

Via electronic email

September 23, 2022

Richard Martínez Alvarado
Vice President for Countries
Inter-American Development Bank
1300 New York Avenue
NW Washington, D.C. 20577

RE: Concerns and recommendations to strengthen the IDB Access to Information Policy review and consultation process

Dear Mr. Richard Martínez Alvarado,

As a coalition of civil society organizations who have [engaged](#) for years with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), actively engaged around the [safeguards](#) and policy reviews, and supported the creation of the MICI. We are writing to convey concerns in regard to the consultation process designed for IDB's Access to Information Policy (AIP) review, currently taking place.

While we celebrate the fact that IDB is reviewing its AIP since it represents an opportunity to strengthen the policy and align it with international standards and the Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF). We urge the IDB to demonstrate its commitment to a strong AIP by holding a robust, meaningful, and inclusive consultation process as a first step and necessary condition to achieve a positive outcome.

We believe that the way in which the AIP review process is currently structured inhibits civil society and project-affected communities' engagement in the process, and thus is less likely to lead to a strong outcome. Therefore, we make the following recommendations based on widely shared experience in our previous engagements with the IDB Group:

1. **Update and organize all information related to the consultation process in one location on the IDB's website.** The [Consultation Plan](#) published in June 2022 contains outdated information. The IDB agreed to make changes to its plans for the review based on civil society recommendations, including an extension of the second phase to 90 days and in-person consultations, but these changes are not contained in the Plan document. To guarantee that all relevant stakeholders are effectively informed about the Consultation Plan, we recommend that the Plan document be updated or a clear addendum to the Plan be posted alongside the document.

2. **Incorporate a 30-day public comment period for external stakeholders to send comments and recommendations to a second AIP draft.** The Bank informed this group that there is a possibility that they will open a public comment period on a second draft, which depends on the “substance” of the comments received. However, we believe this should be guaranteed from the outset of the review process. In the ESPF review process, opening a comment period on a second draft strengthened the ESPF and represented good practice. The review on the AIP should live up to this standard.
3. **Proactively seek input from stakeholders to facilitate their participation.** The Bank’s [Public Consultation Processes Portal](#) has already published the [agendas](#) for the consultations, but these have not been designed in a participatory manner, and the available information is detailed poorly. We recommend that the IDB create detailed and participatory agendas that allow civil society to shape the discussion. The Bank should consider the use of participatory methodologies that promote a direct dialogue and participation so that all participants’ recommendations and opinions are heard and considered. Extensive PowerPoint presentations and highly structured ‘dialogues’ with consultants hired by the IDB to moderate the discussion, reduce space for meaningful discussion directly with the Bank specialists and thus lead to less productive input.
4. **Eliminate the barriers present in the current consultation plan to enable meaningful participation.** The IDB requires stakeholders to register on an electronic platform as a requisite to participation in the consultations. This inhibits engagement for the following reasons: a) the registration process is not intuitive or easy; b) it disincentives the engagement of those communities that don’t have strong internet connectivity or that don’t have experience using these platforms; c) there is no clarity about the data protection and privacy of the platform; d) it does not protect people who may want to keep their anonymity due to the fear of retaliation or risks of reprisals, or because they have open cases at the MICI.
5. **Confirm and disseminate the dates and locations in advance for the in-person meetings.** The Consultation Processes Portal only mentions that “in-person meetings will be arranged later on during the consultation process.” However, considering the process has already started, it is concerning that there is no information or details about dates and locations for in-person consultations. We urge the IDB to share this information at least 30 days in advance to guarantee diverse and effective participation. We also recommend avoiding the months of December and January for consultations, considering the difficulties that organizations and communities in this region may have to travel or participate in the consultations during this time of the year.
6. **Open a comment period to receive public comments regarding the AIP implementation guidelines.** To complement the AIP review process, we urge the Bank

to guarantee a comment period to share input and recommendations to the AIP implementation guidelines, considering their relevance for the application of the Policy.

7. **Meet with civil society at the IDB Group Annual Meeting in Panama, 2023.** Provide specific opportunities and space for civil society to participate and effectively engage in the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the IDB and IDB Invest, to be held in March 2023 in Panama, which will allow the Bank to dialogue with civil society on, the AIP review, among other issues.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with IDB Management to guarantee a meaningful consultation process and a strong, revised AIP, that reflects international best practice and highest standard.

Sincerely,

Accountability Counsel (US)

Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad (AAS, Colombia)

Asociación Centro de Estudios de la Diversidad Sexual y Genérica (AMATE, El Salvador)

Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA, Regional)

Asociado Unión de Talleres 11 de Septiembre (Bolivia)

Bank Information Center (BIC, US)

Centro de Asistencia Legal a Pueblos Indígenas (CALPI, Nicaragua)

Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL, US)

Coalition for Human Rights in Development (Global)

Conectas Direitos Humanos (Brazil)

Coordinadora de Comunidades Afectadas por TRECSA (Guatemala)

Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (DAR, Peru)

Ecologia e Ação (ECO, Brazil)

Foro Social de la Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras (FOSDEH, Honduras)

Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (FARN, Argentina)

Fundación Cambio Democrático (FCD, Argentina)

Fundación CAUCE: Cultura Ambiental - Causa Ecologista- (CAUCE, Argentina)

Fundación para el Desarrollo de Políticas Sustentables (Fundeps, Argentina)

Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (Inesc, Brazil)

Instituto Maira (Brazil)

International Accountability Project (IAP, US)

International Rivers (Brazil)

Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad (PICI, Guatemala)

Protection International Mesoamérica (Regional)

Sociedad y Discapacidad (Sodis, Peru)

Sustentarse (Chile)

Wetlands International (LAC)

CC: IDB Board of Directors and Office of the Secretary, Access to Information