

OPEN LETTER

Civil Society Organizations Call on the New Development Bank to Respond to Affected Communities and Establish an Independent Accountability Mechanism

5th October 2026

To: The President and Board of Directors of the New Development Bank

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, call on the New Development Bank (NDB) to urgently establish and operationalize an independent accountability mechanism accessible to communities affected by NDB-financed projects.

NDB finances major infrastructure, energy, water and environmental projects across its member countries. These investments can bring significant development benefits, but they can also profoundly affect the lives, livelihoods, homes, land and environment of communities living in and around project areas. NDB's own [Environmental and Social Framework](#) recognizes the importance of meaningful consultation, access to information, and effective grievance mechanisms.

The problem is what happens when these processes do not work.

Communities and civil society organizations have raised concerns about NDB-financed projects in different countries, including concerns about consultation, access to information, environmental and social impacts, and the ability to engage with NDB itself.

In Brazil, communities affected by the NDB-financed Araripe III wind complex raised concerns about consultation, information and impacts on traditional communities. [Research by Conectas Human Rights and the International Accountability Project](#) found that affected communities did not know how to obtain information about the project or how to lodge complaints.

In South Africa, research concerning the NDB-financed Medupi Environmental Protection Project found that community activists engaged in advocacy around the project were unaware that NDB was a financier, did not know about NDB's policies, and did not know that they could approach the Bank directly. [The research](#) also identified broader shortcomings in NDB's information-access and engagement practices.

There is also evidence of problems when civil society has sought information directly from NDB. In relation to the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase II (LHWP II), AFRODAD sought information from NDB concerning the project's environmental and social policies, consultation, resettlement, monitoring and compliance. [AFRODAD's assessment of its engagement with NDB](#) documents concerns regarding the timeliness and substance of the Bank's response. Independent research examining NDB's information-disclosure system has similarly identified problems with acknowledgment, timeliness, and the adequacy of responses to information requests.

These experiences point to an important accountability gap. Communities may have concerns about an NDB-financed project, but there is no dependable pathway from raising those concerns to independent review, problem solving or remedy at the level of the Bank.

LHWP II: An accountability gap playing out now

The situation in Lesotho illustrates why this matters.

NDB is a co-financier of LHWP II, providing a ZAR 3.2 billion loan. Communities in the Mokhotlong area have raised serious concerns relating to blasting and damage to homes, compensation and resettlement, loss of land and natural resources, livelihoods, water, environmental impacts, gender-related harms and the effectiveness of existing grievance processes.

The community has sought dialogue and accountability and has filed a complaint with the African Development Bank's Independent Recourse Mechanism (IRM). The community wants a problem-solving process that brings together affected communities, the project implementer and relevant financiers to address the harms and identify solutions.

The community and its advisors have also [sought](#) NDB's engagement. Yet NDB has not provided a meaningful avenue through which the community can raise concerns about NDB's own role, seek independent review or pursue remedy from the Bank.

This is particularly concerning in a co-financed project. The involvement of multiple financiers should not mean that affected communities are left navigating different institutions without a clear route to accountability. The African Development Bank has itself recognized the complexity of LHWP II's financing arrangements, which involve NDB, Development Bank of Southern Africa and commercial banks.

NDB has recognized the need for an accountability mechanism

The need for an independent accountability mechanism is not new. NDB's [2022–2026 General Strategy](#) states that the Bank will establish well-designed mechanisms to address grievances arising from its expanding operations and collect feedback from individuals, communities and civil society organizations.

In March 2025, NDB's Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee considered an issues paper on establishing a [“fit-for-purpose” Independent Accountability Mechanism](#) and provided guidance on the next steps for its creation.

We welcome this progress. But affected communities cannot be expected to wait indefinitely while projects continue to affect them. An accountability mechanism is needed not only for future projects, but for communities already seeking answers and remedy today.

We therefore call on NDB to:

- 1. Establish and operationalize an independent accountability mechanism without further delay.** The mechanism should be independent of project management, accessible to affected communities and able to provide both compliance review and problem-solving functions.

2. Ensure meaningful participation by affected communities and civil society in designing the mechanism. The mechanism should be accessible in practice, including to communities facing geographic, financial, linguistic or other barriers.

3. Provide an effective interim avenue for accountability while the mechanism is being established. Communities currently affected by NDB-financed projects should not be left without recourse during this transition.

4. Engage meaningfully in existing accountability processes concerning NDB-financed projects. Where another financier's accountability mechanism is examining a co-financed project, NDB should participate constructively in the process and in efforts to identify and implement appropriate remedy.

NDB has an opportunity to ensure that its commitment to sustainable development is matched by meaningful accountability to the people affected by the projects it finances.

For communities in Lesotho and elsewhere, this is not simply a question of institutional design. It is a question of whether, when project-level mechanisms fail and direct engagement with the Bank does not provide a meaningful response, there is somewhere they can turn.

There should be.

We call on the New Development Bank to close this accountability gap and establish an independent, accessible and effective accountability mechanism without further delay.

For questions or to discuss the letter, contact: Nkoti Reitumetse Mabula on nkoti.reitumetse@seinoli.org.ls and Robi Chacha Mosenda on robi@accountabilitycounsel.org

Signed,

1. Seinoli Legal Centre, Lesotho
2. Survivors of Lesotho Dams, Lesotho
3. Accountability Counsel, Kenya / United States
4. AbibiNsroma Foundation, Ghana
5. Actions Féministes pour le Développement Durable en Guinée, Guinea
6. African Coalition for Corporate Accountability (ACCA), South Africa
7. African Law Foundation (AFRILAW), Nigeria
8. AUCED RDCongo, Democratic Republic of the Congo
9. Bank Climate Advocates, United States / International
10. Cabinet QUATUM PROJET, Central African Republic
11. Committee for Peace and Development Advocacy (COPDA), Liberia
12. Community Outreach for Development and Welfare Advocacy (CODWA), Nigeria
13. Economic Justice Network of FOCCISA, South Africa
14. ENDA LEAD Afrique Francophone, Senegal
15. ETS Daroul Khidmah, Senegal
16. Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAF), Uganda
17. Foundation for Environmental Management and Campaign against Poverty (FEMAPO), Tanzania
18. Foundation for Environmental Rights Advocacy and Development (FENRAD), Nigeria
19. Global Rights Advocacy, United States

20. Green Advocates International, Liberia
21. Green Leaf Advocacy and Empowerment Center, Nigeria
22. Housing and Land Rights Network of Habitat International Coalition, Egypt
23. Inclusive Development International, Kenya / United States
24. Indigenous Peoples Rights International, Kenya
25. Inisiasi Masyarakat Adat (IMA), Indonesia
26. Initiative Bonne Gouvernance des Ressources Naturelles au Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo
27. International Accountability Project, Global
28. Jamaa Resource Initiatives, Kenya
29. JUHUDI Community Support Center, Kenya
30. KRuHA, Indonesia
31. Mazingira Network-Tanzania (MANET), Tanzania
32. Mboro SOS, Senegal
33. MiningWatch Canada, Canada
34. ONG ASAS, Senegal
35. PINGOS Forum, Tanzania
36. Psychological Responsiveness NGO, Mongolia
37. Quest for Growth and Development Foundation, Nigeria
38. Surge Africa Organisation, Nigeria
39. Sustainable Holistic Development Foundation (SUHODE Foundation), Tanzania
40. Syndev, Senegal
41. Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability, Uganda
42. Urgewald, Germany
43. Victims of Violence Support Africa (VVSA), Kenya
44. Witness Radio, Uganda
45. Zimbabwe Environmental Law Organization (ZELA), Zimbabwe