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Energy Access – Boosting World Bank Group efforts and the uptake of clean off-grid and mini-grid renewable energy

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, urge the World Bank Group (WBG) to increase the levels and pace of investments in distributed renewable energy to provide clean energy access for the poorest people. The WBG has a key role to play in boosting public finance and technical support to client countries to help remove barriers and incentivise additional investment in renewables. This would demonstrate the WBG's leadership on reducing poverty, promoting energy for all, transitioning to net zero emissions and inclusive economic growth. It would also show the WBG as a responsible financier, responding to increasing demand for low-cost renewables, especially off-grid renewables, to achieve clean energy for all.

We welcome the World Bank Group's commitment to ramp up energy access finance and the increase for off-grid renewable energy to \$600m in 2018. However, business as usual won't deliver energy for all. A huge finance gap remains as \$52bn is needed each year. Finance is urgently needed to reach the 1 billion people who globally still live without access to electricity and 41 per cent of the global population still lack access to clean cooking fuels and technologies. Access to affordable and reliable energy is fundamental to reducing poverty and enabling inclusive economic growth. Businesses and economies can't flourish sustainably unless they have clean, affordable energy. Moreover, since the energy sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, it is paramount that the energy access gap is addressed through renewable energy.

The WBG is not adequately prioritising decentralized renewable energy solutions that addresses both rural energy access and global climate goals. The rate of electrification did not improve for the poorest 40 percent of the population in countries with WBG operations in the last three years, despite the growing demand from client countries. Those living in extreme poverty are under-supported or cannot be reached by private sector companies. The WBG would have a significant impact on energy access progress and reaching those in extreme poverty, if it allocated a larger proportion of its energy portfolio as public finance to off-grid and decentralized renewable energy and clean cooking solutions.

According to International Energy Agency, the number of people without access to energy in sub-Saharan Africa is increasing and part of the problem stems from the fact that finance continues to focus on exporting energy resources ahead of energy access. The lack of guidance in country strategies and criteria for portfolio selection as well as the lack of energy access requirements for policy support to the energy sector and public-private partnerships often result in an imbalance of WBG investments and/or policy reforms aimed at exports and not enough towards domestic energy needs.

In order to avoid climate disaster and provide energy to the rural poor, the World Bank Group must make clean energy access a true priority by committing to

- Develop a roadmap on how the WBG will ramp up significantly its public finance and technical support to meet demand, and mainstream off-grid renewable energy into its energy portfolio, as its contribution as a large development bank, towards achieving the Global Goal for Energy for All. The WBG should also assist the top 20 'high impact' countries - where access rates are lowest.

- Follow the example of the African Development Bank which set an ambitious energy strategy for Africa to achieve electricity access by 2025, including a target to deliver 75 million off-grid connections by 2025.
- Work with national governments and the private sector to improve the enabling environment, redesigning electricity markets, and integrating off-grid and mini-grid renewable energy into national energy planning and electrification strategies. Use existing mechanisms for the grid, especially smart subsidies to make investments in off-grid and mini-grid attractive.
- Develop official investment criteria that provide clear guidance to staff on how to prioritize portfolio selection based on direct increase to energy connections, under-funded renewable energy opportunities, and proven reduction of GHG emissions. All energy related private public-private partnerships (PPP) projects should be designed to contribute to either energy access for the poor or renewable energy, preferably both.
- Put access before exports. Ahead of any WBG support for energy exports in a given country, the World Bank must first ensure increases in electrification rates are taking place at an adequate rate to meet the Global Goal for Energy for All. If not, World Bank assistance must first cover the gap in financing for new electricity connections.
- Track and report on its energy access investments, including off-grid and mini-grid renewable energy, as a share of the total energy portfolio spending annually, with a breakdown by country. The results should be published on the WBG website and be aligned with the corporate scorecard and SE4ALL Energising Finance.

These new commitments are not only essential, but achievable. They would also send strong signals to other investors that the World Bank Group is serious about taking action on climate change and towards achieving energy access for those most in need. It is time for the World Bank to step out of the darkness and light the way on energy access, while combating climate change.

Sincerely,

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| 350.org | Global |
| Abibiman Foundation | Ghana |
| Arab Watch Coalition | MENA |
| Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt (BWGED) | Bangladesh |
| Bank Information Center | USA |
| Bank Information Center Europe | Europe |
| BHAVE Power Systems | Global/USA/India |
| Big Shift Global | Global |
| Bretton Woods Project | UK |
| Buliisa Initiative for Rural Development Organisation (BIRUDO) | Uganda |
| CAFOD | Global/UK |
| Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) | International |
| Christian Aid | Global/UK |
| CLEAN (Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Action Network) | Bangladesh |
| Environics Trust | India |
| Equitable Cambodia | Cambodia |
| Fundacion Chile Sustentable | Chile |
| Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment | USA |
| Inclusive Development International | Global |
| InspirAction | Spain |
| Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns | |
| NGO Forum on ADB | Regional |
| Oil Change International | Global |
| Oxfam | Global |
| Pollinate group | Asia |
| Power for All | USA |

Servicios Juridicos y Sociales SERJUS
Social Justice Connection
SolarAid
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
Tearfund
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Canada
UK/Africa
Sweden
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Germany