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Nepali Communities Seek Justice for Violations in World Bank Project

Kathmandu, Nepal, July 14, 2015 – Last week an independent investigation revealed serious abuses in a World Bank-funded transmission line project in central Nepal. The Khimti-Dhalkebar transmission line runs through indigenous and rural communities, who have been raising concerns about the project for over five years. Though the findings validate community concerns, the World Bank has not committed to correcting the damage caused by its failures in this project.

The World Bank's Inspection Panel, the grievance office meant to hold the Bank accountable to its own policies, conducted an investigation in response to a community complaint filed in July 2013. The complaint outlined extensive harm to communities' land, health, and livelihoods, including violent repression of peaceful protesters by armed security forces.

After visiting affected communities, the Inspection Panel found that the Bank "did not ensure adequate, timely and meaningful consultations during project preparation and implementation." The Bank failed to assess alternative routes for the power line and whether the local agency implementing the project had capacity to do so. The Panel also found the Bank did not provide prompt and effective compensation to families forcibly displaced by the project, nor did it create a local and accessible way for people to register their complaints.

In response to the Panel's findings, the World Bank has a responsibility to create an action plan to bring the project into compliance with its policies. Yet the Bank's plan, released along with the Panel's findings, fails to address harm already caused and the faulty assumptions on which the project is based. It belatedly recommends dissemination of information to communities, though the project is nearly complete. The plan is silent on two of the communities' central concerns -- how to address the Bank's failure to consider less harmful alternatives to the power line's route, and how to ensure safety of community members and peaceful protesters from armed security forces.

"The action plan, prepared without consulting the affected communities, does not go far enough," said Shankar Limbu, Secretary of LAHURNIP, a Nepalese human rights organization supporting the communities. "The best solution would be to divert the line away from people's homes."

"The World Bank must continue engagement and supervision of this project to ensure its investments do not continue to cause harm, and that force is not used against communities at any stage of the project's implementation," said Komala Ramachandra, South Asia Director of Accountability Counsel, a non-profit legal organization that the communities engaged for support.

The Panel findings come after a [string of recent reports](#) documenting the Bank's role around the world in funding projects that violate human rights. "With efforts in Nepal focused on reconstruction after the earthquake, it is all the more crucial that the Bank take timely steps to remedy the harm it caused and ensure positive development outcomes on the ground," said Ramachandra.

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Additional information, documents, and multimedia is available here:

<http://www.accountabilitycounsel.org/communities/current-cases/high-voltage-power-line-nepal/>