- including Egypt - is a relatively new agenda for the Bank. In recent years, middle income countries have sought the Bank's advice and knowledge and as a result the "Knowledge Bank" has proven to be a key platform for engaging in policy dialogue and supporting reforms. As a global institution, we have the comparative advantage of sharing and drawing upon lessons of experiences from the different regions across the world.

In Egypt, we hosted a number of forums that focused on public private partnerships, improving investment climate, better targeting of the poor, subsidies and the economic empowerment of women. We see the value in such experience exchange between countries facing the same challenges. In terms of our portfolio design, we are responding to a shift in Egypt's policy agenda that is focusing on achieving high and sustainable growth, promoting investment, reforming the financial sector, creating jobs and targeting vulnerable segments of society. We are building on the experience of the existing projects such as the Social Fund for Development, the Education project, the Sohag Rural Development Project and others. New projects that are currently being planned include support for financial sector reform, the Integrated Governorates Projects (I&II) and a number of major infrastructure projects e.g. the recently negotiated El Tebbin Power project that will follow the successful experience of the airport development project. Through a combination of our

knowledge services and efficient delivery of project financing, the Bank's assistance remains a very attractive option or package if you wish, for Egypt.

Q: What lessons has the Bank drawn from its earlier experience in infrastructure projects to this new era?

I am glad you raised the question. For those of us who have been in the Bank for a long time, what the Bank did and did very well was to support infrastructure projects after which, the Bank support to this sector declined for many years. In Egypt for example, the current CAS includes about 60-70% infrastructure projects. The Bank's re-entry to this critical sector was the result of the insistence by various countries to solidly underpin their global and regional competitiveness. Basically, if you want to compete effectively and efficiently you have to have the necessary infrastructure in addition, of course, to designing and implementing policy reforms. This is not to say that other sectors such as health and education are not important. They are key imperatives for any country. Both the former and current Bank Presidents have emphasized that countries across the world would have a difficult time moving forward without developed and adequate infrastructure. Global and regional experience has revealed that every country that has realized sustained long term growth has a substantial infrastructure base.

Q: Within the scope of the Egyptian Government's efforts toward decentralization, how is the Bank addressing capacity and structural gaps at the local level?

The activities we are planning in support of the Government's efforts in this area include many projects that will be implemented at the local level and hence will require additional capacity. We are pleased at being able to support the Government's gradual shift to decentralization. We have a number of projects in the pipeline including the Integrated Governorates Development Projects (I&II), the Alexandria Growth Pole Project among others where capacity enhancement represents a central feature.

(Continued on page 12)



Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, World Bank President

In his first address to the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund since becoming Bank president June 1st 2005, Wolfowitz told gathered finance and development officials his priority is to ensure the Bank produces tangible results in its efforts to support the world's poor, and not just in the poorest countries. Mr. Wolfowitz said he believes poverty can be defeated by strong leadership in developing countries, supported by much closer teamwork by the donor countries, development agencies and civil society organizations that offer them desperately-needed resources and expertise.

"Whether investing in education, health, infrastructure, agriculture, the environment, we in the World Bank must be sure that we deliver results. And by results, let me be clear. I mean results that have a real impact in the day-to-day lives of the poor. We stand accountable to them for these results," he added.

"We cannot just count the number of schools, clinics, and businesses that are established," he said. *"It is also about the quality of the curriculum, the health care delivered and the jobs created. We must address both the qualitative as well as the quantitative challenges which deny opportunities for the poor."*

New World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz Stresses Results Agenda In Annual Meetings 05 Speech

In describing a world that has seen remarkable progress in the fight against poverty during past decades, the Bank president also noted that hundreds of millions of people across the world - and particularly in Africa - are being left behind. *"Every day, thousands of people living in extreme poverty, many of them children, die from preventable diseases,"* Wolfowitz said. *"The scale of death and deprivation in Africa is particularly alarming. Since 1981, the number of Africans living on less than \$1 a day has nearly doubled from 164 million to 314 million."*

Concluding 2-days of meetings with top world leaders and government delegations, Wolfowitz communicated a spirit of hope and optimism. *"I believe we've made significant progress in fulfilling our obligations to the world's poorest people, whom we ultimately represent at these meetings,"* he told reporters at the conclusion of the semi-annual meeting of the, a ministerial-level committee of the governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

"The high point of these meetings is the historic endorsement," said Wolfowitz, *"of the G8 proposal to cancel 100 percent of the debts of some of the world's poorest countries."* Finance and Development ministers who were gathered for the of the IMF and World Bank reached agreement on financing of the debt relief promise put forward by G7 finance ministers in London last June and endorsed by the heads of G8 countries in Gleneagles in July.

The Development Committee also supported the World Bank's new Africa Action Plan and committed the Bank to increased financing of infrastructure as part of a growth agenda. *"Taken together, the G8*

commitments and the Africa Action Plan represent the

largest commitment to increase development assistance in the past 50 years," Wolfowitz told reporters.

Leadership Key to Improving Lives of the Poor
The World Bank president said translating this international wellspring of goodwill and intent into real results for the world's poor will take leadership and accountability, the empowerment of civil society and women, the full participation of the private sector, and adherence to the rule of law. He said the Bank Group needs to explore innovative ways to provide wider access to financial services to the private sector in developing countries, where growth of small and medium-sized companies is often stunted by lack of access to finance. The Bank chief also noted that governments in developing countries could spur growth and ensure empowerment of the poorest people by ensuring there is a sound legal framework in place, complemented by fair, consistent and coherent regulation.

Finally, Wolfowitz pledged to better target Bank Group programs in middle-income countries, which are home to more than one billion of the world's poorest people. *"With time, and with results, the needs of our partners will evolve. Success will bring new challenges that will require new responses,"* he said. *"As our partners grow and prosper, we too must adapt our mission and operations. Innovation and adaptation will be critical if the Bank is to remain relevant in this changing world."* ■

Complementary Equity and Development: WDR 2006 Report

This year the Bank's flagship annual publication the "World Development Report" brings the theme of "Equity" to the forefront of developmental strategic planning, resource allocation and decision making. The report released in September 2005 raises many questions relating to the effectiveness of national and global development policies in addressing inequalities and allowing individuals across the world a fair access to opportunity that is irrespective of race, gender, social or family background.

