



# Strategic Plan 2024-2028

## BIC's Vision

Development is driven by communities, reduces poverty and inequality, sustains the environment, and fulfills human rights.

## BIC's Mission

The Bank Information Center (BIC) promotes social, environmental, and economic justice by amplifying local voices and democratizing development.

## Who we are

BIC is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that advocates for transparency, accountability, sustainability, and inclusion in development finance. BIC is completely independent of governments and Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and aims to be community-driven.

## What we do

BIC partners with civil society in borrower countries to monitor and influence the policies and operations of the World Bank Group and other MDBs. In partnership with international, regional, and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), BIC conducts research and advocacy aimed at improving and reforming MDB policy and practices and preventing any backsliding.

## Context Analysis

### Shifting Influence of Development Finance Actors

In the past decade, China has increased its spending on infrastructure projects in MDB borrowing countries and has specifically sought to use this financing to increase its influence in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Chinese financing has also led to concerns about a race to the bottom, driving down environmental and social standards for development financing as well as questions about the competitive advantage for the MDBs. In many cases, the fear of having to compete with Chinese lending has led to reluctance by MDB management and boards to raise standards. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenge of climate change have put the spotlight back on the World Bank Group and regional development banks as key actors that play a critical role, distinct from that played by bilateral financiers, in addressing these global crises.

### Climate Crisis

The world has entered into an urgent new phase in which the climate system is reaching tipping points towards a new state from which the planet cannot recover. The impacts of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions and destruction of carbon sinks are irrefutable. People are already experiencing more intense hurricanes, frequent forest fires, rising sea levels, and record days of heat. The impacts of a warmer world are apparent and devastating to vulnerable communities, especially the most marginalized members of those communities. Entire populations are at risk of their countries becoming uninhabitable. As part of the climate solution, there is increased recognition of the crucial role that Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants, and traditional communities have to play in protecting forests, fighting climate change, and conserving biodiversity.

### Transforming Financial System

The World Bank evolution roadmap is part of a global discussion seeking to address a massive gap in financial resources to address worsening global crises. There is currently a push among some donor governments for the MDBs to go beyond an exclusive focus on development and to contribute increased financing for global public goods. Civil society groups across regions, including those working on debt justice and human rights, have also amplified their calls for accountability in development finance and holding the World Bank and other MDBs accountable for the global debt crises countries are experiencing. At the same time, borrower countries see it as unjust to ask them to take on more debt to address crises caused primarily by wealthy countries.

## Restricted Civic Space and Risk of Reprisals

Civic space continues to be restricted or further shrink in many borrower countries, making it difficult for MDBs to engage safely and meaningfully with civil society and project-affected communities. This is coupled with human rights and environmental defenders continuing to face reprisals in connection with raising concerns about development projects at concerning rates. Borrower governments are proposing and passing discriminatory laws, particularly against LGBTQI+ people, that are in stark contrast to MDB policies and the values that these institutions profess to uphold. MDBs must grapple with how to operate in countries with laws in direct opposition to their own policies and where restrictive laws and the risk of retaliation create a chilling effect on stakeholders' willingness to share candid views on projects.

