



Arab Watch Regional Coalition for Just Development (AWC)

Strategy Framework

2019-2022

Background on AWC

AWC is an open membership coalition that was founded, and officially launched, in April 2018 by 23 civil society representatives from 6 Arab countries. The founders have been working together in a loose network for years on issues related to social, economic and environmental rights in International Financial Institutions' policies and portfolio in the Arab region. AWC is registered as a nonprofit organization in Morocco. AWC had an independent management entity. The Board of Directors are elected by the members and each represents the members in his/her country.

Vision: The Arab Watch Regional Coalition envisions inclusive, participatory, just and sustainable development processes in the Arab region.

Mission: Empowering and activating the role of the civil society in the Arab region to influence the policies, programs and projects of international financial institutions in the region to achieve effective inclusive, participatory, equitable and sustainable development.

Goals:

AWC works to achieve its mission through:

- Enabling, activating, and coordinating the role of Arab civil society to be engaged with, monitor, and influence the activities of IFIs in the region.
- Strengthening IFIs policies that support transparency, participation, accountability and all the principles of international human rights convention.

Methodologies:

AWC works to achieve its goals by different means, including:

- Providing necessary technical and financial support to civil society groups in the region to enable them to monitor and influence IFIs activities in their countries.
- Developing support and solidarity mechanisms among AWC members to enable them to continue carrying on their work in their countries in the face of an increasing closing civic space.
- Developing and disseminating fact sheets, analytical reports, studies and papers on IFIs activities and policies.
- Providing training materials and organizing training workshops for civil society groups in the region on the different entry points to be engaged with, and monitor, IFIs; as well as on organizing successful advocacy campaigns to influence IFIs activities and policies.
- Creating channels of communication with IFIs and submitting alternative proposals related to their activities and policies in the region



- Facilitating the use of different international accountability mechanisms by AWC members and other civil society groups in the region.
- Using all other legitimate lobbying and advocacy tools including, but not limited to, the use of media, social media, meetings with governments officials, petitions, and others.
- Communicating and exchanging information with networks and similar organizations in the region and other parts of the world.
- Organizing local and regional meetings, gatherings, field visits, and conferences for members with similar networks and organizations, inside and outside the Arab region, to share experiences and coordinate activities.
- Facilitating vertical networking with international civil society organizations and networks that have the potential to influence decision makers in international financial institutions.

Strategic themes/objectives for the period 2019 through 2022

- 1 – Activate, reinforce, and strengthen IFIs’ citizen engagement policies and strategies to address the growing attack on civic space in the Arab region.**
- 2. Limit IFIs’ investments in conventional energy towards more investment in inclusive renewable energy in the region.**
- 3. Address all the negative consequences of IMF policies by introducing alternative policies that respond to the needs of local communities.**
- 4. Ensure IFIs reconstruction policies and projects in the region’s fragile countries are inclusive and do not exacerbate sectarian, ethnic, or tribal conflicts.**



1 – Activate, reinforce, and strengthen IFIs’ citizen engagement policies and strategies to address the growing attack on civic space in the Arab region. (See more details on this theme attached)

Many IFIs have adopted policies and strategies to increase citizens and stakeholders’ engagement in the design, implementation and evaluation of their funded projects worldwide. These policies include disclosure of information, consultations and grievance mechanisms. However, citizens' lack of knowledge of these policies contribute to the ineffective implementation on the grounds. On the other hand, the implementation of some of these policies is the responsibility of the borrowers and the implementing governments’ agencies. In countries where the regimes are systematically cracking down on civic space, the implementation of those policies is reduced to a mere checking the box exercise.

AWC intends to work on two fronts; disseminating information on IFIs funded projects and the different citizen engagement policies and strategies that should govern their implementation; and facilitating the communication of local groups with the officials in these institutions to address any complaint from those policies’ implementation.

On the other hand, the coalition will advocate for IFIs to assess the citizens’ engagement environment in each country, in terms of laws and practices, and modify the implementation notes of their policies accordingly.

2. Limit IFIs’ investments in conventional energy towards more investment in inclusive renewable energy in the region.

IFIs are increasingly investing in the energy sector in the region to meet the increasing local demand and the needs of the European energy market. The energy projects funded by these institutions include projects based on conventional resources like oil and natural gas, as well as renewable resources like solar and winds. In recent years, some countries have witnessed a rise in the use of coal in violation of international climate conventions. Although some of the IFIs active in the region are bound by policies that prevent them from investing in coal, they resort to do so indirectly through investing in intermediary financial institutions that invest in coal. Since those coal projects are not directly funded by the international institution itself, they don’t comply by its policies, including the different safeguards, citizens’ engagement, and disclosure of information.

On the other hand, investment in renewable energy, especially solar and wind, is also increasing. However, in the absence of real participation of citizens, such projects often have negative effects on the surrounding communities as well as on some other environmental resources such as water and land.

AWC will conduct studies and disseminate information on these projects, especially those funded through intermediary financial institutions. Through its members, AWC will also monitor and report on the implementation of some of those projects and use the findings for an advocacy campaign to ensure IFIs shift their investments from conventional energy to renewable that are inclusive with minimum, if no, negative impacts on local communities and other environmental resources.



3. Address all the negative consequences of IMF policies by introducing alternative policies that respond to the needs of local communities.

Many Arab countries are experiencing difficult economic conditions as a result of the recent political changes and conflicts. As a result, many of the Arab regimes turned to the International Monetary Fund for financial support and had to comply with the terms of the IMF loans. These conditions include austerity measures like the reduction of the public sector, the cancellation of subsidies on energy and many goods and services, the increase in taxes, etc. While official progress reports indicate positive results for these loans, an improvement in the economic situation and an increase in gross national product; these reports ignore the economic and social impacts on citizens, especially on poor, middle-income and marginalized and vulnerable groups, and on the services they receive from the state. These impacts are likely to increase poverty rates in many countries in the region to unprecedented levels. They also contribute to the increase in illegal immigration from the region, and the increase in violence and terrorism.

The IMF has recently begun to adopt reform policies such as fighting corruption and motivating governments to prepare gender-sensitive budgets. However, these policies are still optional and are not included in the loan terms.

AWC will conduct studies to clarify the negative social and economic impacts of IMF loans on the marginalized groups in the Arab countries. The findings and recommendations of these studies will be used in campaigns targeting the IMF to take those impacts into accounts when evaluating its current loans to the Arab countries or developing new ones.

4. Ensure IFIs reconstruction policies and projects in the region's fragile countries are inclusive and do not exacerbate sectarian or tribal conflicts.

Many countries in the region have gone through difficult periods requiring reconstruction in areas affected by these conditions. Civil wars and conflict with ISIS and other extremist groups have destroyed infrastructure in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. Some development institutions have already begun to develop plans for the reconstruction of areas affected by these conflicts.

However, the absence of some groups from the table risk exacerbating sectarian conflicts in these areas.

AWC will reach out to representatives of different groups in these areas and disseminate information about these construction plans in a simplified and easy to understand language. AWC will provide its services to ensure the effective participation of these groups by building their capacity and facilitating their engagement with decision makers in different involved IFS.