In a presentation at the 12th Annual Conference of the Economic Research Forum (ERF) hosted in Cairo, Dr. Giovanna Prennushi, Lead Economist, at the World Bank, presented some of the report's key messages and findings.

A broad sharing of economic and political opportunities is instrumental for growth and development, both because it leads to a more efficient use of a nation's resources, and because when

economic and political inequalities reinforce each other, institutions tend to emerge that are less conducive to long-term growth.

The implication of this message for the Bank's analytical and operational work is that there is a legitimate role for public action in the pursuit of equity, provided such action is cognizant of the primacy of individual freedoms, and of the role of markets in allocating resources.

Equity and Development

(Continued on page 14)



Ongoing Projects

Health Sector (US\$90 million)

The project will: (i) expand the health insurance toward universal coverage for a basic package of primary health care and public health services; and (ii) improve access to, efficiency and quality of primary care and public health services in the three pilot Governorates to meet the service demand created by the expansion of PHC health insurance coverage.

Education Enhancement (US\$75 million)

Key objectives of the project are to (i) increase access to equity; (ii) improve the quality of student performance; and (iii) enhance the efficiency of the education system.

East Delta Agriculture Services (US\$15 million)

The project aims to increase the productivity of 26,000 low-income families who have been recently settled on about 130,000 feddans of saline soil to be reclaimed.

National Drainage II (US\$50 million)

The project will: (i) increase the agricultural productivity of about 0.8 million feddans of irrigated land by improving drainage conditions through evacuation of excess irrigation water with subsurface drains into existing open drains; and (ii) avoid yield and production losses on this land, which would result if waterlogging and soil salinity problems were to persist.

Irrigation Improvement (US\$80 million)

The project will: (i) increase agricultural production and farmers income by improving the irrigation infrastructure, facilitating a more equitable distribution of water and improving on-farm irrigation management; (ii) improve the long-term sustainability through takeover of responsibility for operation and maintenance of the tertiary level irrigation system by the farmers and their sharing in the costs for tertiary level investments; and (iii) strengthen the institutional planning and implementation capacity of MWRI in the irrigation subsector.

P.S. Rehabilitation III (US\$120 million)

The main objective of the project is to improve the efficiency and reliability of delivery of irrigation water and timely evacuation of drainage water to prevent the losses in crop yields resulting from aging pumping stations on the irrigation and drainage system.

Integrated Irrigation Improvement (US\$120 million)

The overall project objective is to assist the Government in improving the management of irrigation and drainage in the project area to increase the efficiency of irrigated agriculture water use and services (expected to have positive impacts on water distribution quantity, quality, equity and timeliness).

Secondary Education Enhancement (US\$50 million)

The project will: (i) increase access to general secondary education through upgrading commercial schools to technological general schools and provide flexible options for study within and between branches of the system; (ii) better align curricula and assessment with skills needs of employers and higher education; (iii) provide professional development for teachers and administrators on new technologies, curricula, assessment and management techniques; and (iv) strengthen institutional capacity.

Social Fund III (US\$50 million)

The project's objective is to help create jobs and provide community infrastructure and services through labor-intensive works.

Sohag Rural Development (US\$25 million)

The project will primarily support the sustainable development of Sohag rural villages through the participatory approach initiated by the National Program for Integrated Rural Development.

Higher Education Enhancement (US\$50 million)

The project will create the conditions fundamental to improving the quality and efficiency of the higher education system in Egypt through legislative reform, institutional restructuring, and establishment of independent quality assurance mechanisms and monitoring systems.

Skills Development (US\$5.5 million)

The project will assist the borrower in carrying out a pilot program to stimulate the private sector demand for skills training development through a demand-driven and competitively-based mechanism.

Airport Development (US\$335 million)

The project will support the borrower's ongoing efforts to eliminate capacity bottlenecks to growth in airport traffic, raise the quality of services to international best-practice standards at Cairo International and Sharm El Sheikh Airports, and promote private sector participation in airport management and service delivery.

Early Childhood Education Enhance. (US\$20 million)

The Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project for Egypt aims to achieve its development objectives through the following three components: (i) Increase Access; (ii) Improve Quality; and (iii) Build Capacity. The Access component will: (i) support the public construction and maintenance program; (ii) support expansion through kindergartens registered through the Ministry of Insurance and social Affairs and community provided facilities; and (iii) address demand-side constraints.

Portfolio Highlights

World Bank Ongoing Projects

Projects	Approval Date	Closing Date	Loan Amount	Disbursed Amount (US\$ mil)	Primary Sector
East Delta Agr. Services	11/04/97	31-Jun-07	15.00	6.57	Agriculture
National Drainage II	06/15/00	30-Jun-07	50.00	24.72	Agriculture
Irrigation Improvement	12/22/94	30-Jun-06	80.00	66.82	Agriculture
Integrated Irrig. Improv. & Mgmt.	05/03/05	31-Mar-14	120.00	0.00	Agriculture
Pumping Stations Rehab. III	08/06/98	31-Aug-06	100.00	59.22	Agriculture
Sohag Rural Dev.	08/27/98	30-Apr-07	25.00	18.48	Agriculture
Early Childhood Educ. Enhancement	02/15/05	31-Dec-10	20.00	0.10	Education
Education Enhancement	12/24/96	31-Aug-06	75.00	58.71	Education
Higher Educ. Enhancement	04/16/02	31-Dec-07	50.00	17.33	Education
Skills Development	07/31/03	30-Jun-08	5.50	0.12	Education
Secondary Educ. Enhancement	04/15/99	30-Jun-06	50.00	19.57	Education
Health Sector	05/21/98	30-Jun-06	90.00	46.33	Hlth/Social Protection
Social Fund III	06/01/99	28-Feb-06	50.00	53.63	Hlth/Social Protection
Airports Development	03/30/04	30-Jun-09	335.00	45.39	Infrastructure
Total			1,065.50	416.98	

