

A photograph of two women. In the foreground, an older woman with grey hair and a pink headscarf looks directly at the camera. She has a small gold nose ring and is wearing a floral patterned garment. In the background, a younger woman with dark hair and a red headscarf also looks towards the camera. She is wearing a blue garment. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a thatched roof.

AMPLIFYING
the VOICES of

WOMEN,
CHILDREN and
MARGINALIZED
GROUPS

accountability
counsel

Accountability Counsel works in communities where people face **human rights abuses** that compromise their livelihoods, threaten their culture, and destroy the **environments** they depend on for survival.

We support communities challenging abuses from internationally-financed projects in sectors ranging from agribusiness to the extractive industries. The grave repercussions of these projects often disproportionately marginalize already vulnerable members of communities. As **lawyers for communities**, we assist with complaints to accountability offices tied to these projects.

We **amplify the voices of women, children and other marginalized groups** within their communities to ensure their **rights are protected** and their **unique struggles are heard**. Our organization brings **respect** and **dignity** as core values to our work so that we do not perpetuate domination and oppression, which cause injustice at many levels.



Raising Her Story: Liberia

For years, groups worked in Liberia to document abuses associated with an agribusiness project. When communities then asked Accountability Counsel to support them through a complaint to a US agency that funded the project, we applied our respect-based approach.

Because of our effort to reach out to women, girls and other marginalized groups, our clients shared for the first time that there had been:

- widespread sexual abuse by company employees,
- gender-based workplace discrimination, and
- increased danger to women in childbirth and additional burdens for women and girls tasked with traveling far distances to fetch water due to water contamination.

Through our work, we documented these impacts in an official complaint, video, and in the media.

Our advocacy resulted in a full investigation verifying abuses and changes to US federal law to ensure that these types of abuses are prevented in the future.



Why a Focus on Gender & Marginalization?

Women and marginalized groups are often the least likely to be consulted about a project that will fundamentally alter their livelihoods, yet are the most likely to bear the disproportionate brunt of impacts such as **denial of access to water**, **food security threats**, and **physical and sexual abuse**. When project impacts reduce family income, girls may be the first **taken out of school**, **trafficked into slavery**, or **forced into early marriage**.

Impacts on indigenous, lower caste and racial minority women can cause even deeper marginalization. It is imperative that the voices of women, girls and marginalized groups are heard through the complaint process so that those with power — to stop abuses and make change — respect their rights.

Accountability Counsel's Approach

Our approach identifies and addresses forms of **marginalization** and **hierarchy** that are specific to each community where we work.

We employ respect-based methods to ensure that women, children and other marginalized people are included as full participants in community strategies seeking **accountability**.

We tailor our approach to our specific client communities, including:

- **indigenous** people,
- **women and children**,
- **racial, ethnic and religions** minorities,
- **lower caste** people, and
- **LGBTQ and non-cisgender** individuals.

These people often face a baseline level of marginalization within their communities and are therefore at greater risk from project impacts.



Our Approach Applied

- When working in communities, we seek out **women leaders** to guide our work and ensure that we are aware of issues uniquely facing women and girls, with frequent work in **small groups**.
- We ensure that **communication** formats are appropriate so that language is not a barrier for those who do not speak the languages used by corporations, international institutions, and accountability offices.
- We take particular care to ensure that **women's stories** of abuse, concerns about livelihoods, mental and physical health and safety, and other gender-related impacts of projects are understood and **documented** in the formal complaints to accountability offices. We take great care to respect women's **confidentiality**, **security**, and **decision-making** about how and when their stories are shared.
- When conducting follow up work, we ensure that women are **participants in decision-making** and that our process of seeking accountability has an **empowering impact** that does not further oppresses vulnerable members of society.

Accountability Counsel's attorneys have worked with communities in nearly two dozen countries to raise their voices and **demand respect for their human rights and environment**. Our policy advocacy has led to an improvement in accountability rules at nearly a dozen international institutions.