



Communique

November 10, 2017

Over 30 civil society representatives, including members of BRICS Feminist Watch (BFW) came together to interact with the senior management of the New Development Bank (NDB) on the 25-26th of October, 2017 in Shanghai.

NDB's President K V Kamath, Vice-Presidents Vladimir Kazbekov, Xian Zhu, and Leslie Maasdorp interacted with the group on various aspects of the bank such as its structure, staffing approach, communications strategy, policies, project financing, design, approval, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and financial instruments including green bonds.

The civil society organisations (CSOs) in turn presented their concerns, suggestions, and demands on issues of transparency, accountability, access to information, gender, environmental and social management, and mechanisms to institutionalize civil society engagement.

Members of BFW made interventions pertaining to the inclusion of women throughout the project cycle. On transparency and access to information, we pushed for timely publication of all project documents before approval to permit affected communities the opportunity for free prior and informed consent, and dedicated spaces for disclosure and dissemination of information which take into account barriers to access for women such as internet inaccessibility. We urged the NDB to learn from the good practices and shortcomings of other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and include strong safeguards for women. We also made the case for the bank to invest in small and decentralized infrastructure projects, instead of mega infrastructure which often neglects or undermines women's rights. Moreover, the bank must support projects which have a positive developmental impact on women such as provision of subsidized clean cooking fuel and farm machinery for women. Finally, we suggested that the NDB consider special mechanisms for assessing women's complaints, regarding sexual harassment for instance.

The BFW also coordinated a session on gender, which strongly reinforced that women must be recognized as independent and productive stakeholders, instead of being limited to a vulnerable group. We highlighted that the disproportionate burdens of women's unpaid or underpaid work and unpaid care work are unacceptably high, and that the NDB's projects, especially on infrastructure and energy, must address these. We urged the bank to outline its position on gender equality, as at present, the bank's general strategy does not mention it. The bank must develop project selection criteria based on gender analyses and support projects which further women's rights to productive assets such as land, housing, and new technologies. Improving women's capacities and ensuring women's rights are desirable developmental outcomes and require careful and targeted planning on the NDB's part.



In this context, we welcome the positive steps already taken and on-going by the bank in terms of ensuring female staff, such as its plan for opening a care facility for children in the office premises. We are heartened that the bank's Diversity Policy lays out the bank's commitment to eliminate barriers and prevent discrimination on grounds of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and marital or family status in the workplace, and that its Environment and Social Framework is committed to mainstreaming gender.

We would also like to acknowledge the positive response that we received to the letter we presented to the NDB senior management, which carried our key demands and was endorsed by over 100 feminist organisations and women across the world. In the letter, we have asked the bank to: -

- 1) Set up an external multi stakeholder gender advisory committee**
- 2) Develop a comprehensive, mandatory gender policy to guide all NDB's structure, governance, and operations**
- 3) Set up an internal gender unit with senior feminist experts within NDB to lead these processes.**

We would like to see the bank follow up on these and integrate gender responsiveness into all aspects of the Bank's operations and functions.

During our discussions, the NDB staff shared that they would consider hiring a gender expert, as well as formulating a gender policy. They have also stated that their approach to sustainable infrastructure goes beyond the do no harm approach to maximizing benefits, which includes gender equality.

In order to further build on our interaction, the NDB has invited civil society for a seminar during the next Annual General Meeting. As BFW, we are willing to support the sessions with inputs on women's rights and inclusion. We are also encouraged to know that the bank would consider filling gaps in country systems and hence, would request the bank to share, in case they already exist, or develop concrete gender dimensions into the assessment methodology before this meeting. We would also urge the bank once again to develop a gender policy and substantive gender indicators during the lifecycle of its projects.

We believe that as a Southern institution committed to sustainable development, the NDB has the opportunity and responsibility to play a transformative role towards achieving substantive equality for all women and girls by tackling structural inequalities and injustices. We therefore, appreciate the bank's engagement with BFW and look forward to deepening our cooperation towards this goal.