

Forming coalitions to advocate for IDB reforms

The IDB and IDB Invest started a process to review their environmental and social safeguards around 2019, opening consultations for CSOs to provide input and engage in the process. BIC reconnected with partners in the LAC region and organized a coalition of CSOs to advocate together around the safeguard review process. This initial informal coalition became the IDB Working Group (WG), which now consists of multiple organizations from the LAC region and internationally that focus on advocacy targeting the IDB. The WG not only helped strengthen IDB's new Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF), but also started engaging in a more systematic way with the IDB influencing, and changing other areas and programs of the IDB, and pushing for the IDB to open more space for civil society and project affected communities. For example, thanks to our advocacy, the IDB strengthened the Amazon Initiative; we supported communities to stop and change projects that would negatively impact them; push for structural changes at the IDB Invest on Indigenous Peoples, and opened a conversation with the IDB on how they can institutionalize effective channels for civil society engagement.

Before the effort to engage with the IDB's safeguards review process, BIC and our partner CSOs did not work with the IDB because of many internal and external reasons, and the IDB was not a target of advocacy for many organizations in the region. Meanwhile, the IDB was closed to receiving input or opening space for civil society. It was not used to the scrutiny of critical CSOs and was not used to engaging with them to improve policies and project implementation.

After this effort, we observed numerous impacts:

- The ESPF now includes more than 60 recommendations articulated by the CSO coalition in the WG's joint documents. These documents were submitted to the IDB on the first and second ESPF drafts. The most relevant recommendations are: an exclusion list; a commitment not to tolerate reprisals; strengthened requirements for IDB's monitoring and supervision and due diligence; clearer roles and responsibilities for IDB and borrowers; specific protections for marginalized groups (including persons with disabilities, afro-descendants, and LGBTQI individuals), which include ensuring that these populations have access to project benefits; strengthened requirements for the identification of E&S risks and impacts; adoption of child labor standards; and that biodiversity offsets are not an acceptable mitigation measure in instances of critical habitat.
- Due in part to our advocacy, the ESPF includes a standalone safeguard policy on stakeholder engagement. The new policy also includes a reference to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in

Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu agreement) and requirements on reprisals and retaliation.

- In 2023, the WG participated in conversations with the IDB to plan CSO participation in the next IDB Annual Meeting. The WG is talking with IDB about how they can strengthen relationships with critical CSOs and open more space for project-affected communities. In 2024, for the first time in many years, civil society will have a specific space to participate in the IDB Annual Meeting. The WG was able to influence several consultation processes, such as the safeguards review process, the AIP consultation, the consultation for the IDB-CSO relationship, etc.
- The WG monitors several IDB and IDB projects and engages in periodic conversations with IDB management around those projects, pushing for improvements and changes that would minimize negative impacts on project-affected communities.
- IDB and IDB Invest had taken steps to operationalize the commitment in the ESPF not to tolerate reprisals, including producing a technical note on reprisals for bank staff and putting management-led grievance mechanisms in place for IDB and IDB Invest. Members of the WG have been providing input and recommendations for this discussion.
- IDB took into account several of the WG's critiques and recommendations on how to strengthen the design of the Amazon Initiative.
- MICI's final report on Guatemala hydropower projects included a recommendation that, should the IDB Invest divest from the project, management should develop a responsible exit plan that would remediate the harms identified by the MICI report. The recommendation responds to what communities had been advocating for in the context of the MICI case. Also, responds to what civil society organizations members of the WG had been asking for many years: the IDB Invest needs to exit projects responsibly and address harms.
- Following advocacy from communities, both the Development Finance Corporation and the IDB Invest declined to support the Jilamito Hydroelectric Project in Honduras, Marfrig in Brazil, and Trecca in Guatemala.
- Members of the IDB Working Group support communities with MICI complaints.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE ISSUES RAISED IN THIS REPORT, PLEASE CONTACT BANK INFORMATION CENTER AT:

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