

## GENDER ACTION LINK:



**“The struggle for accountability is not an easy one. While the Inspection Panel at the World Bank and the emerging accountability mechanisms at other international financial institutions represent significant and important developments, engaging in these processes requires a real commitment of resources and perseverance by project affected people and their allies.” (FOEI, 2004)**

International Financial Institution (IFI) “accountability mechanisms” are a means for communities and civil society to seek compensation for or prevent damage they may suffer from IFI investments. Past complaints taken to accountability mechanisms mainly addressed environmental impacts, involuntary resettlement, and lack of information and consultation with affected communities. Gender Action is working to hold IFIs accountable for gender impacts through taking gender discrimination complaints to IFI accountability mechanisms (Gender Action 2007). IFIs have committed to promoting gender equality, reducing poverty and empowering women through their policies and action plans. However, IFI actions on gender equality rarely matches its rhetoric. Many IFI projects ignore gender inequalities and exacerbate poverty, leading to increased sex work, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS among women and girls.

Gender Action’s extensive research has revealed that, for example, World Bank-financed projects in the extractive industries sector contribute to numerous negative and harmful impacts for women in all project cycle stages. Often, women are underrepresented or excluded from the consultation and planning processes for projects that will affect their livelihoods and community environments. Moreover, pollution and environmental contamination from extractive industry projects disrupt essential daily survival activities, such as gathering water, preparing food, and farming; tasks that are performed mainly by women. In addition, the influx of construction migrant workers has been associated with increased gender-based violence, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and human trafficking. Women are therefore disproportionately affected by IFI-financed projects in the extractive industries sector (Gender Action 2006, 2007, 2010).

In response to pressure from environmental groups, IFIs have created semi-independent “accountability mechanisms”, which allow those who feel negatively affected or potentially harmed by IFI investments to voice their concerns. These accountability mechanisms try to ensure that the social and environmental standards and policies set out by IFIs themselves are met. Such standards include the gender policies which mandate the IFIs to pay specific attention to and prevent damaging impacts which affect women and girls, the majority of the world’s poor who suffer from the most gender discrimination.

Gender Action has highlighted the policy paths in which to bring a gender discrimination complaint to each IFI accountability mechanism in its publication, “Speaking Up for Gender: A Step-by-Step Guide to IFI Accountability Mechanisms” (2010). Civil society and communities can take a claim to an accountability mechanism if an IFI has violated its own stated gender equality policy if, for example, an IFI project has not considered and/or accounted for the following:

- ✓ **Social and Health Impacts:** Harmful social and health effects on women, particularly in regards to family planning access and maternal care.
- ✓ **Resettlement Issues:** Restricted or limited women’s rights to own or hold title to land or receive compensation.
- ✓ **Infrastructure Impacts:** Limited women’s access to natural resources and livelihood opportunities through new zoning and construction.
- ✓ **Indigenous Rights:** Negative impacts on indigenous communities, especially in regards to the representation, consultation and participation of indigenous women in all project phases.
- ✓ **Environmental Impacts:** Impeded women’s ability to participate in daily livelihood activities, such as farming, that affects their daily needs (i.e. water, food, or fuel collection).

It is time to hold IFIs accountable for the negative and damaging impacts of their projects which disproportionately hurt women and girls. Civil society, claimants and their allies must come forward and hold IFIs responsible for the harmful gender impacts of IFI projects and their promises to promote gender equality. See the ‘What Can Be Done?’ Box for recommended civil society actions.



## IFI Gender Guidelines and Accountability Mechanisms

IFI	Gender Guideline	Accountability Mechanism
ADB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational Policy/Bank Procedure on Gender and Development (2003)</li> <li>Policy on Gender and Development (2003)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">ADB Accountability and Compliance Review Mechanism</a>
AfDB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender Policy (2001)</li> <li>Gender Plan of Action (GPOA) (2004)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Independent Review Mechanism</a>
EBRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental and Social Policy (2008)</li> <li>Gender Action Plan (2009)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Project Complaint Mechanism</a>
IDB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational Policy on Women in Development (currently being revised)</li> <li>Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan (2003-2005)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism</a>
IFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender Action Plan (2007)</li> <li>Gender Entrepreneurship Markets (GEM)</li> <li>Private Sector Development - Gender (PSD- Gender)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO)</a>
World Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational Policy and Bank Procedure 4.20 on Gender and Development</li> <li>Gender Action Plan (2007)</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Inspection Panel</a>

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Civil society should help build the capacity of affected communities - particularly local women - to bring gender discrimination cases to IFI accountability mechanisms as well as help claimants gather information on IFI policies and procedures.
- Using the IFI gender guidelines and accountability mechanisms outlined within Gender Action's 'Speaking Up for Gender' guide, civil society must join affected communities to hold IFIs accountable for their negative impacts on women as well as their promises to strengthen gender equality.
- Civil society should help communities bring media and international attention to gender discrimination claims, which will highlight the issues and may pressure IFIs for a positive outcome.
- Civil society must continue to pressure all IFIs to strengthen gender policies and accountability mechanisms.
- Civil society must pressure IFIs for increased transparency, demanding increased access to and appropriate translations of key investment documents for local communities.

### POSSIBLE PARTNERS!

- Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) [www.ciel.org/](http://www.ciel.org/) (Global)
- Gender Action: [www.genderaction.org](http://www.genderaction.org) (Global)
- International Accountability Project (IAP) [www.accountabilityproject.org/](http://www.accountabilityproject.org/) (Global)
- The Center for Women's Law Studies and Legal Services of Peking University [www.womenwatch-china.org](http://www.womenwatch-china.org) (China)

#### ACTION RESOURCES:

- ['Gender Justice: A Citizen's Guide to Gender Accountability at the IFIs'](#): A detailed, concrete guide for understanding accountability and gender at the IFIs.
- ['Speaking Up for Gender: A Step-by-Step Guide to IFI Accountability Mechanisms'](#): A user-friendly, comprehensive guide for taking gender discrimination complaints to IFI accountability mechanisms. Includes specific information about the complaint process and the requirements of each IFI as well as case studies. Available in Spanish.
- ['A Citizen's Guide to the World Bank Inspection Panel'](#): Provides detailed information regarding the claim process and what to expect from the panel process. Also available in Spanish.

#### RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL DECLARATIONS:

- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)
- [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

#### REFERENCES:

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- CIEL 1999, 'A Citizens' Guide to the World Bank Inspection Panel'.
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- Clark, D. et al. (eds) 2003, 'Demanding Accountability: Civil Society and the World Bank Inspection Panel'.
- Friends of the Earth International 2004, 'A Strategic Guide: Strategic Tips for Filing Complaints with International Financial Institutions'.
- Gender Action 2006, 'Boom-Time Blues: Big Oil's Gender Impacts in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Sakhalin'.
- Gender Action/CIEL 2007, 'Gender Justice: A Citizen's Guide to Gender Accountability at the IFIs'.
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- Oxfam Australia 2002, 'Tunnel Vision: Women, Mining and Communities: Introduction, Women's Rights Undermined'.
- World Bank Inspection Panel 2009, 'The Inspection Panel Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2009'.