

Press Release: Climate Justice Advocates Demand That Public Development Banks and Private Investors Stop Fueling the Climate Crisis

Bangkok, 9 October 2026 – “Public development banks and private investors are financing environmentally destructive projects with impunity, and local communities and environments refuse to pay the price. The polluters and their financial backers must be held accountable,” was the message from human rights and environmental defenders on 9 October ahead of the World Bank’s Annual Meetings in Bangkok at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Thailand.

Asia draws energy, extractive, and infrastructure investments from public development banks, including the World Bank Group, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB). These projects produce carbon emissions, destroy biodiversity, pollute air and water, and damage local people’s lives and livelihoods. At Accountability Counsel’s event, “[The World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok: Financing Development or Fuelling the Climate Crisis?](#),” advocates across Asia shared their experiences protecting people and the planet from these harmful projects and demanded financial institutions be accountable and uphold their environmental and human rights commitments.

Thai Communities Defend Our Climate

People living and working in the project areas speak out to protect their local environments, and they know best how to sustainably and responsibly design projects to prevent harm in the first place. Despite that, energy and extractive projects continue to be designed, constructed, and implemented without input or consent from local communities. “It’s a purposeful choice,” said **Accountability Counsel’s Senior Communities Associate, Sutharee Wannasiri**. “A consistent pattern I hear from communities harmed by energy projects is that nobody told them about the project in advance or asked their consent; and yet, they bear the most risk when things go wrong.”

One timely example is the Burapa gas-fired power plant, under ongoing construction in Chachoengsao province in Thailand. “I am a farmer who makes my living from the land by growing rice and vegetables. In today’s era of a rapidly warming planet, our food crops are already affected,” shared **Uangfa Chamket of Chachoengsao Re: Power**. “The construction of the Burapa gas-fired power plant is like adding fuel to the climate crisis. We are already facing pollution, flooding, and drought. The fossil-fuel power plant will further intensify these harms. While the companies and investors behind the project stand to make profits, my communities are left to live with the

pollution. To date, no company or bank that financed harmful projects has stepped forward to take responsibility for the harms. We are the ones who are forced to bear the costs of adapting to climate change impacts and restoring our communities and livelihoods," Chamket added.

The Burapa Power Plant Project secured at least US\$ 600 million in loans from two commercial banks whose names were kept in secret by Thai project implementers, an example of inadequate information disclosure that prevented communities from an effective and prompt access to remedies.

While it's well-known and true that fossil fuel extraction harms our climate, too often proposed alternative energy projects follow the same top-down, extractive playbook. And if renewable energy projects still cause harm to local ecosystems and livelihoods, they are not truly just or acceptable alternatives.

"Prachinburi is an important agricultural province, providing food, herbal medicines, and livelihoods for local people. However, the expansion of industrial development has worsened water, soil, and air pollution, while government oversight remains inadequate. The construction of three additional industrial waste-to-energy plants co-financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will further increase the volume and severity of cumulative pollution in the area," stated **Ridditat Boonyaburanakit of the Strong Prachinburi Community Network**. "We therefore call on the ADB and the AIIB to review and suspend their financial support for the project until they can ensure that it is transparent, governed responsibly, and does not shift the environmental and health burdens onto local communities," added Boonyaburanakit.

When harm from energy and extractive projects occurs, it too often falls on local communities to organize and protect themselves, their neighbors, their ecosystems, and by extension, our planet. Defending their communities' livelihoods in conflict-stricken Thailand southern border provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, advocates often are met with intimidation and surveillance. The three provinces are under the declaration of national security laws including the Martial Law and the Emergency Decree.

"Protecting the environment under the implementation of national security laws means carrying both concern for the community and fear for our own safety. The authorities and project implementers must guarantee that speaking out peacefully does not put anyone at risk," shared **Abdulloh Awae and Romzee Dokor of the Civil Society Assembly for Peace - NATURE**. Despite these challenges, the network of

young environmental defenders successfully delayed the two biomass power plants in Yala province in 2024 through awareness-raising, community-led documentation, and non-violent actions campaigns.