1/ As of December 15, 2005

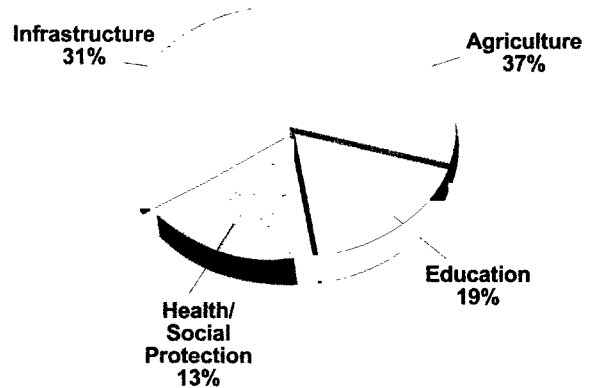
2/ Loan Amount minus Disbursement will not equate Undisbursed Amount due to exchange rate vis-à-vis SDG

World Bank Assistance (FY1996-2006)

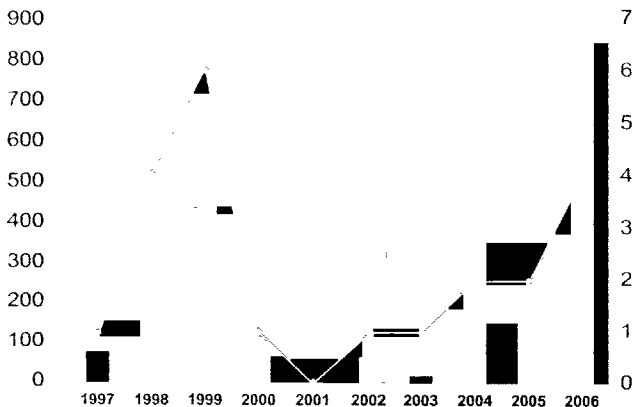
Fiscal year	# of Projects	IBRD/IDA (US\$mil)
1996	3	172.2
1997	1	75.0
1998	4	142.0
1999	6	425.0
2000	1	50.0
2001	0	0.0
2002	1	50.0
2003	1	12.4
2004	2	340.5
2005	2	140.0
2006	4	829.6
Result 1/	25	2,236.7

1/ Result as of October 31, 2005 (excluding cancellations)

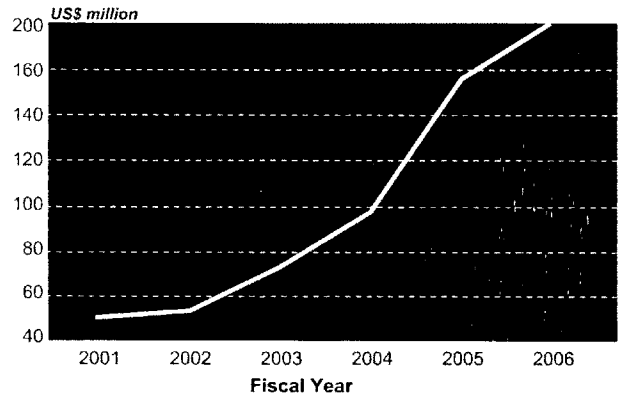
Sectoral Distribution of ongoing projects (by value)



◆ # of Projects ■ IBRD/IDA (Amount)



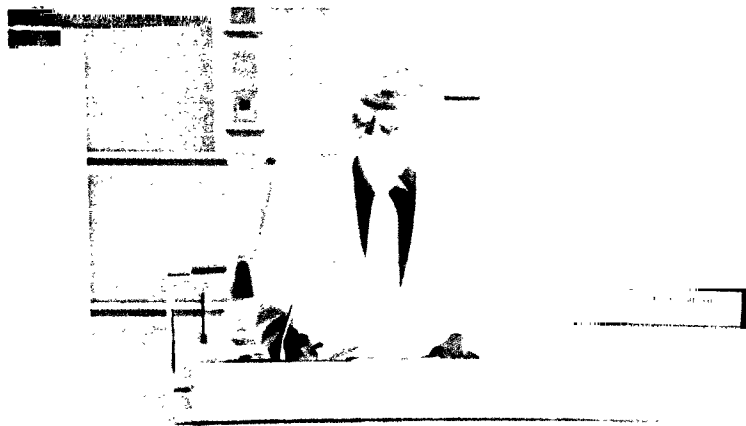
Disbursements 1/



1/ Disbursement figure for FY2006 is projected as US\$200 million considering the volume of excepted disbursements in FY06.



Call for Parliamentarians to Deliver Results for Poor



Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, World Bank President

In this year 2005 - the Year of Development - the plight of the world's poor has dominated the global policymaking agenda as never before. There have been pledges to double aid to Africa and cancel the debt of the world's poorest countries. One often overlooked group wields the power to ensure that this momentum becomes the reality on the ground.

Hosted by the Parliament of Finland, the sixth annual conference of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank, under the theme "Beyond the Year of Development: What Now?", brought 200 elected representatives face-to-face with World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, World Trade Organization Director General Pascal Lamy, and other development leaders. The gathering featured workshops on pressing issues such as debt relief, trade, climate change, and aid effectiveness.

Saying that the call for action in the fight against poverty had resonated loud and clear around the world during this year of development, President Paul Wolfowitz urged parliamentarians from 90 countries to help their countries deliver results for the poor. "As World Bank President, I intend to build on the partnerships that the Bank has already established with parliaments around the world," Wolfowitz said. "Their oversight role has an important bearing on the mission to fight poverty. Across the world, parliamentarians monitor public resources and provide a crucial link between the World Bank and the local communities in both developing and developed countries," he further added.

