Alliance of Civil Society Organisations for Clean Energy Access

POSITION STATEMENT

SECURING THE MISSION 300 DIVIDEND:

A Civil Society Framework for Accountable, Inclusive Energy Finance

ACCESS Coalition

MAY 2026

POSITION STATEMENT

As the African Development Bank (AfDB) convenes its 2026 Annual Meetings under the theme ***"Mobilising Africa's Development Financing at Scale in a Fragmented World,"*** Mission 300 (M300) represents both the Bank's largest energy commitment and its greatest fiduciary test. With over USD 50 billion in pledges and over 600 million people still awaiting electricity, 85 % of them being in sub-Saharan Africa[1] and 2.1 billion lacking clean cooking[2], the quality of implementation will determine whether the investment reaches the last mile or reproduces existing inequalities. Civil society organizations (CSOs) across the continent submit this framework not as opposition, but as partners offering community intelligence, verification capacity and implementation reach that no centralized institution can replicate.

African energy projects bear a weighted average cost of capital approaching 13%, with commercial debt reaching 18.6% making it structurally difficult for centralized energy enterprises to access finance on viable terms. In this fragmented landscape, M300's success cannot be measured by connections alone. It must be evaluated whether those connections reduce poverty, realize rights and deliver equitable transitions. Scale without accountability, transparency, and meaningful community inclusion generates connections that register on dashboards but fail to deliver productive power for energy poor communities.

Evidence from across the continent reveals interlocking structural failures that threaten to divert M300 capital from its intended beneficiaries.

First, a systemic capital mismatch and severe financial opacity exists. The OECD Creditor Reporting System lacks a distinct category for energy access, making it operationally impossible to track whether public finance reaches last-mile populations. This data gaps enables systematic misallocation: finance gravitates toward large-scale generation projects while decentralized renewable energy (DRE) networks responsible for 55% of all new connections in Sub-Saharan Africa[3], receive negligible institutional support. Clean energy finance remains overwhelmingly debt-dominant; grants and highly concessional loans constitute barely 1% of renewable energy aid[4], deepening domestic debt distress while failing to de-risk the solutions most capable of reaching the unconnected. Global clean energy investment reached USD 2 trillion in 2024[5], yet Africa attracted just USD 40 billion around 2% of the global total despite having the largest concentration of the world's energy poor. Annual clean cooking investment in Africa is estimated at USD 675 million, far below the USD 4 billion required to reach SDG7 by 2030[6]. For the AfDB, this mismatch represents a significant opportunity cost, capital that could be doing so at the scale or speed the moment requires.

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[1]IEA, IRENA, UN Statistics Division, World Bank, WHO (2025). Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2025. Washington DC: World Bank. https://trackingsdg7.esmap.org/
[2]WHO (2023). Household air pollution: Key facts. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health
[3]IEA (2025). Africa Energy Outlook 2025. International Energy Agency. https://www.iea.org/reports/africa-energy-outlook-2025
[4]IRENA (2025). Decentralised renewable energy for universal access in Africa. International Renewable Energy Agency. https://www.irena.org/Publications/2025/Africa-Decentralised-Renewables
[5]IEA (2025). Africa Energy Outlook 2025. International Energy Agency. https://www.iea.org/reports/africa-energy-outlook-2025
[6]IEA (2025). Africa Energy Outlook 2025. International Energy Agency. https://www.iea.org/reports/africa-energy-outlook-2025

Second, a governance deficit that diverts resources from those who need them most. Technical and non-technical losses across the region range between 30% and 50%[7] consuming nearly half the resources needed for annual sector investments. Without governance reform, M300 capital risks being absorbed by failing centralized systems rather than connecting the energy-poor communities it is designed to serve. Existing energy subsidies remain deeply regressive: the top income quintile captures six times more in subsidies than the bottom quintile[8], entrenching inequality rather than reducing it. For the AfDB, these governance failures represent both a development challenge and a significant implementation risk that must be addressed through structural reform, not simply increased financing.

Third, a participation gap that undermines both performance and rights. A right based approach to SDG 7 requires that most affected by energy decisions particularly women, displaced populations and marginalized communities have active, timely and meaningful involvement in how energy services are designed and delivered. International safeguard standards too often facilitate consultations as formality rather than decision influencing engagement. The result is tokenistic participation where communities are informed of decisions rather than empowered to shape them. Energy infrastructure designed without genuine community input consistently underperforms on utilization, maintenance, and tariff collection.

By contrast, where governments have treated energy planning as an integrated development process, mapping intersecting barriers and across health, agri-food, and education, and embedding decentralized solutions directly into local budgets, outcomes have improved significantly.

Kenya has demonstrated this through a county-level energy plans that utilized an Energy Delivery Model approach, engaging end users to identify local needs disaggregating the requirements of different groups and mapping both energy and non-energy barriers including skills, policy and socio-cultural factors. Thus, built genuine social ownership and supported integration into county budgets. At the national level, Kenya's Last Mile Connectivity Programme paired subsidized connection fees and lifeline tariffs with micro-enterprise support, achieving expanded access alongside a measurable reduction in income inequality when connections were paired with productive-use programming, illustrating that well designed energy access can reduce inequality, not merely expanse coverage[9].

To secure the Mission 300 dividend, civil society coalitions call for the formal integration of four guardrails into all M300 frameworks.

I.

Adoption of a Decentralized and Clean Cooking Priority Framework.

