

Bridging the gap between CSOs and the Bank

Around a decade ago, BIC began a capacity-building program for CSOs based in Mexico, Central America, and South America to engage with decision makers in Washington, D.C. Before this initiative, the Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC) would often be one of the few CSOs in the room during conversations among decision makers in financial institutions and the government around projects that impacted marginalized communities in Latin America. ILRC was therefore able to witness how the landscape and dynamics changed once region-based CSOs were brought to the table.

BIC's capacity-building efforts included bringing the heads of CSOs to D.C. so they could witness and learn policy advocacy targeted at international financial institutions and the U.S. government. The effect was two-fold. First, CSOs were given new tools and expertise in a highly specialized form of policymaking that is impossible to learn without engaging in it firsthand in Washington. BIC helped bridge the gap between the unique knowledge CSOs already had about what local communities want, need, and care about with their ability to advocate for those things to the people who can do something about it.

Second, alongside developing the knowledge, resources, and skills of these CSOs directly, BIC also succeeded in facilitating connections among partner organizations and between these organizations and important points of contact within financial and governmental institutions. This network had and continues to have long lasting impacts downstream.

One example of such downstream impact was the gains the ILRC and Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (DAR) were able to accomplish in the IDB's policy review process on issues concerning indigenous peoples. Though ILRC and DAR did not meet through BIC, because of the contacts in D.C. that DAR was able to build through BIC, they knew the ILRC was the subject matter expert with whom they should consult on indigenous peoples matters in the Americas.

Both DAR and ILRC were involved in the most recent public input process on the IDB's first draft policy. After the IDB put forth its second draft, ILRC identified new provisions in that document that had not been in the first that would allow developers to assign individual property rights to collectively owned land. This policy approach is problematic for indigenous peoples, as it can rupture communities, disrupting traditional ways of relating to each other and the land. In their advocacy to remove this provision, DAR and ILRC collaborated closely to strategize both organizations' respective comments to the IDB, as well as on a public education campaign through co-written articles in publications. This led to the removal of the language that would have allowed developers to divide up land and grant individual land titles. The IDB is now the only MDB in the world that does not permit this practice during development projects.