



Development Finance Institutions:

Human Rights Obligations and the Right to Remedy

2015 United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights Parallel Session

Development finance institutions (DFIs) have a mandate to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development. But, in many cases, projects funded by these institutions lead to social and environmental harm, including serious human rights abuses. Such abuses include forced evictions, violations of workers' and indigenous peoples' rights, and reprisals against communities and human rights defenders who speak out against such projects. Abuses like these often result in further impoverishment of marginalized and vulnerable populations. The World Bank and many other development banks – international, regional, and national – have in place safeguard policies designed to prevent environmental and social harm and accountability mechanisms to address violations of these policies. While these policies and mechanisms may be leveraged to protect communities and the environment, they do not sufficiently address rights-related risks or provide protection to human rights defenders.

The interactive panel discussion will be divided into three parts:

- (1) A brief introduction to how DFIs operate and salient problems for communities affected by the projects they finance, including access to justice and reprisals against project critics.
- (2) The challenges civil society and communities face, and opportunities they have, for improving safeguard standards and their implementation.
- (3) Strategy and tactics for doing advocacy with DFIs and potential for cooperation and collaboration.

Moderator:

Phil Bloomer, Executive Director, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre

Panelists:

Komala Ramachandra, South Asia Director, Accountability Counsel

Accountability Counsel supports communities harmed by internationally financed projects to employ community driven and policy level strategies to access justice.

Margaret Federici, Safeguards Program Assistant, Bank Information Center

The Bank Information Center partners with civil society in developing and transition countries to influence the World Bank and other DFIs to promote social and economic justice.

Caio Borges, Lawyer, Business and Human Rights, Conectas

Conectas, founded in São Paulo in 2001, is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to promote the realization of human rights and rule of law in the Global South.

Sarah Saadoun, Acting Advocate on International Financial Institutions, Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch is an independent, non-governmental organization that monitors and reports on human rights in 90 countries around the world.