

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



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

## Lawyers for Communities

In **India, Colombia** and **Mongolia** our strategic support to communities has resulted in investigations by international institutions into abuses of worker's rights, extreme noise pollution and mining-related abuses.

In response to our work supporting villagers in **Nepal** harmed by a transmission line, the World Bank's complaint office has finalized its compliance investigation report and we expect its public release in the coming weeks.

In **Liberia** and **Haiti**, our advocacy for local communities is leading to systemic policy change at national and global institutions, including increased transparency and higher human rights and environmental standards.

## Policy Advocacy

We continue to serve as a **leading voice** in our field, demanding strong accountability

offices. In the U.S., we are focusing on the government's plan to promote responsible business conduct.

## New People & Places

Last fall we welcomed a new **Policy Director**, Kindra Mohr, to our team, as well as **Board Members** Shashi Buluswar, Faris Natour, and Julia Shepardson. We have also moved into a **new office in San Francisco** to accommodate our growth.



## ADVANCING OUR FIELD THROUGH POLICY ADVOCACY

## LIBERIA: Investigation Inspires New Hope for Policy Change

In December 2014, our South Asia Director Komala Ramachandra spoke on three panels at the **UN Forum on Business and Human Rights** in Geneva, Switzerland, including one organized by Accountability Counsel on the gaps and challenges that exist for communities seeking remedy from international financial institutions and the importance of strengthening complaint offices.

The **Inter-American Development Bank** recently revised its **Independent Consultation and Investigation Mechanism** policy, resulting in a complete overhaul of the office. Despite strong criticism from a coalition of civil society organizations, including Accountability Counsel, the revised policy includes provisions that may damage the mechanism's independence and reduce its accessibility for project-affected communities. We will monitor the new office and continue our work to help communities access and use the office.

The U.S. government announced last fall that it will develop a **National Action Plan to promote responsible business conduct by U.S. companies**. Accountability Counsel has been a strong voice in the government's public consultation process. Our Policy Director Kindra Mohr recently spoke at a public consultation in Berkeley, California, and we have submitted extensive written comments, emphasizing the importance of having strong accountability offices available to communities impacted by U.S. business activities abroad.

Our work supporting hundreds of Liberians suffering human rights and environmental impacts of a U.S.-financed biomass project has led to congressional scrutiny of a major U.S. development agency.



With support from Accountability Counsel and Green Advocates International, Liberian farmers, workers and charcoalers submitted a complaint last year to the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), demanding an investigation into workers'

rights violations, loss of local livelihoods, damage to forests and other harm from the OPIC-funded project. Last fall, our efforts led OPIC's Office of Accountability to release an independent review of the project. The review included important recommendations to improve OPIC's human rights due diligence and monitoring.

Since the report's release, Accountability Counsel has continued our advocacy to encourage systemic change at OPIC. We urged Congressional leaders to take action — they responded by inserting language in the 2014 U.S. Appropriations Act, directing OPIC to report to Congress on its plan to implement changes. We will continue our work on this issue to ensure that OPIC improves its human rights and environmental due diligence.





# HAITI: Complaint Sparks Call for Major Reform

While the World Bank prides itself on its high social and environmental standards, our work in Haiti has revealed that in some of the most vulnerable communities, the Bank is choosing not to apply any standards at all.

In January 2015, along with the NYU Global Justice Clinic, we assisted the Haitian Justice in Mining Collective and mining-affected communities in Haiti to file a complaint to the World Bank's complaint office about the Bank's role in drafting a new national mining law. The complaint demanded meaningful public consultation and adequate protections before developing mining in Haiti.

The complaint office acknowledged that the concerns raised are serious and legitimate, yet found that it could not investigate the issues because the Bank *chose* to fund the project in a way that exempted it from any social and environmental standards.



This case revealed a dangerous loophole in the Bank's social and environmental policies, and the decision indicates that the Bank is conducting a review of the relevant policy by the next fiscal year. We led 92 organizations in sending a letter to the Bank demanding that they close the loophole and take responsibility for their role in Haiti.

## Our Impact: Two Complaints Found Eligible for Investigation

In **Bogotá, Colombia**, communities filed a case to the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) complaint office demanding redress for extreme noise pollution caused by an IDB-funded international airport expansion. The problem is so severe that many local children suffer from hearing damage and a large portion of the community experiences chronic insomnia.

In **Mongolia's South Gobi Desert**, nomadic herders filed complaints regarding the impacts of a railroad and dozens of roads associated with two large-scale mines funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The proliferation of roads in the South Gobi's windy and arid climate, and the volume of traffic associated with mining activities, have been causing serious dust and noise pollution, pasture loss and fragmentation and loss of access to water sources.



**In both cases**, communities filed their complaints without international assistance and, as is common in such cases, their complaints did not mention any specific policy violations. After hearing worrying indications about the eligibility of their complaints, complainants asked Accountability Counsel to assist by filing detailed supplemental submissions analyzing all relevant policy violations. **As a result of our assistance, both complaints were found eligible for compliance review.**

## WELCOMING NEW STAFF



Last fall, we welcomed **Kindra Mohr** to our team as our new Policy Director. Kindra joins us with prior experience combatting corruption at the Office of

Inspector General for the City of New Orleans and the World Bank's Office of Evaluation and Suspension. She previously worked on good governance initiatives at PriceWaterhouseCoopers. As Policy Director, Kindra will open our DC Office this summer and leads our work advocating for independent and effective complaint offices.

### Special Thanks to Our Recent Pro Bono Attorney Colleagues at:

Covington & Burling LLP  
Nixon Peabody LLP

## INDIA:

### Demanding Fair Treatment and Just Wages

Accountability Counsel continues to support tea workers in India to voice their concerns over human rights abuses and unfair treatment carried out by their employer, with funding from the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC). Local groups filed a complaint to the IFC's accountability office, which is conducting an investigation.

Our local partners and student organizations have been active in demanding a living wage for tea workers. Recent negotiations highlighted the ongoing need for these efforts, when the local union agreed to a wage that is far below the state minimum for tea workers.

As a result of the complaint, the tea plantation owner has created a new fund to address living conditions for workers. In December, we traveled to the plantations to document recent changes to living quarters, which are largely cosmetic and inadequate to address the issues raised in the complaint. We are providing this evidence to the IFC's accountability office to help inform its investigation into IFC policy violations.



### Thanks to our Law Fellows & Interns

With us in Spring 2015, pictured top to bottom, are Law Fellows **Iris Mattes** and **Jianyang Hoh** of UC Berkeley Law and **Caroline Reiser** of UC Irvine Law.

Thanks also to our Fall 2014 Bridge Fellow **Lauren Gruber** (UC Irvine Law) and our Intern **Biola Macaulay** (Stanford).



Finally, a very special thank you and farewell to our 2014 year-long Fellow, **South Asia Associate Delphia Lim**.



### Supporting Accountability Counsel

We are grateful for the ongoing support of individual donors like you. Please **donate** online through our website or by check to our address below.

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