

African Development Bank Review Plans Leave Civil Society Concerned and Disappointed

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has, after much anticipation, released, for the first time, [public information](#) about its process for reviewing and updating the Integrated Safeguards System (ISS). The ISS is the set of environmental and social harm-prevention policies that apply to development projects financed by the AfDB across Africa.

Despite civil society [demands](#) for a comprehensive and multi-phase process, as has been the norm amongst the AfDB's peer institutions undergoing similar reviews, the announced plans demonstrate a lack of genuine desire for engagement with civil society. The process provides external stakeholders with limited opportunities to share their input on the critical policies under review. According to the press release, AfDB management has already completed its internal review and has endorsed the draft of the new ISS policy. Before a draft is made public, it will be approved by the AfDB Board of Directors Committee on Development Effectiveness (CODE), scheduled for late January 2022. A public consultation draft incorporating CODE's comments will be circulated for a planned 45 day online comment period and four external consultation sessions that will include three meetings with member country representatives and one session that will be open to civil society organizations.

The announcement was made this week as many organizations close through mid-January. Civil society organizations are concerned that by the time external input is sought, decisions will have already been made on both the structure and the content of the policies, making any consultations merely a check box exercise rather than a genuine opportunity to influence the policies. While one listed objective of the review is to "ensure harmonization with the policies of peer institutions," AfDB's process for seeking external input falls far short of the more extensive, multi-phase and multimodal consultation efforts undertaken by peer institutions on their comparable policies, including most recently the Inter-American Development Bank and Asian Development Bank's reviews of their environmental and social safeguards. Civil society [calls on the AfDB](#) to immediately commit to providing space in the process to meaningfully consider input from civil society and other external stakeholders, and to incorporate this input into the ISS.

Civil Society Working Group on the AfDB

For questions or for further information, contact:

Aly Sagne, Lumière Synergie pour le Développement (a.sagne@lsdsenegal.org)

Phiona Nampungu, Bank Information Center (pnampungu@bankinformationcenter.org)

Tity Agbahey, Coalition for Human Rights in Development (tagbahey@rightsindevelopment.org)