Parliamentarians: Meeting at a Pivotal Time

2005 has been the year for world leaders to take centre stage and pledge to help the world's poor. It was evident at the July G8 meeting of the world's major industrialized nations - a meeting that led to leaders pledging to boost aid to Africa and cut debt of poorer countries. And leaders from around the world met in September in New York at the United Nation's World Summit to examine how to get poorer nations back on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals - the international set of targets to improve the health, education and living standards of the poor by the year 2015. Trade took centre stage in December 2005 with the 6th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference that was held in Hong Kong. With this Year of Development already delivering clear promises such as boosting the quality and quantity of aid, the world's poor are expected to benefit.

As Bert Koenders, the Dutch parliamentarian who

chairs the independent Parliamentary Network on the World Bank, said: "This meeting comes at a pivotal time. As parliamentarians, we need to build the necessary political will. It is our job to hold governments and inter-governmental agencies like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization accountable," Koenders said. "We parliamentarians can no longer afford to be the missing link. We need a strategy for change."

The Parliamentary Network of the World Bank - Common Interests on a Dialogue Agenda

Across the world, parliamentarians oversee public resources, and provide a much-needed link between the World Bank and grassroots constituents. That is why the Bank sees parliamentarians as important development partners who can call for more and better aid and fairer trade, promote reforms, take on corruption, and shape development projects. Set up in 2000, PNoWB now gathers nearly 1,000 parliamentarians from 110 countries. The group aims to encourage policy dialogue between legislators and the World Bank and the IMF, and to mobilize parliamentarians in the fight against poverty. Members of PNoWB and other inter-parliamentary initiatives regularly engage the Bank on development issues such as HIV/AIDS, economic reform, international trade and fighting corruption. Parliamentary networks over the past few years have debated a number of key questions relating to the Millennium Development Goals and the commitment of the international community so far in instilling a sense of urgency to meeting the goals on time. Many are skeptical of a "business as usual" approach that is likely to hinder efforts of poverty reduction among vulnerable groups and indeed the role of parliamentarians in accelerating the pace of global, regional and national efforts is critical.

The annual conference is the network's flagship event, organized in collaboration with the World Bank. For the Bank, the Helsinki gathering offered an opportunity to sample political opinion from parliamentary leaders across the world. In his opening statement, World

Bank President Paul Wolfowitz referred to the critical role of parliamentarians in the coming period.

"Development policies are not made in a vacuum. They reflect the political environment in which they are formulated. This means that effective leadership and strong public institutions are needed if we are to fight poverty successfully. It also means effective leadership by elected representatives. Well-functioning parliaments can help ensure that the voices of the poor are heard and that their needs are addressed in the policymaking process. Against this background, the World Bank and Parliamentarians are increasingly working on issues of common interest."

According to Wolfowitz, parliaments play an equally vital role in countries that provide development assistance. Parliaments debate and approve foreign-aid budgets and shape and review development policies. They are also an important partner in the call for action, making the case for more aid, better use of aid and more trade opportunities.

Over the past ten years, the World Bank Group has also responded to requests for capacity building. More recently with Finland's support, the Bank conducted a study to examine the parliament's role in representing the poor in conflict-affected countries, the most vulnerable group in the developing world. The report of this study group has been distributed to some 50 Parliaments around the world.

For the Parliamentary Network of the World Bank, two areas emerge as a focus for partnerships according to the World Bank President. These are engaging Parliamentarians in dialogue and strengthening the capacity of Parliaments who are becoming more integral to the mission of the World Bank Group. For the Bank, a results-based agenda mandates a commitment that comes with strong leadership. "Throughout recent histories, parliaments have steered their countries through times of great change and contributed to progress and development. Today, parliaments must rise to a new challenge: helping their countries to stand accountable in the fight against poverty and to deliver results for the poor," said Mr. Wolfowitz. ■



Dr. Mustapha Nabli and Mr. Emmanuel Mbi at the Cairo Press briefing on the Regional Poverty Report

Representatives of regional and national press at the Cairo press brief

Reducing Poverty and Human Development in MENA: World Bank Report Explores Challenges and Opportunities for Sustaining Gains in Poverty Reduction and Human Development in the Middle East and North Africa

Since the mid-1980s, there has been little progress in the poverty situation in the MENA region although human development indicators have continued to improve. Accelerating poverty reduction and sustaining human development improvement are important challenges for the region in the future says a World Bank report.

The report provides an overview of trends in poverty and human development indicators during the last two decades. It shows that the substantial progress in reducing poverty in earlier decades came to a halt in the latter half of the 1980s. Average poverty rates for the region, measured at the \$2 per capita per day international poverty line, fell to around 25 percent by 1987, the lowest in the world at that time. But they stagnated thereafter, fluctuating between 20 and 25 percent. "This is the social cost of slow growth," says Mustapha Nabli, Chief Economist at the World Bank for the MENA region noting that "an additional 11 million people were added to the ranks of the poor between 1987 and 2001 because the region's population continued to grow but its economies didn't."

The depth and breadth of knowledge about the causes and consequences of poverty in MENA is limited by the availability of data. This is a serious issue in MENA countries where, according to Farrukh Iqbal, the principal author of the report, "access to data is typically considered not a matter of public right but of bureaucratic discretion." Often, this results in the lack of good information even within government agencies to understand and analyze poverty, design effective anti-poverty programs, and learn from experience. Fortunately, there is enough aggregate data available to the World Bank that a credible picture of poverty trends can be assembled even for the MENA region.

According to this picture, while poverty incidence rates did not improve during the period from 1985 to 2000, there were strong gains in human development: Literacy spread to 69 percent of the population, average schooling (for those above 15) rose to 5.2 years, child mortality rates plunged to around 46 per thousand births, and life expectancy continued to climb to reach 68 years. Indeed, the region improved its human indicators faster than middle-income comparators over this period.