## Inclusive Development

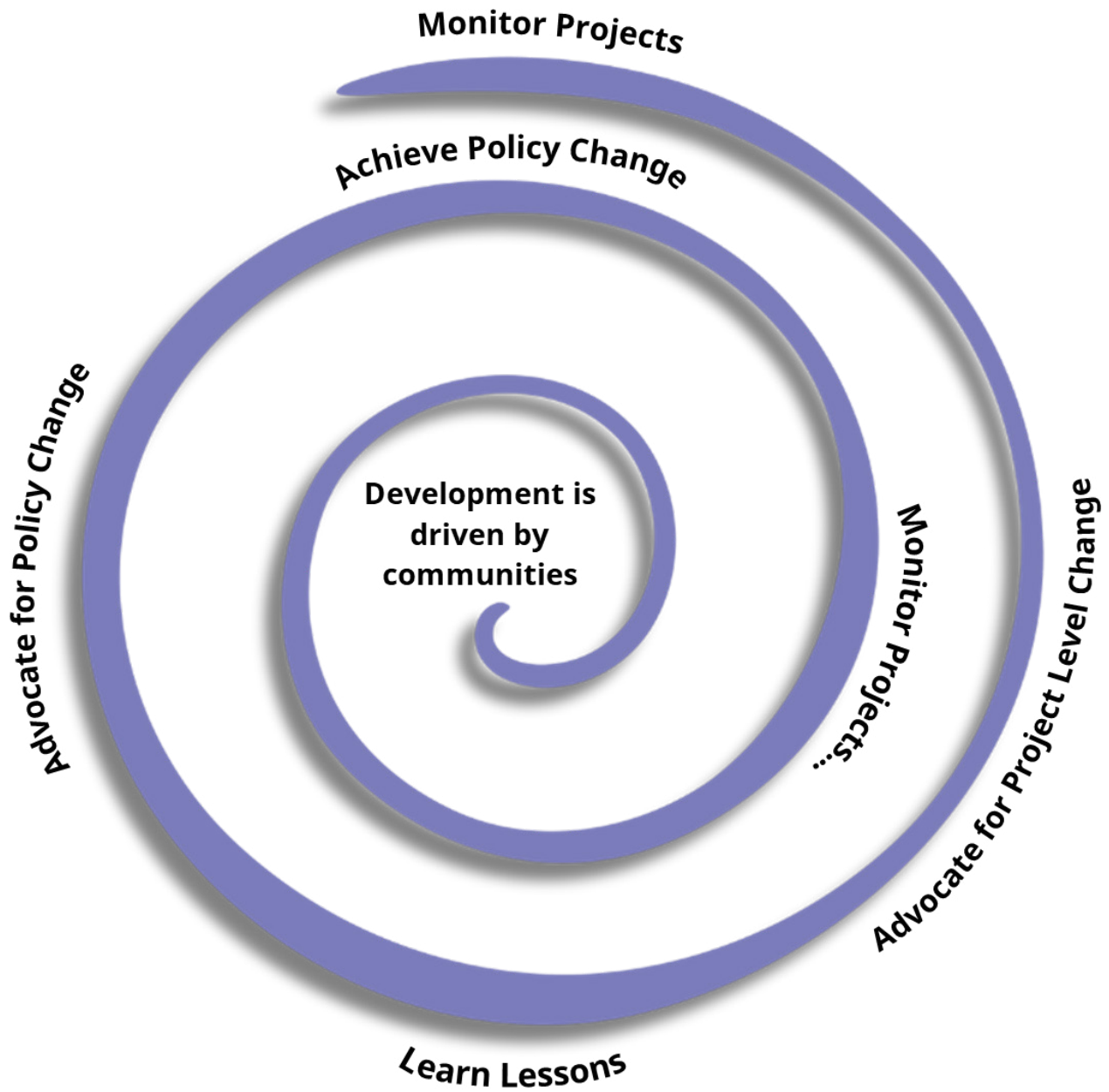
Over the past decade, there has been an increasing recognition that for development projects to genuinely reduce extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity, members of marginalized groups must also benefit from these projects. Marginalized groups are increasingly acknowledged as among those who must be consulted, included, and able to access development project benefits. While MDBs have begun to explicitly include marginalized groups in their policies and have hired staff with specialized expertise around, for example, disability or gender-based violence, they have a long way to go in effectively including each marginalized group as stakeholders and beneficiaries of projects.

## Identifying BIC's Added Value

In preparing the strategic plan, BIC considered not only the global MDB landscape but also sought to hone in on its own unique value add. Part of this work was collecting a wide range of [stories of BIC's impact](#) in the development finance space. Over the course of the past thirty-five years, BIC has been most successful when coordinating and providing MDB-specific knowledge, experience, and connections to large coalitions of civil society groups advocating for change.

## Theory of Change

MDBs respond most favorably when pressure is applied from both above, through advocacy with shareholding governments and other pressure points, and below, with civil society and affected communities calling for change at the project level. BIC believes that to maximize our impact and achieve our objectives, our project monitoring work and support to grassroots civil society must inform high-level policy advocacy that amplifies and helps create space for community voices. Additionally, BIC believes that to create a cascade effect, advocacy must target the World Bank, complemented by advocacy with other MDBs.



