



Mr. Jim Yong Kim  
President  
World Bank  
Washington, DC

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Dear President Kim,

We, the organizations and individuals undersigned, write to urge you to use your authority to expand funding for B-SPAN, the Bank's Internet-based webcasting system, so that it can fulfill its original mandate. The re-invigoration of B-SPAN as an uncensored channel streaming Bank policy dialogues to the public dovetails with your efforts to reform the institution into a "solutions bank" and raise the Bank's profile as a center of development expertise. We urge the Bank begin by webcasting civil society sessions from future Bank-IMF spring and annual meetings. We would also like to meet with you to discuss how webcasting Bank policy dialogues can help the institution eliminate extreme poverty by 2030. This is our second letter requesting action on B-SPAN, and is in response to a letter from Managing Director Caroline Anstey sent October 3, 2011 but only received by us on May 29, 2013. While we appreciate the important work the Bank has done to increase its openness, we believe the case in favor of B-SPAN is far stronger than any reasons we have heard to the contrary, and want to reiterate our original request with renewed enthusiasm for reviving B-SPAN.

As background, B-SPAN was launched in 2000 to film the plethora of policy dialogues, seminars and conferences taking place inside Bank headquarters and to stream the content to the public. B-SPAN's motivation was to provide global development practitioners with an opportunity to access knowledge critical in helping them reduce global poverty and enhance sustainable development. It also provided Bank personnel with an opportunity to connect and expand communications opportunities with external constituencies. Finally, it sought to increase the Bank's influence so as to create new business opportunities for itself. After its launch, B-SPAN was enthusiastically embraced by thousands of Bank staff and the viewing public who valued the transparent, unedited webcasts providing critical development knowledge free of spin. With the support of Bank staff between 2000 and 2004, B-SPAN disseminated more than 700 unedited webcasts of Bank events to the public. When it was last fully functioning in 2004, B-SPAN webcasts were watched by a quarter-million viewers and its website accounted for almost 2% of the entire Internet traffic the Bank received that year.

From our discussions and exchanges with Bank officials, we have heard three basic concerns for their reluctance to revive B-SPAN. First is over viewership where Bank officials have cited anemic traffic statistics of people watching B-SPAN webcasts. Second

#### **AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**



and closely related, is a belief that Bank stakeholders are not interested in watching lengthy policy dialogues, but instead would rather receive information in formats that are short and concise. Finally, some officials believe the Bank's video management system provides content that meets audience needs and goes beyond webcasting.

We believe the traffic data cited to us came from a period when B-SPAN was no longer in service, and therefore is not an accurate analysis of B-SPAN or its potential. In 2004, its webcasts achieved the record highs in viewership and Internet traffic cited above. Data trends by 2004 had recorded triple-digit growth in all traffic indices for three years running. Audience viewership came from 185 countries. More than 18,000 subscribers had joined B-SPAN's monthly newsletter, making it second only to the Bank's general email list as the institution's largest. And, almost half the audience viewed webcast streams for ten minutes or longer and many for twenty minutes or longer meaning tens of thousands of global development practitioners and government officials found value in the content by investing time in watching the webcasts.

We think the notion stakeholders will not be interested in watching extended policy dialogues undersells the valuable content the Bank creates daily. If external audiences are not interested in watching webcasts of the Bank's seminars and conferences, why hold the events at all? The Bank proudly promotes its Open Data, Open Aid Partnership and Mapping for Results initiatives as democratizing and redefining the development paradigm. Why wouldn't transparent webcasts of its daily policy dialogues where the Bank's data is discussed and put into context by internal and external experts achieve the same results? Clearly, these events are valuable for the Bank personnel, invited guests and external audiences. We should not confuse stakeholders such as media and civil society actors who need quick and targeted responses from the Bank on policies or projects as the audience targeted for B-SPAN's webcasts. Media and civil society actors will be interested in B-SPAN webcasts, but the system is primarily designed for economists, academics and government officials who want and need to know the details of the policy dialogues they are watching. They are who generated the robust traffic numbers cited above.