The fact that little poverty reduction occurred during the 1990s despite remarkable gains in human development reflects a failure to translate rising human capital into higher productivity. The slow growth experienced by the region over this period was a consequence in part of deficiencies in macroeconomic and structural policies. Among the structural policies

that prevented higher rates of return to education and higher rates of employment were those related to trade. Insufficient openness to trade and investment constrained the returns to human development investments in the region.

Progress in human development indicators despite economic stagnation and a decline in levels of social spending suggests gains in the efficiency of service delivery during the 1990s. Such efficiency gains may have come from better targeting of spending to underserved groups. They may also have arisen from positive cross-sectoral impacts of earlier investments in female education and the provision of safe water supply. For example, statistical analysis shows a strong link between child mortality improvements during 1980-2000 and the level of female education achieved by 1980. The report also notes that the region's social safety nets need considerable improvement. The parts of the safety net that are effective are not efficient and the parts that are relatively efficient are not effective. For example, food and energy subsidies reach a large number of people and are effective in the sense that they also reach the poor. However, both food and energy subsidies are inefficient in that they involve a lot of resource leakage to the non-poor. On the other hand, cash handouts are often better targeted to the poor and the vulnerable but they are funded at such low levels (typically less than 1 percent of GDP) that they are not very effective. While acknowledging some improvements in the design of food subsidies in such countries as Tunisia and Egypt and the switch from a food subsidy system to a cash transfer system in Algeria and Jordan, the report notes that opportunities to make a more substantial difference through reforming fiscally-profligate energy subsidies have largely been missed.

The report argues for a three-pronged plan to meet future challenges: (a) accelerate growth while paying special attention to the need to increase labor absorption in the private sector; (b) further improve human capital by focusing on education quality at all levels and expanding the access of the poor to health services; and (c) strengthen social safety nets through an emphasis on efficiency and insurance objectives.

(Continued from page 12)

HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Middle East and North Africa

World Bank Launches Regional Strategy to Help Countries Develop National HIV/AIDS Plans

On December 1, The World Bank launched a regional strategy to help countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) prevent a major surge in the HIV/AIDS infections in the region. The new strategy — Preventing HIV/AIDS in the Middle East and North Africa: A window of Opportunity to Act—will help countries in the Middle East and North Africa referred to in this strategy are: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank & Gaza, and the Republic of Yemen. fight HIV/AIDS more effectively.

"With an estimated 0.2 percent of adults infected with the HIV/AIDS virus, MENA's level of infection is relatively low compared with Africa, South Asia and Central Asia as well as the Caribbean regions," says Ayo Akala, World Bank Public Health Specialist and author of the Strategy. "Our strategy cautions, however, that low prevalence does not mean low risk."

While many governments have taken steps to prevent HIV/AIDS, the new strategy says that their overall response has been too slow. Regional HIV/AIDS activities have focused primarily on medical responses, such as blood supply safety, mandatory testing, and increasingly treatment to AIDS patients. However, the social and economic factors driving an HIV/AIDS epidemic in MENA countries have not been sufficiently addressed. For example, many countries lack comprehensive national strategies.

Furthermore, the strategy suggests countries work more closely with people living with HIV/AIDS and concentrate on high risk groups such as injecting drug users, commercial sex workers, prisoners (who are often drug users), and men who have sex with men.

According to the new strategy, it is important to keep in mind that HIV/AIDS surveillance systems in the region are very weak. For example, many private health providers do not report HIV/AIDS cases. Official HIV/AIDS estimates tend to be vague and lack reliable data making it difficult for governments to respond effectively.

The strategy's key aims are to:

- Engage political leaders, policy makers and key stakeholders to raise awareness and give greater priority to HIV/AIDS programs within the national development agenda, with particular focus on prevention and expanding access to information.
- Help countries to upgrade their surveillance systems and strengthen research and evaluation of epidemiological, economic, and behavioral aspects of HIV/AIDS.
- Support the development of national HIV/AIDS strategy and programs with priority focus on

- prevention and expansion of access to information.
- Support capacity building and knowledge sharing for comprehensive management of HIV/AIDS programs.

So far this year, 67,000 people were newly infected with HIV in the region and the total number of AIDS deaths has increased from 55,000 in 2003 to 58,000 in 2005 so far, according to UNAIDS. Additionally, the total the number of deaths due to AIDS in the region has increased almost sixfold since the early 1990s.

"We know from international experience that HIV/AIDS prevalence rates grow exponentially, so the MENA region is well poised to capitalize on this knowledge by investing early on in monitoring and prevention," says Bachir Souhail, World Bank HIV/AIDS Focal Point and Lead Social Development Specialist for the region. "Good prevention programs are a bargain compared with the costs of the epidemic."

Souhail says that countries should immediately step up their efforts in prevention, particularly as the spread of HIV is vulnerable to migrations, wars, economic downturns and other developments that affect social stability.

The World Bank has worked with Lebanon and Morocco to develop national strategies and hopes to work with

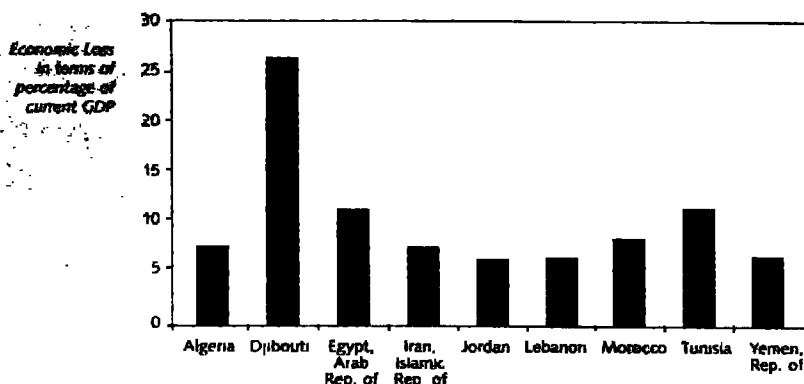
the remaining countries in the region as well.