## Strategic Objectives

1. Local communities influence the design and implementation of MDB projects and policies that impact them, including through participation and inclusion in safe and meaningful consultations.
2. MDBs establish and adhere to the highest international standards in development finance on access to information, stakeholder engagement, accountability, remedy, responsible exit, and environmental and social safeguards.
3. MDB governance and operations prioritize inclusion of marginalized groups and Indigenous Peoples, the protection of their rights, and their equal access to project benefits.
4. MDBs promote environmental sustainability and climate justice, including by harmonizing all of their investments with the overarching goal of the Paris Agreement.

## BIC's Areas of Focus

### Institutions

As it is a leader in the development finance space, change at the World Bank Group has a cascading effect on peer institutions and other actors. At the same time, to promote higher standards in all regions and prevent backsliding, and for advocacy to be most effective at driving lasting change, BIC believes that a focus on the World Bank Group must be paired with engagement with other MDBs. BIC determines its focus on specific target institutions by considering both the **institution's potential role in achieving inclusive, sustainable development** as well as **BIC's relative ability to influence the institution**.

For the former, BIC considers the institution's:

- geographic scope;
- development mandate;
- role in setting standards, convening development partners, and influencing the development agenda.

For the latter, we consider BIC's location, expertise, reputation, contacts, and potential for impact. Being based in Washington, DC, gives us more effective access to the institutions based here and to the US government. BIC also has institutional expertise, reputation, and contacts built up over its history and reinforced during its recent work. BIC's contacts are both within institutions (staff and executive directors) and around them—with CSOs that represent project-affected communities or have an interest in a particular element of development finance. BIC recognizes that its effectiveness is not determined solely or mostly by its capacity alone, but by the coalitions it is able to build and help sustain for ongoing advocacy. Accordingly, we consider what unique value BIC can add to existing networks, the capacity of groups and networks already working on the institution, and whether there are gaps we can help to fill.

Based on the above criteria, BIC expects to work primarily on the World Bank Group, Inter-American Development Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the US Development Finance Corporation in the immediate term.

### Issues

When prioritizing issues to focus on, BIC considers how the work contributes to our core mission and strategic objectives. We also look at

- context and opportunity for change in that area
- the demand from partners
- whether there is a gap or unmet need where BIC can add significant value

- our own capacity, resources, experience, and potential to make change
- potential synergies with and opportunities to learn lessons from our existing work and core issues of focus.

## **Advocacy**

We create multilevel advocacy campaigns to achieve change in MDB policy and practices, including through

- convening and building alliances and coalitions to advance policy reforms and combat efforts to weaken standards.
- targeting key decision makers, including governments, MDB management, and other influential actors, and connecting with potential allies within institutions.
- opening space for partners and community leaders to elevate local concerns and push for change in project design and implementation.

## **Research**

BIC carries out research into projects, policies, and programs at the MDBs to inform advocacy, including through

- developing case studies of projects that have an adverse impact on communities and exemplify broader shortcomings in MDB policies and practices, or of projects where good practice emerges and have led to positive results for communities.
- conducting policy and program analysis at individual MDBs, as well as comparative analysis of different MDBs to identify good practices that should be replicated, as well as where there are shortcomings that must be addressed.

## **Support to Communities and Civil Society**

We work directly with communities impacted by MDB projects, along with local, national, and international civil society groups that serve these communities, including by

- facilitating communities' ability to raise concerns about harm that results from MDB projects or programs and seek change to project design and implementation.
- compiling and distributing relevant information about MDB policies and processes to partner networks, conducting trainings, and providing capacity-building support among partners and their broader networks on effective use of MDB mechanisms and policies.
- improving vertical integration by building strategic connections among our partner organizations at the community, national, regional, and international levels.
- supporting civil society partners and communities in using MDBs as a lever to achieve change at the local, national, and regional levels on issues ranging from the rights of children and persons with disabilities to protection for forests and forest peoples.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT BANK INFORMATION CENTER AT:

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