

Visit Report

Partnership for Development Knowledge Conference

Sana'a, Yemen, March 03-07, 2014

On invitation from the Government of Yemen as an international speaker in the 'Knowledge for Development Partnership Conference', Supporting Constructive Engagement between Government of Yemen and CSOs jointly organised by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of Yemen and the World Bank Group, George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International attended the conference and made a presentation on 'Government-CSO Partnerships and Collaborations: Lessons from India' and facilitated working groups on 'Citizens Engagement in Service Delivery' and 'Access to Information'.

Historical Relationship



India and Yemen have deep rooted historical, cultural and trade relations. The relations between India and Yemen date back to several centuries, when Yemeni traders used to be intermediaries for Indian traders in India's trade with Roman Empire. In the subsequent years, Yemen became an important route for Indian Hajj pilgrims, particularly the ports of Aden and Mocha.

In 1839, Aden became part of the British Empire and was administered by the Bombay Presidency as a sentinel to guard the southern entrance to the Red Sea. A garrison of 2000 Indian soldiers was established in Aden and the Indian Rupee was made the official currency. The Aden administration was separated from India in April 1937 with the appointment of a Governor directly reporting to London. An Indian diplomatic mission at the level of Commissioner was set up in Aden in June 1950. The Indian Embassy in Sana'a was established in 1970.

Currently, India and Yemen enjoy very close and friendly relations. Today, there are more than 300,000 Indians of Yemeni origin in Hyderabad and around 100,000 Yemenis of Indian origin in southern Yemen. More than 6,000 Indians are working in Yemen and contributing meaningfully to the economy of Yemen. The bilateral trade between the two countries crossed US\$3.25bn during 2011-2012.

Context

Two years ago, Yemen was on the brink of an all-out civil war, paralysed by a political and security crisis, in a region swelling with protest against authoritarian regimes. Today it is taking peaceful steps forward through dialogue, as the only Middle Eastern country with a negotiated transition and a clear roadmap for change.



The crisis erupted in Yemen early 2011, as popular uprisings stirred elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As the Yemenis themselves started to look for a way out, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and United Nations helped Yemen establish a way forward to prevent a descent into civil war.

Laying out the steps for a return to peace and stability, the transition agreement paved the way for transitional elections, and a government of National Unity early 2012 along with steps to begin a critical restructuring of the armed forces. Carrying forward the next steps in the transition, Yemenis were engaged in broad-based national dialogue supported by the United Nations, which concluded in January 2014.



Instilling the concepts of transparency and accountability, empowering CSOs and opening up new opportunities for cooperation are important steps towards achieving democratic change. A cornerstone of the change process towards sustainable government-CSO partnerships is learning from international and regional experiences in the countries that have undergone similar transitions.

Supporting government-CSO partnerships and constructive engagement is one of the key pillars of the World Bank's support in the MENA, and in Yemen specifically, which consists of strengthening the governance framework, both on the supply and the demand side. As part of the World Bank support, a Partnership for Development Knowledge Conference, Supporting Constructive Engagement between Government of Yemen and CSOs, was organised in Sana'a, Yemen during 04-06, 2014 with the objective to allow high-level decision makers and CSOs in Yemen learn from each other and international experiences.

The Conference

The Conference was jointly organised by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of Yemen and the World Bank Group. On the first day, Cheriyan made a presentation on "Government-CSO Partnerships and Collaborations: Lessons from India" and facilitated a working group on 'Citizens Engagement in Service Delivery'.



He visited the Indian Embassy and met with the Ambassador, Amrit Lugun. The Indian Ambassador also hosted a dinner for him along with Mohammed Alhaweri, Deputy Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, Government of Yemen; Mariana T Felicio and Najat Yamouri, The World Bank, Washington DC. As an outcome of the conference, it was decided to take India as model for Yemen to study and incorporate best practices.