Long-Term Economic and Social Impact of HIV/AIDS

The financial and economic costs of HIV/AIDS can be substantial, especially when it reaches the full AIDS epidemic stage. A recent World Bank study estimated that an AIDS epidemic could reduce the average economic growth rate in the MENA region by 1.5 percent per year for the period 2000–25.5 Cumulatively, this would translate into a potential loss in production of about 35 percent of the current gross domestic product value by 2025. The most visible consequences of HIV/AIDS are the increased spending on prevention, care, and treatment. For MENA countries, the financial cost of an HIV/AIDS epidemic could be substantial. An estimate by Jenkins and Robalino (2003) projects the direct cost of HIV/AIDS to be on average around 1.5 percent of GDP by 2015 for most MENA countries, and as high as 5 percent in Djibouti (see figure below).

For more information on World Bank activities in the Middle East and North Africa, or to view the strategy, please visit: <http://www.worldbank.org/mena>
For more information on World Bank activities on HIV/AIDS, please visit: <http://www.worldbank.org/aids>

Economic Losses Incurred by Delaying Interventions by Five Years in 2000-25



Source: C. Jenkins and D. A. Robalino, 2003, HIV/AIDS in the Middle East and North Africa. The Costs of Inaction. Washington, DC: World Bank



2005 in a Snapshot

Major Events at the World Bank Egypt Country Office

January:

- Departure of Shengman Zhang, Managing Director of the World Bank after a 2-day visit to Egypt where he met with the Prime Minister to discuss the features of the new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS 2006-2009) within the context of Egypt's reform program.
- Two weeks following his official appointment on 15 December as New World Bank Country Director for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti, Mr. Emmanuel Mbi's launches CAS consultations with government, private sector and civil society.

February:

- Signing of the Early Childhood Development Project in a ceremony attended by Mr. James Wolfensohn, World Bank President and Egypt's Prime Minister
- World Bank President, Mr. James Wolfensohn leads a high-level World Bank management and expert team joined by senior government and World Bank representatives from Brazil and Mexico at the High Level Retreat on Enhancing Social Safety Nets in Egypt that was hosted by Dr. Ahmed Nazif, Egypt's Prime Minister.
- Mr. Emmanuel Mbi World Bank Country Director, addresses the Mediterranean Cities Forum organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina with support from the World Bank and in collaboration with a number of international organizations.
- World Bank supports and participates in the Regional Consultations on the World Water Forum Mexico 2006 that were held in Cairo.

March:

- World Bank executive directors unanimously selected Mr. Paul Wolfowitz as the new president of the World Bank group.
- Visit of the World Bank Ombudsman to Egypt
- MNA-ECA Frontiers Workshop in Bank Operations

April:

- World Bank Country Office in collaboration with the MNA Financial Management team organizes on Enhancing Corporate Financial Reporting in Egypt with high level attendance including the Egyptian Minister of Investment and leading international and local private sector representatives
- World Bank Country Office hosts Workshop on Young Professionals Program

May:

- World Bank Board of Directors approves US\$ 120 million loan for the Integrated Irrigation Improvement project with joint financing from the

Government of Egypt, Netherlands and KFW.

- Ms. Judith Heumann Special Advisor to the Bank on Disability visits Egypt on a 6-day tour to familiarize with relevant activities and programs.

June:

- World Bank Board of Directors discusses the new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS 2006-2009)
- The MNA Small Grants Workshop for Youth Organizations was hosted in Egypt where more than 70 youth representatives from 5 MNA countries participated.

July:

- Mr. Christiaan Poortman, World Bank Vice President for the MNA region joins H.E. Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, Chairperson of the National Council of Women at the High Level Policy Forum on Economic Empowerment and Opportunities for Egyptian Women
- Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, World Bank Country Director for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti joins Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina at the signing ceremony and launch of the Public Information Center at the Library in the city of Alexandria.
- Mr. Emmanuel Mbi meets with Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigerian Minister of Finance and accompanying high-level delegation to share perspectives on reform with Egyptian government officials during a one-day visit to Egypt that was coordinated by the Nigerian Embassy and supported by the World Bank Country Office.

August:

- Introduction of the Alternate Work Schedule for Country Office staff and completion of new office expansion.

September:

- Regional launch of the Doing Business 2006 by Mr. Michael Klein, Vice President for the World Bank/IFC and author of the report joined by Mr Emmanuel Mbi Country Director and senior members of government, private sector, civil society and media representatives.
- Mr. Emmanuel Mbi Country Director, joins the Minister of Electricity at the opening of the National Workshop on Demand Management and Energy Efficiency

- National Presentation of the main findings of the Bank-assisted report titled: Toward a More Effective Social Policy: Subsidies and Social Safety Nets in

Egypt to the Information and Decision Support Center

- Mr. Emmanuel Mbi World Bank Country Director joins the Water Sector team in launching the field-based preparation/consultations of the integrated sanitation and sewerage program in rural areas of the Delta region
- Launch of the Japanese Social Development Fund for Preventing Child Labor at the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in a ceremony chaired by the Secretary General of the NCCM.

