

**For Immediate Release**

## **Development Finance for Covid-19 Crisis Should Uphold Human Rights**

*Global Coalition Calls for Essential Services, Economic Justice, Protection for Vulnerable Communities and the Environment*

(May 18, 2020) – Human rights should guide the use of billions of dollars committed by development finance institutions to address the Covid-19 health and economic crisis, the [Coalition for Human Rights in Development](#) said today.

The Coalition of 98 social movements, grassroots groups, and civil society organizations across the world has found that the pandemic is hurting vulnerable communities affected by development projects and exacerbating issues around inequality, violence, militarization, and surveillance.

The Coalition has tracked commitments of about [US\\$90 billion](#) in emergency response from all the major multilateral development banks. Additional resources are likely to be earmarked towards economic recovery, with the World Bank Group saying it is prepared to provide \$160 billion for the next 15 months. As these funds are disbursed, however, [stories of mismanagement](#) and waste have also started emerging.

“Every dollar from a development finance institution could make a real difference for a family facing joblessness, hunger, or eviction, but it needs to reach them,” said [Komala Ramachandra](#), Senior Business and Human Rights Researcher at [Human Rights Watch](#), in Washington, DC. “Now more than ever, development banks should be guiding and overseeing their government and private clients to make sure their dollars have their intended impact.”

In a [statement](#) published today, the Coalition said that development finance institutions should ensure their funds – during the pandemic and beyond – reach the most vulnerable people and provide universal and equitable access to essential services, including health care, food, housing, water, sanitation, education, and sustainable livelihoods. This includes avoiding funding projects that harm the environment, displace people, or threaten food security.

The Coalition also said that institutions should include protections against corruption and provide for transparency, accountability, and meaningful consultation with affected communities.

“Development financiers should guarantee that their beneficiaries – whether governments or companies – have protocols to prevent, monitor, and address rights violations and to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on Indigenous Peoples,” said Aída Gamboa, Coordinator of the Amazon Program of [Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales](#) (Rights, Environment and Natural Resources, DAR) in Peru.

As Covid-19 containment measures have created additional risks and challenges for those speaking out against harmful development activities and standing up for their rights, the Coalition also urged development financiers to help protect civil society and ensure safety from reprisals.

“Environmental and land rights defenders are confronting increased risks and threats during this Covid-19 pandemic lockdown,” said Jaybee Garganera, National Coordinator of [Alyansa Tigil Mina](#) (Alliance to Stop Mining, ATM) in the Philippines. “Confined to our homes, we are unable to respond to destructive actions of mining, logging, dam projects, and other aggressive development activities. Meanwhile, for extractive industries it’s business as usual: mining operations are allowed to continue.”

Reports that resources previously earmarked for other uses are now being repurposed, often without transparency, have heightened concerns, the Coalition said.

“In the best of times, communities face enormous challenges in accessing information and participating in projects that will affect them,” said Elias Jika, Africa Program Coordinator for the [International Accountability Project](#) based in Malawi. “Development banks should follow the highest international standards to ensure communities’ right to information is fulfilled by proactively disclosing all funds that are being used for Covid-19 response and ensuring project information is accessible in local languages.”

The Coalition said development finance institutions should ensure their funds do not exacerbate inequality issues through privatization or public-private partnerships, and that resources going to the private sector are used to support workers’ rights. The Coalition also urged development banks to cancel debt payments for borrowing countries at least until the end of 2020 and use their collective influence to push private actors to extend debt relief.

**For more information, please contact:**

In Rome, for the Coalition for Human Rights in Development, Lorena Cotza (English, Spanish): +39-32-857-61056 (mobile); or [lcotza@rightsindevelopment.org](mailto:lcotza@rightsindevelopment.org) Twitter: @RightsinDevt

In Washington DC, for Human Rights Watch, Komala Ramachandra (English): +1-347-413-1356 (mobile); or [ramachk@hrw.org](mailto:ramachk@hrw.org). Twitter: @Komala\_chandra

In Lima, for DAR, Annie Morillo (Spanish): +51-99-39-31989; or [amorillo@dar.org.pe](mailto:amorillo@dar.org.pe)

In Lima, for DAR, Pamela Cifuentes (Spanish): [pcfuentes\\_consultora@dar.org.pe](mailto:pcfuentes_consultora@dar.org.pe)

In Manila, for ATM, Paul Delin (English): +63-906-419-2895; or [pauljohndelin@protonmail.com](mailto:pauljohndelin@protonmail.com)

In Manila, for ATM, Paul Pangan (English): +63-977-816-1113; or

[pjpangan@protonmail.com](mailto:pjpangan@protonmail.com)

In Lilongwe, Malawi, for the International Accountability Project, Elias Jika (English, Chichewa): +265-999-122353; or [elias@accountabilityproject.org](mailto:elias@accountabilityproject.org)

*The Coalition for Human Rights in Development is a global coalition of 98 social movements, civil society organizations, and grassroots groups working together to ensure that development is community-led and that it respects, protects, and fulfills human rights. We do so by making sure that communities have the information, power, and resources to determine their own development paths and priorities and to hold development finance institutions, governments, and other actors accountable for their impacts on people, peoples and the planet. For a list of members of the Coalition, please see:*

<https://rightsindevelopment.org/our-members>.