Officials suggest the Bank's video management system allows the institution to provide products to external audiences beyond webcasting, and importantly curates content based on audience usage. We believe this is not in the interests of the Bank or its stakeholders. This suggests the Bank is using traffic data to determine what content to feature rather than allowing stakeholders to make their own decisions. B-SPAN's experience was that even relatively low-trafficked events on niche policy subjects could have a powerful impact for interested development practitioners outside the Bank. Content users know their needs better than anyone else. Our view is that it should be the content users who decide what is relevant rather than editing from a select group of Bank officials.

## **AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**



Currently, the Bank has "World Bank Live" in place to webcast a few major events (a Presidential speech, a large conference, etc.) each year. This is a far different model than B-SPAN, which focused on policy and issue-related events held daily. At its zenith, B-SPAN conducted more than 350 webcasts annually, and even this large number only represented a fraction of the events held at the Bank each year. There is nothing incompatible with merging B-SPAN into the Bank's video management system as an operating channel. B-SPAN could take advantage of new streaming and social media technologies that didn't exist when it originally functioned. These technologies would disseminate B-SPAN streams at very low cost and with mobile phone applications these events can now reach countless millions instantly. The Bank's marketing team would benefit by having a myriad of branding opportunities. The video management system would benefit by piggybacking off of B-SPAN's audiences to heighten attention to its other product lines.

To be plain-spoken: This issue is not about branding, instant communications, targeted communications or new technologies. It is also not about the Bank continuing its progress on transparency, though that is a worthy goal. This is about knowledge sharing of events not deemed confidential so that the vital information locked within the Bank's walls - knowledge often generated from the sources and resources of its clients - can get to external development stakeholders to help them in the application of their own global poverty reduction efforts. *Importantly, for the Bank, tangible benefits would accrue for the institution as it would focus global attention upon itself as one of the pre-eminent sources of knowledge on development, thereby generating new business opportunities.* At a time when the Bank is implementing budget cuts, investing in a resuscitated webcasting system would recoup outlays many times over. For example, as the Bank implements reductions in staff travel expenditures, B-SPAN can fill the gap by allowing overseas staff costless and immediate access to Bank meetings and events in Washington.

In closing, we wish to acknowledge and thank the Bank for the important progress it has done to become more open and accessible. We also believe more progress is possible and vital to the interests of the Bank and its stakeholders. Again, we think the re-invigoration of B-SPAN as an uncensored channel streaming Bank policy dialogues to the public dovetails with your efforts to reform the institution into a "solutions bank" and raise the Bank's profile as a center of development expertise. Therefore, we wish to reiterate our request the Bank resume B-SPAN's webcasting of Bank policy dialogues and begin by webcasting all civil society sessions of future Bank-IMF spring and annual meetings. We believe this initial step is appropriate and would be beneficial to all. Finally, we share with you a common vision that the Bank's development knowledge can help end extreme poverty by 2030. Therefore, we again request a meeting with you to discuss how webcasting the Bank's daily policy dialogues can best be implemented to help achieve this objective.