At least 50% of total M300 capital should be directed to DRE systems and clean cooking the technologies proven to reach last mile populations most effectively. Grants and highly concessional finance should be prioritized for last mile connections and clean cooking given that commercial debt remains inaccessible and unaffordable for the poorest households. To unlock domestic capital and reduce foreign exchange risk for DRE enterprises, Mission 300 should establish a Results-Based Financing (LC-RBF) Guarantee Facility[10] that incentivizes local commercial banks to lend to energy access businesses in underserved areas with explicit targeting of informal peri-urban settlements.

[7]AfDB (2025). Africa Energy Sector Overview. African Development Bank. https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/sectors/energy
[8]IMF (2023). Fossil Fuel Subsidies: Implications for Public Policy. International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/climate-change/energy-subsidies
[9]World Bank (2024). Kenya Last Mile Connectivity Programme: Results and Lessons. Washington DC: World Bank.
[10]ACCESS Coalition (2025). Can Mission 300 Build a Just Energy Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa? Policy Brief Issue No. 3. Nairobi: ACCESS Coalition. https://access-coalition.org/

By directing capital to decentralized and clean cooking solutions alongside grid investment, Mission 300 can maximize the number of people reached while advancing its climate and universal access objectives.

II.

Meaningful, Institutionalized Civil Society and Community Participation.

Mission 300 should transition from adhoc consultations to permanent partnerships where communities and civil society organizations actively shape energy decisions and not only receive notifications after decisions are made. Participatory approaches must be adapted to different local contexts, ensuring that energy interventions are designed around the specific needs, constraints and opportunities of energy poor people in each setting. Energy access must be accompanied by supporting services, productive use programmes, health, education and livelihood linkages to ensure that connections deliver sustainable development impact, not simply a meter connection. At headquarter level, ACCESS calls for a formal CSO advisory mechanism within the AfDB's Mission 300 governance architecture with defined rights to review and respond to programme level decisions before implementation. At national level, accredited CSOs representatives should hold formal seats on all National Energy Compact Steering Committees and Compact Delivery and Monitoring Units (CDMUs), with defined oversight roles for safeguard compliance, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) enforcement, and grievance redress. These partnerships should be resourced: national compact secretariats should allocate dedicated budget lines to cover for CSO participation costs, ensuring that civic oversight is not dependent on voluntary capacity.

For the AfDB, this institutionalizes a layer of community intelligence that improves safeguard compliance, strengthens accountability and generates real-time insight on implementation progress and bottlenecks.

III.

Real-Time, Community-Verified Digital Reporting.

Mission 300 should upgrade its monitoring from static administrative reporting to dynamic, performance-based tracking. By embedding citizen feedback loops directly into the MapAfrica portal and the AESTAP framework, the Bank can leverage georeferenced data from local CSOs to verify actual service quality rather than reported connection numbers. All interventions should be tracked using the World Bank Multi-Tier Framework (MTF)[11] to monitor reliability, safety, and consumer affordability and productive use going beyond binary connection metrics. Disaggregated equity dashboards should show distributional outcomes across quintiles and social groups making inequality visible rather than hidden with national averages. This prevents the Tier 1 Trap, where basic lighting is counted as access and enables course corrections when connections fail to deliver development impact.

IV.

Enforceable Energy Safety Nets (ESNs) and GEDSI Budgets.

Mission 300 should upgrade its monitoring from static administrative reporting to dynamic, performance-based tracking. By embedding citizen feedback loops into establish a minimum level of energy services for the poorest households,

[11]World Bank/ESMAP (2015). Beyond Connections: Energy Access Redefined. ESMAP Technical Report 008/15. Washington DC: World Bank.

ensuring that connection is not the end point but the floor from which productive energy use and development outcomes can grow. Universal energy access cannot be achieved without addressing systemic gender, disability, and social exclusion (GEDSI). The AfDB should require all M300 projects to ring-fence 1% to 2% of total budgets for independent, third-party social monitoring and cross-sectoral development tracking. This funding should explicitly institutionalize Energy Safety Nets (ESNs), including targeted connection subsidies and progressive baseline tariffs, ensuring that the most marginalized households, displaced populations, persons with disabilities, and rural communities benefit from, rather than are bypassed by, Mission 300. Embedding GEDSI indicators operationalizes the Bank's gender strategy while reducing the social exclusion risks that drive project delays and community resistance.

The 2026 Annual Meetings are a defining moment. Mission 300 can become a benchmark for rights based accountable, inclusive development finance. One that delivers genuine development impact and reduced inequalities for Africa's energy poor, not merely connections counted. ACCESS Coalition and Civil society organizations across Africa stand ready not as critics, but as partners. We bring community intelligence, verification capacity, and implementation reach that no centralized institution can replicate. We invite the Board of Governors and Bank leadership to work with us to embed this framework into Mission 300 implementation architecture, and to build the accountability systems that will determine whether the historic commitment truly leaves no one behind.

For further information, please contact: info@access-coalitions.org

ABOUT ACCESS COALITION

Founded in 2014, the Alliance of CSOs for Clean Energy Access (ACCESS) is a global network of over 100 civil society and research organizations and practitioners working at the local, national, regional and international levels. Our mission is to advocate for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 7) to ensure everyone has access to safe, reliable and affordable energy, and for environmentally sustainable and efficient energy systems globally.

ACCESS aims to strengthen transparent and inclusive multi-stakeholder participation at all stages of energy access decision-making as the foundation of a just and inclusive energy transition, amplifying the voices of energy poor people and civil society to deliver just energy transitions and champion people-centred, locally led solutions.

Read more about ACCESS here: **https://access-coalition.org/**