November:

- Negotiations of the El Tebbin Power Plant Project concluded with the representatives of the Government of Egypt

December:

- The Regional Conference on Job Creation and Skills Development launched by Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, World Bank Country Director joined by Michal Rutowski, Sector Director for the Human Development Group at the World Bank, MNA region.
- Visit of Mr. Christiaan Poortman, Vice President for the MNA region to conduct high level discussions with the Egyptian prime minister and members of Cabinet.
- World Development Report 2007 Country-level Consultations with youth from Upper and Lower Egypt.
- World Bank Country Office hosts the Women in Economy Workshop for the Mashreq
- Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, World Bank Country Director addresses a diverse group of international and regional investors at the opening of the International Conference Egypt Invest 2005
- Consultation meeting on piloting the Use of Country Environment Systems to the Bank-supported project Environmental Pollution Abatement Project II
- World Bank MNA Chief Economist, Dr. Mustapha Nabl joined by Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, Country Director for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti launch the World Bank regional report titled: Sustaining gains in Poverty reduction and human Development in MNA to regional and local media.
- Mr. Emmanuel Mbi, World Bank Country Director signs the agreement of the establishment of the third Public Information Center at the internationally-renowned Sugar Technology Institute (STI) in Assuit Governorate in a ceremony attended by the Vice President of Assuit University and the Director of STI. ■



(Continued from page 3)

Balancing Employment Opportunities with "Equitable Growth"

Delegates shared experiences and listened to a number of presentations that introduced ideas for placing employment creation at the centre of economic policymaking, and on improving the job prospects of millions of young people who are either unemployed or underemployed to ensure "equitable growth". The employment challenge cannot be solved by one minister or agency alone, confirmed participants. A comprehensive effort involving the Ministries of Economy, Finance, Planning, Investment, Education, Labor, Training as well as the private sector and civil society including trade unions represents the solution. Yet for MNA countries, as in other parts of the world,

coordination among these agencies is a challenge that needs to be effectively overcome. In most instances the Ministry of Labour is not part of the economic policy-making and yet ministers of labour are in the frontline in dealing with it.

"Cross-Cutting" Conferences- A Platform for Policy Dialogue

Over the past few years, the World Bank has been actively engaged in policy dialogue and providing technical advice to several MNA countries. In a region featuring a diversity of economies and priority agendas whether among the GCC, middle income or the relatively lower income countries, national and sub-regional agendas vary. Demand on the "Knowledge Bank" across

MNA is growing and the timing is opportune for fostering cross-cultural themes to exchange experiences and draw upon lessons from other regions. The first series of regional flagship reports after released in 2003 on unemployment, gender, governance and trade created a significant level of interest among policy makers and paved the way for many economic reforms that need to be implemented. As the Bank prepares to launch two additional flagship reports on education and water, the region is experiencing a transition that fundamentally hinges on its capacity to build cross-sectoral networks that would ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of these reforms and foster principles of public accountability and equitable growth. ■

For more information about the World Bank's work in Egypt, please visit: www.worldbank.org/eg

(Continued from page 4)

I would also like to emphasize to many skeptics that decentralization is not one thing you can do from one day to the next. Even in very "old" Federations like the US, Australia, Brazil and others, they are still facing many challenges with decentralization that they need to overcome to ensure that the decentralization is effective.

Q: How does the Bank regard its relationship with civil society?

One thing I would like to make clear is that it is not so much about the Bank's relationship with civil society. Rather, one needs everybody's contribution in the development of a country so you cannot push development if you are ignoring one part of society or a civil entity at the international level. It is "common sense" in doing "good business" to bring in civil society and consult with them- as we do with other stakeholders- on a variety of interventions and to get their views on what we can do better. It is common knowledge that in the past there were often tensions with civil society, in particular NGOs, as to whether the Bank's assistance was actually reaching the poor. However, I think more and more civil society groups now realize that they did not fully understand and appreciate the Bank's efforts and the Bank has figured that it is in its interest to build strong bridges to civil society to effectively achieve its mission.

The question is not how we see our relationship but rather how best we can benefit from each others' knowledge and experience as we go forward. The bottom line is that we are all trying to create jobs, fight poverty.

Q: How do you mainstream the Bank's firm position on fighting corruption and transparency in Bank's operations?

Transparency is a central pillar of anything that the Bank does to help any country to promote growth

and fight poverty. Corruption is a cancer that destroys the very essence of development and puts the lives of many at risk. We have the duty to ensure that fighting corruption stays at the top of the agenda and that Bank-financed projects are beyond reproach. The one thing we do not want to do is to put money in an environment where there are "leakages" even if it's not Bank funds that are stake. Our funds complement public and other donors resources so it is a shared responsibility to ensure that fighting corruption, ensuring transparency and public accountability are part of any program to promote the development of any country.

Q: Finally, how does the Bank view cooperation and partnerships with other donors?

This is one of the key roles of the Country Office because the action is on the ground and- as representatives of our institutions- we are committed to the quality and effectiveness of such actions. In Egypt for example, you have several donors and coordination to ensure effectiveness is absolutely essential. The Bank is playing an important role in leading and facilitating this coordination while ensuring that we are all partners. The question is: what are different strengths that we can bring to our common vision to help Egypt develop and modernize as it fights poverty. Taking the education sector for example, we are very active in this field and so are the European Commission (EC) and USAID with whom we coordinate. Similarly in the financial sector, it is crucial that we coordinate our efforts with other donors (the EC, USAID and the African Development Bank). We are doing the same in health, and in infrastructure. We are very encouraged by what the government itself is doing on the national side. It is inspiring to have a government that is moving fast sometimes faster than us. Everyday, something new is happening that is laying the foundation for a new and different Egypt. ■

(Continued from page 5)

A growth strategy built around a focus on the private sector and international trade and investment can deliver the best results. Such an approach contained within the 2007-2010 Strategy for Egypt, emphasizes female labor force participation and the average annual growth rate of 5.5 percent per year or higher, the economy is projected to reach 1905. Such a strategy would also help reduce poverty and improve living standards. A decade from now, the number of people living on less than 2 dollars a day could be reduced by 27 million more people would be lifted out of poverty by 2015, with a high growth strategy that would...

The strategy will focus on... are likely to be... and will help... the employment... and labor... challenges... the health front... improve the... and cooper... the focal... that is likely... and this... highlight... supply of safe water... groups as well as... preventative health...

Safety net reforms are also needed. The prevailing social safety nets can be made more efficient through better targeting but this is presently constrained by political economy considerations as well as by data issues in data access, quality and related technical considerations. Safety nets can also be strengthened through measures that help insure against the risks of job and income loss. Such measures include: unemployment insurance, temporary employment in public works, and microfinance. ■

PIC EGYPT

Public Information Center

Outreach



What is the Public Information Center PIC?