## **AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**



1. Aash Mishra, Department of Regional and Urban Planning, London School of Economics, United Kingdom
2. Dr. Abdun Noor, Coordinator, Center for Managing Implementation of Development Projects, United States
3. Accountability Counsel, United States
4. Action Against Impunity for Human Rights, Democratic Republic of Congo
5. Action for Economic Reforms, Philippines
6. African Center for CSO Accountability and Aid Effectiveness, Kenya
7. AID/WATCH, Australia
8. Alasdair Roberts, Faculty Director, Rappaport Center for Law and Public Service, Suffolk University, United Kingdom
9. Aldo Bello, Executive Vice President and Chief Creative Officer, Mind & Media, United States
10. Alliance for Rural Democracy, Liberia
11. Andreas Bummel, Chairman, Committee for a Democratic United Nations, United States
12. ARTICLE 19, Global Campaign for Free Expression and Information, United Kingdom
13. Axel Dreher, Chair of International and Development Politics, University of Heidelberg, Editor, Review of International Organizations, Germany
14. Baher Shawky, Director, Egyptian Center for Civil and Legislative Reform, Egypt
15. Balázs Romhányi, Director, Fiscal Responsibility Institute Budapest, Hungary
16. Bank Information Center, United States
17. Barry Herman, Advisory Board, Social Justice in Global Development, and Visiting Senior Fellow, Graduate Program in International Affairs, The New School, United States
18. Bessma Momani, Senior Fellow, Centre for International Governance and Innovation, Associate Professor, University of Waterloo, Canada
19. Both ENDS, Netherlands
20. Brian Atwood, Professor of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, former Chair, Development Assistance Committee, OECD, and former Administrator, U.S. AID
21. Bruce Jenkins, international development consultant and IFI transparency advocate, United States
22. Bruce Rich, Visiting Scholar, Environmental Law Institute, United States
23. Bruce Tasker, editor, Blowing the World Bank Whistle Blog in Armenia, Armenia
24. Dr. Catherine Weaver, Associate Professor and MGPS Graduate Advisor, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, United States
25. Centre for Law and Democracy, Canada
26. Centre pour l'Environnement et Développement, Cameroon
27. Chris Blattman, Assistant Professor, Political Science and International Affairs, Columbia University, United States

## **AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**

28. Cinnamon Dornsife, Acting Co-Director, International Development Program, John Hopkins University, and former U.S. Executive Director to the Asian Development Bank, United States
29. Citizens for Justice, Malawi
30. CIVICUS, South Africa
31. Claude I. Salem, Executive Director, Partnerships for Capacity Development, United States
32. Coalition of the Flemish North South Movement (11.11.11), Belgium
33. Corporate Accountability International, United States
34. David Bonbright, Founder, Keystone Accountability, United States
35. David Ellerman, Visiting Scholar, University of California, Riverside, and author, *Helping People Help Themselves: From the World Bank to an Alternative Philosophy of Development Assistance*, United States
36. David Hunter, Director, International Legal Studies Program, Washington College of Law, The American University, United States
37. David Phillips, author, *Reforming the World Bank: Twenty Years of Trial and Error*, United States
38. David Wheeler, Senior Fellow Emeritus, Center for Global Development, United States
39. DB Shome, Neva Group, United States
40. Derecho Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Peru
41. Doug Norlen, Policy Director, Pacific Environment, United States
42. Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, Egypt
43. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Egypt
44. Eurodad, Belgium
45. Feminist Task Force, United States
46. Foro Ciudadano de Participacion por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos, Argentina
47. Frank Vogl, Vice Chairman, Partnership for Transparency Fund, and Co-Founder of Transparency International, United States
48. FUNDAR, Center for Research and Analysis, Mexico
49. Gary Edwards, Chairman and CEO, Ethos International, Inc., United States
50. Gary Scotland, Managing Partner, ARIKAE, United States
51. Gender Action, United States
52. Global Financial Integrity, United States
53. Global Giving, United States
54. Government Accountability Project, United States
55. Green Advocates International, Liberia
56. Halifax Initiative, Canada
57. Hanna Owusu-Koranteng, Associate Executive Director, Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining, Ghana
58. HELIO International, France

**AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**

59. Housing and Land Rights Network, Egypt
60. Dr. Ian Davis, Director, NATO Watch, United Kingdom
61. Ilka Camarotti, International Development Consultant, Brazil
62. Incomindios, International Committee for the Indigenous People of the Americas, Switzerland
63. INKOTA-netzwerk, Germany
64. Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
65. International Association of African NGOs, United States
66. International Rivers, United States
67. Isaac Otabor, Fiscal Responsibility Commission, Nigeria
68. J.H. Snider, President, iSolon.org, and 2012-2013 Residential Lab Fellow, Edmond Safri Center for Ethics, Harvard University, United States
69. James Roberts, former State Department Foreign Service Officer, United States
70. Jan Pronk, Professor of Theory and Practice of International Development, Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, former Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, and former Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Netherlands
71. Jean-Patrick Villeneuve, Senior Assistant Professor, University of Lugano, Switzerland, and Adjunct Professor, Ecole Nationale d'Administration Publique, Canada, Switzerland
72. Jeffrey Winters, Associate Professor and Honors Program Director, Northwestern University, co-editor, *Reinventing the World Bank*, United States
73. Jim Kessler, Senior Vice President for Policy, Third Way, United States
74. John Christensen, Director, Tax Justice Network, United Kingdom
75. Ambassador John McDonald, Chairman and CEO, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, United States
76. John Weeks, Professor Emeritus, University of London, United Kingdom
77. John Williamson, development economist, author of the phrase "The Washington Consensus", United States
78. Jonathan Fox, Professor, School of International Service, American University, United States
79. Jubilee USA, United States
80. Jubilee Debt Coalition, United Kingdom
81. Karen Joyner, Independent Consultant, United States
82. Katherine Marshall, Executive Director, World Faiths Development Dialogue, United States
83. Kathryn Gilje, Principal, Strategic Currents, LLC, United States
84. Kevin Gallagher, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Boston University, United States
85. Kim Barkin, CEO, International Trade Development Corporation, United States
86. Lant Pritchett, Professor of the Practice of International Development, Harvard University, United States

**AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**

87. Leon Kukuk, International Development Consultant, Uganda
88. Liza Grandia, Associate Professor, Department of Native American Studies, University of California-Davis, United States
89. Lloyd Etheredge, Director, Government Learning Project, Policy Sciences Center, United States
90. Lumière Synergie pour le Developpement, Senegal
91. Dr. Maartje van Putten, Managing Director, Global Accountability, The Netherlands, and former member, World Bank Inspection Panel, Netherlands
92. Mal Warwick, co-author, *The Business Solution to Poverty*, United States
93. Manfredo Marroquín, President, Acción Ciudadana, Guatemala
94. Mariana González Armijo, Director, Transparency and Accountability in International Financial Institutions, FUNDAR, Mexico
95. Margaret Keck, Professor of Political Science, John Hopkins University, co-author, *Activists Beyond Borders*, United States
96. Marie Dennis, Co-Director, Pax Christi International, United States
97. Mark Fodor, Executive Director, CEE Bankwatch Network, Czech Republic
98. Mark Weisbrot, Co-Director, Center for Economic and Policy Research, United States
99. Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, United States
100. Maurice McTigue, Vice President, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, United States
101. Michael Brown, President, Satya Development International, United States
102. Michael Deal, Executive Director and CEO, Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance, United States
103. Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, U.S. Province, United States
104. Mohammed Ali Loutfy, President, Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union, and Campaign on World Bank Safeguards and Disability, Lebanon
105. Nancy Birdsall, President, Center for Global Development, United States
106. Nagy Hanna, Senior Fellow and Board Member, Center for Policy on Emerging Technologies, United States
107. National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda, Uganda
108. Natural Justice, South Africa
109. Natural Resource Womens Platform, Liberia
110. New Rules for Global Finance Coalition, United States
111. Norwegian Forum for Development and the Environment (ForUM), Norway
112. Oil Workers Rights Protection Organization Public Union, Azerbaijan
113. Organisation pour le Renforcement des Capacites de Developpement, Burkina Faso
114. OT Watch, Mongolia
115. Participatory Development Initiatives, Pakistan
116. Pascal Corbé, Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, Germany
117. Per Kurowski, former Executive Director, World Bank, 2002-2004, Venezuela

**AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**

118. Pesticide Action Network, North America
119. Peter Burgess, CEO, True Value Metrics, United States
120. Peter Eigen, Founder, Transparency International, Germany
121. Dr. Peter Knight, Member of the Board, Fernand Braudel Institute of World Economics, São Paulo, Brazil, and former Chief of the World Bank Pilot Electronic Media Center, Brazil
122. Peter Wahl, Chairman, World Economy, Ecology and Development Association, Germany
123. Policy Alert, Nigeria
124. Publish What You Fund, United Kingdom
125. Rachel Blair, Executive Director, Kindness in Action, United States
126. RELUFA, Network Fighting Hunger in Cameroon, Cameroon
127. Renee Dankerlin, International Development Consultant, United States
128. Resonate! Yemen, Yemen
129. Rick Reibstein, Lecturer, Environmental Law and Policy, Boston University, and Faculty, Harvard Extension School, United States
130. Rita Pandey, Professor of Economics, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, India
131. Dr. Robert Goodland, former President, American Ecological Society, United States
132. Robert Wade, Professor, Department of International Development, London School of Economics, United Kingdom
133. Robinah Rubimbwa, Executive Director, Center for Women in Governance, Uganda
134. Rosemary Segero, President, Hope for Tomorrow, Kenya
135. Saskia Sassen, Professor of Sociology, Co-Chair, Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University, United States
136. Shamsul Bari, Co-Chair, Transparency Advisory Group, Bangladesh
137. Shandana Khan, CEO, Rural Support Programmes Network, Pakistan
138. Share The World's Resources, United Kingdom
139. Shwe Gas Movement, Burma
140. Sierra Club, United States
141. Social Justice Committee of Montreal, Canada
142. Social Support Foundation, Ghana
143. Dr. Sohail Mahmood, Dean and Head, Department of International Relations, Preston University, Pakistan
144. Steve Berkman, author, *The World Bank and the Gods of Lending*, United States
145. Sudarat Sereewat, Director, FACE Foundation, Thailand
146. Susan Aaronson, Research Professor, Elliot School of International Affairs, The George Washington University, and author, *Taking Trade to the Streets: The Lost History of Public Efforts to Shape Globalization*, United States

**AMPLIFYING LOCAL VOICES TO DEMOCRATIZE DEVELOPMENT**



147. Susanna Cafaro, Founding Member, The Group of Lecce, and author, *Democratizing the Bretton Woods Institutions*, Italy
148. The Jus Semper Global Alliance, United States
149. The ONE Campaign, United States
150. Thomas Blanton, Director, National Security Archive, George Washington University, United States
151. Tom Farer, Professor, University of Denver, former Dean, Joseph Korbel School of International Studies, United States
152. Tony Fleming, Managing Editor, GlobalMemo.org, United States
153. Transparency International – USA, United States
154. Uwaifo Aromose, Chancellor, Barinu Institute for Economic Development, United States
155. Urgewald, Germany
156. Veit Burger, former Senior Economist, Global Development Learning Network, World Bank, Austria
157. Virginia Ifeadiro, Executive Director, Initiative for Food, Environment and Health, Nigeria
158. Volta Basin Development Foundation, Ghana
159. Dr. Waleed Addas, economic advisor, Islamic Development Bank, Saudi Arabia
160. Warren Nyamugasira, Founder and Managing Director, Centre for Strategic Social Change, Uganda
161. William Easterly, Professor, Department of Economics, New York University, and Co-Director, NYU Development Research Institute, United States
162. William Savedoff, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development, United States
163. Workers Assistance Center, Philippines
164. World Development Movement, United Kingdom
165. World Future Council, Germany
166. Dr. Yaya Fanusie, SaiGobe, Inc., United States
167. Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Zimbabwe
168. Zoe Young, author, *A New Green Order? The World Bank and the Politics of the Global Environmental Facility*, United Kingdom