Demanding Accountability from the Banks Financing Harm

The World Bank Group, the Asian Development Bank, and other development finance institutions have official channels – called independent accountability mechanisms – that accept complaints from people when a bank's investment risks or causes harm. **Accountability Counsel's Executive Director Margaux Day** explained that "when functioning well and properly mandated, local defenders can use banks' accountability mechanisms to stop, redesign, and remediate harm from projects, but when the mechanisms don't live up to their promise, they fail communities and risk shielding banks from responsibility."

Globally, environmental and human rights defenders have filed more than 2,425 complaints to financial institutions' accountability mechanisms documenting egregious harms. **Aaron Pedrosa of the Philippines Movement for Climate Justice** shared the struggles of 10 communities seeking justice for harm from coal power plants financed by the International Finance Corporation. "The IFC's accountability mechanism independently verified the communities' claims and found the IFC in violation of its own policies," shared Pedrosa, "and yet the IFC and other investors have yet to remedy that harm. Communities deserve for banks' safeguards to have meaning; when banks fail to adhere to them, they should be responsible."

Martha Doq of Perkumpulan Nurani Perempuan, an Indigenous women's organisation based in East Kalimantan, Indonesia shared the expectations of Indigenous Dayak Bahao communities, who have raised significant concerns about a World Bank-funded carbon credit scheme directly to the World Bank but received no meaningful response. "Long Isun never consented to this project," clarified Martha. "Our forest has been counted into the World Bank's emission reductions and sold as carbon credits, but the people who have kept that forest standing for generations were told, in effect, that we had no say. We asked the Bank's own Inspection Panel to look at this, and it declined. So we are here in Bangkok to ask a simple question: if a carbon project depends on Indigenous stewardship, how can it proceed without Indigenous consent?"

Yuvensius Stefanus Nonga of WALHI Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia shared the experience of Indigenous communities in Poco Leok whose opposition to a KfW-financed renewable energy project was met with physical assaults, arrests, and

detentions of community members by security forces. Yuvensius calls upon the World Bank and KfW to “stop funding geothermal and other climate projects in East Nusa Tenggara that would increase the region's vulnerability to disasters. Every geothermal project implemented by energy enterprises in Flores and Lembata has clearly violated the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, as they have been fraught with deception toward the community from the very beginning.”

Both the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank are currently reviewing their rules that determine how easily local communities can raise concerns and receive remedy for investments that contribute to harm. “These policy reviews are an opportunity to improve the sustainability of banks’ investments yet the risk of regression is high,” Day added.

Calls to Action for the World Bank

The 9 October event took place days before the World Bank’s Annual Meetings in Bangkok began. Advocates shared actionable demands for the World Bank to stop harming and begin protecting people and our planet:

- **Tala Batangan of the Coalition for Human Rights in Development:** “When financing energy projects, World Bank and other public development banks not only have an important role in conducting due diligence, but also are responsible for continuous oversight of clients in order to effectively prevent, mitigate and address reprisal risks, rights violations, and environmental degradation. When harm occurs, banks should suspend projects, provide remedy, ensure accountability, and prevent recurrence. Furthermore, for the energy transition to be not only fast but also fair, banks must move away from the current top-down model of development towards an approach grounded in open civic space and safe avenues for communities to raise their voices and assert their priorities without fear of reprisals.” (See more at: <https://rightsindevelopment.org/financing-transition-silencing-defenders/>)
- **Joe Athialy of the Centre for Financial Accountability:** “Mechanically merging independent accountability mechanisms without addressing the structural issues does not guarantee genuine independence, strong investigative powers and binding remedies, to ensure affected communities can secure timely, credible justice.”
- **Stephanie Amoako, Policy Director of Accountability Counsel:** “The World Bank Group’s new independent accountability mechanism must be accessible,

be completely independent from bank management, and effectively facilitate remedy. Further, it should build on lessons from over 30 years of community cases to multilateral development banks.”

Press Inquiries

For further information or to schedule a call with any of the speakers, please contact Accountability Counsel at info@accountabilitycounsel.org.