Over the past two years, the World Bank Egypt Office in cooperation with national partners in the field of Development Information has established a Public Information Centers (PIC) Network that includes 3 centers. The first was launched in August 2004 at the Institute of National Planning in Cairo, the second in July 2005 at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and the third was recently launched at the Sugar Technology Institute of Assiut University.

Through these interactive platforms designed for information access and intellectual exchange, students, researchers, NGOs, and the general public can contribute to the development of their communities and enhance their knowledge on a broad range of development issues.

Information Services Offered by the Egypt PIC Network

The services provided by the PIC network covers all related information to development, not only by the World Bank, but also other partner institutions working in this field whether UN agencies or bilateral development assistance agencies.

With assistance from highly qualified resource librarians, PIC Information Services include:

- Free access to general information on the World Bank Group.
- World Bank publications, papers, reports, and operational information according to the World Bank's disclosure policy.
- Free access to electronic search through the internet on the Bank's website.
- Answers to individual queries through email or telephone.

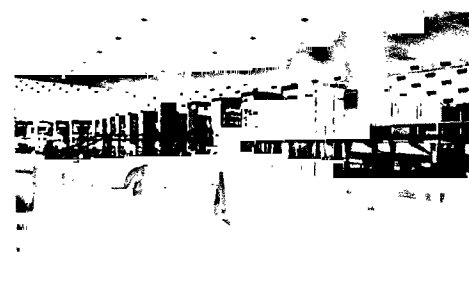
In addition, a SPEAKERS PROGRAM represents an important feature of the PIC Information Services whereby seminars and lectures introducing prominent speakers representing the various development disciplines from the Bank and outside will be organized.



Cairo PIC at the Institute of National Planning

Located at: Documentation and Publishing Center, Institute of National Planning, Salah Salem St. Nasr City, Cairo

The Documentation Center of the Institute has been a depository library for World Bank publications for long years, through which cooperation between the two institutions has been very fruitful. The Center is also one of the few World Bank entities around the world equipped with a special service for visually disabled users that is provided free of charge.



Alexandria PIC at Bibliotheca Alexandrina

Located at: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 62, Shoubra, Alexandria

Historically renowned as the most prestigious platform for sharing knowledge, since humanity, the Library of Alexandria - today after its revival - remains a symbol of global cooperation in the field of knowledge. Building on the success that Bibliotheca Alexandrina was able to achieve in creating strong links with civil society, the Alexandria PIC is intended as an active channel for facilitating dialogue and information exchange.



Assiut PIC at the Sugar Technology Research Institute (SRTI)

Located at: Sugar Technology Research Institute, Assiut University, Assiut

Through this center, the World Bank in cooperation with the University is providing a wider window on development information for the first time in Upper Egypt. Assiut University is acknowledged and reputed for its high scientific and academic standards. As a pioneer institution in Upper Egypt, the University is an active player in the development of local communities and the entire country.

To purchase World Bank publications, please contact the official distributor in Egypt:

Middle East Readers Information Center (MERIC)

Located at: 2 Bahgat Ali St. Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: 735 38 18

MERIC was awarded the "Best Overall Performance 2005" during the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2005, for achieving outstanding sales of World Bank publications throughout Africa and the Middle East.

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The report advocates a bottom-up approach to determining development priorities: public action should seek to expand the opportunity sets of those who, in the absence of policy interventions, have the least resources, voice and capabilities. Such a focus would aim to level the playing field in the crucial areas of human capacities; justice and the rule of law; land and access to infrastructure; and in the broad functioning of markets and the macro-economy.

The report is based on data indicating that in some countries infant mortality are four times as high for the poor as they are for the rich. Similar inequalities exist in the coverage of immunization systems and access to good schools, in access to credit and even in coverage of the law. On a global scale, the report confirms inequities are massive. "The inequities start at birth," Prennushi says. Seven out of every 1,000 American babies die in the first year of their lives, but in Mali, the figure jumps to 126 babies out of every thousand.

The babies who do survive – not only in Mali, but in Africa and in the poorer countries of Asia and Latin America – are at much greater nutritional risk than those born in rich countries.

The report points out that the adverse effects of unequal opportunities and political power on development are all the more damaging because the economic, social and political inequalities are reproduced time and time again across generations. It leads to what the report calls "inequality traps – where the cycle of underachievement continues." The report says that equity is a fundamental part of the package needed to achieve empowerment and a better investment climate. "It is also essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals." "Action to bring about greater equity in the international arena needs to complement action on the domestic front," said Dr. Prennushi at the ERF Annual Conference. "Developed country policies on trade, migration, capital flows, aid and the management of natural resources should be made more equitable, and developing countries should have greater voice in international fora", she further added.

Dr. Heba Handoussa Advisor to the Economic Research Forum chaired the session where she was joined by Dr. Lyn Squire, President, Global Development Network and Dr. Ali Abdel Gadir Ali, Arab Planning Institute as discussants to the report. The session, organized by Radwan Shaban, ERF Research Fellow and World

Bank Lead Economist, was attended by a diverse group representing public and private institutions across the MNA region as well as members of academia, think tanks and civil society.

Leveling the playing field

In order to boost equity in developing countries, the report calls for policies aimed at leveling the economic and political playing field. These include:

- Investing in people by expanding access to health services (right from birth and targeting the most needy); expanding access to schooling, and providing safety nets for the working poor, those unable to work and special vulnerable groups.
- Taxes for equity – the report advocates broad based taxes – on the basis that leveling the playing field will require adequate resources
- Building equitable justice systems and achieving greater equity in access to land, and infrastructure with a special focus on poor people and poor areas
- More equal access to finance by broadening financial systems
- Promoting fairness in the labor market – so workers are protected and not discriminated against in any market. ■

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