

The World BankINTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT
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November 25, 2005

Mrs. Aruna Roy
Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
Village Devdungi
Post Barar
District Rajsamand
Rajasthan 313341

Dear Mrs. Roy,

Thank you for your letter of November 13, 2005 in response to mine of August 2. At the outset, let me express my personal admiration for your role in India's Right to Information movement and reiterate my belief that freedom of information is an essential ingredient for accountability in governance.

The World Bank's Disclosure Policy, under which the Bank proactively releases operational documents at earmarked stages in a project's life cycle, exists precisely because we are a public institution with development objectives answerable to a broad range of stakeholders. However, since our counterparts are sovereign governments, you will appreciate that disclosure of documents with shared ownership, such as correspondence, cannot be done unilaterally. All World Bank policies, as you know, are mandated by its Board of Executive Directors on which India's is an important and influential voice. So if you feel this policy's scope needs to be broadened, the route would be for civil society to prevail upon its government to introduce changes through the Bank's Board.

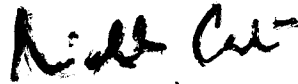
On my part, I have stated several times, and do so again, that we are in favor of full release of documentation pertaining to the proposed Delhi Water Supply and Sewerage Project (and, for that matter, any project in the country in which we are involved), and will concur with any disclosure by the Delhi Jal Board and the Governments of Delhi and India in this regard.

I fully agree that public consultation must be an integral part of any major reform or investment project. But we must be clear that consultations have to be undertaken by the government with its citizens, and not by the Bank bypassing government. As a responsible public institution, the Bank's role is to satisfy itself that a proper consultative process has been followed. It is for this reason that we have publicly welcomed the public debate your colleagues have initiated and appreciated the Chief Minister's call for a thorough round of public consultation before proceeding with the project.

I have never stated that the Bank has nothing to reconsider in the proposed project. Where we have expressed disappointment in the present controversy is in the persistent misrepresentation of facts despite our repeated clarifications, alongside what are possibly genuine misunderstandings of some of the technical aspects of the proposals. Further, the public discourse has appeared to focus more on mischaracterizing the Bank's role than on the substantive issues related to Delhi's water supply and sewerage problems and the accountability of its water service provider.

You will agree that a public consultation and debate must proceed on the basis of a correct portrayal of facts and an informed framing of issues. It was in this spirit that I had invited you for a discussion. Your suggestion that we foster a meaningful discussion not only on the issue of water and sewerage but also other areas where the Bank is active in India is most welcome. I look forward to hearing from you on the modalities of taking this forward and anticipate an early meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Michael F. Carter
Country Director, India

bcc: Omar (SACIA); Hamamm, Locussol (SASEI); Bosch (SASES); Lal, Mozumder (SAREX), India Coordinator