



We assist communities around the world to defend their environmental and human rights.

We hold corporations and international institutions accountable for abusive practices through our dual approaches: direct support to communities and policy advocacy.

## Lawyers for Communities

In **Liberia, Nepal, India and Mongolia**, we are assisting our clients through



critical stages in their cases and we are seeing dramatic results even before the cases have reached completion.

In **Haiti, Kenya and West Virginia**, we are working with groups in early

stages as they formulate strategies to seek accountability for issues ranging from mining-related abuses to port construction displacing villages.

## Policy Advocacy

We have been part of the shifting ground at accountability offices, where in Europe, one of the key complaint offices **improved their policy as a result of our work**. The World Bank's Inspection Panel will be the focus of much of our policy advocacy in the year to come,

with particular attention on the Panel's new complaint procedure.

## New Team Members

This Summer we welcomed new Staff Attorney **Caitlin Daniel** and are thrilled to have four **Law Fellows** and Undergraduate **Interns** making substantive contributions to our team.



# Systemic Change Through Policy Advocacy

**EBRD** - Accountability Counsel provided a leading voice in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) review of its accountability policy. Our suggestions led to important policy changes that improve the accessibility of the EBRD's accountability office and provide greater opportunities for complainants to participate in the complaint process.



**OPIC** - The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) Office of Accountability also revised its operational guidelines this year. Accountability Counsel and other organizations provided comments on a draft version of the guidelines, securing critical changes in the final version that preserve the accessibility of the complaint office. We will continue our advocacy with the goal that ambiguities in the guidelines be interpreted to promote the office's accessibility and effectiveness.

**World Bank** - The World Bank Inspection Panel released revised Operating Procedures in March 2014 over unanimous public criticism from diverse actors, including Accountability Counsel. The new policy contains provisions that increase the Panel's discretion and reduce accessibility for complainants. As part of a unified coalition of actors who opposed the new policy, we continue to vigilantly monitor the Panel to ensure that it remains an effective accountability tool, despite problematic recent changes.

## Assam Tea Plantations Supporting Workers' Rights in India

In India, Accountability Counsel and three local groups are supporting the human rights of workers at tea plantations financed by the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC).

In February 2013, local groups filed a complaint to the World Bank's Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) raising concerns about inhumane living and working conditions on the plantations, including

inadequate compensation, long working hours, poor health conditions and coercion of workers.

The CAO completed its assessment of the case in November 2013. After the plantation owner refused to participate in a dialogue process with the workers and their supporting organizations, the CAO transferred the complaint to its compliance arm to conduct an investigation. Accountability Counsel assisted local groups to file a complaint supplement, detailing the IFC's violations of its social and environmental policies.

In response to the CAO review, the plantation owner has already made some progress in improving plantation living conditions, though much remains to be done. We expect further progress on living and working conditions pending the CAO's compliance report.



# Liberia: U.S. Investigates Abuses

## Complaint Results in OPIC Investigation Into U.S.-Funded Biomass Project

Accountability Counsel, in partnership with Green Advocates International, is assisting hundreds of Liberians who suffered serious human rights and environmental abuses from a U.S.-financed biomass project.

The project, which was intended to rejuvenate rubber farms and create renewable energy, has instead led to serious workers' rights violations, water contamination, harm to forests, and ultimately loss of livelihoods for smallholder farmers and charcoal producers.

With support from Accountability Counsel, hundreds of affected Liberians filed a complaint with the Overseas Private Investment

Corporation (OPIC), the U.S. agency that funded the project, demanding an investigation into the harms. We accompanied the launch of the complaint with a video and online petition, and mobilized congressional engagement with OPIC.



In a victory for the Liberian complainants, the president of OPIC responded by directing the OPIC Office of Accountability to conduct an investigation. This spring, the Office of Accountability traveled to Liberia and held meetings with the complainants and other

relevant parties. We have continued close collaboration with Green Advocates and supported the complainants in Liberia during the investigation. We are currently awaiting the release of the OPIC Office of Accountability's findings and recommendations.

## Nepal: Demanding Inclusive Development

Accountability Counsel and the Lawyer's Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP) are supporting communities in Nepal facing construction of a World Bank-funded high voltage transmission line through their villages. Many villagers were not consulted or provided information about the project, and peaceful, unarmed protestors have been beaten and detained by armed security forces sent by project officials.

In July 2013, Accountability Counsel and LAHURNIP assisted community members in filing a complaint to the World Bank Inspection Panel, which accepted the complaint but postponed its investigation to provide Bank management an opportunity address the communities' concerns. After holding just one meeting with the communities, communication from the Bank has stalled and many of their commitments remain unfulfilled.



The Inspection Panel recently began its investigation and the communities remain hopeful that it will provide an opportunity for their voices to be heard at the international level. Our South Asia Director, Komala Ramachandra, visited the communities in May 2014 and is supporting them through the Inspection Panel process.

## WELCOMING NEW STAFF



Please join us in welcoming our newest Staff Attorney, Caitlin Daniel. Caitlin joins us with prior experience working on Accountability Counsel cases and policy initiatives as a Law Fellow, and later a post-graduate

UC Hastings Bridge Fellow. She has worked on indigenous rights issues with one of our partners in Nepal and represented immigrants as an associate at CPG Immigration Law Group. Caitlin is a 2012 graduate of UC Hastings College of the Law.

### Special Thanks to Recent *Pro Bono* Attorney Partners:

Shea Loewen, Esq.

Gregory Freeman, Esq.

Law Offices of Gideon Kracov  
Covington & Burling LLP

Nixon Peabody, LLP

Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

## Mongolia

### Ongoing dialogue leads to promising achievements in the Gobi Desert

Accountability Counsel continues to assist nomadic herders in the South Gobi desert, who are concerned that Rio Tinto's huge copper and gold mine is threatening the region's water resources, causing other serious environmental impacts and endangering their livelihoods. The project is funded in part by the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Together with Mongolian organization OT Watch, Accountability Counsel has supported the herders in an ongoing dialogue process with Rio Tinto, which is being facilitated by the IFC's



Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) in response to the herders' complaints. The dialogue process has led to significant achievements, including an ongoing study by an Independent Expert Panel regarding the social and environmental impacts of the company's diversion of a river that provides critical ground and surface water for the herders and their livestock.

### Thanks to our Law Fellows & Interns

With us in summer 2014, pictured top to bottom, are Law Fellows **Kristin Beharry** of Harvard Law and **Meghan Natenson** of Berkeley Law, and Interns **Brianna Krong** of Wellesley College and **Lucia Nuñez** of Scripps College.

Thanks also to our academic year Law Fellows and Interns: **Christine Zülów** and **Xiaoling Qin** (Berkeley Law), **Ray Krickel** (USF), and **Heesu Chung** (UC Berkeley).



### Support Accountability Counsel

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