

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 23, 2024

Mr. Ajay Banga
President
The World Bank
1818 H Street NW
Washington, DC 20433

Dear President Banga,

We are writing with regard to International Finance Corporation's (IFC) investment in Bridge International Academies (Bridge) and associated allegations of sexual abuse of students at Bridge schools.

Recent media reports related to the abuse reflect concerns that we raised with the U.S. Treasury in a letter dated October 10, 2023, including allegations that IFC and Bridge management colluded to obstruct and delay the investigation of IFC's independent accountability mechanism, the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO), into the abuse.

Addressing these reports, 35 civil society organizations wrote to you on October 19, 2023, expressing alarm that IFC "turned a blind eye" to evidence of abuse at Bridge schools over a period of years. The civil society letter raises additional concerns about infringements on the independence of the CAO.

An open letter from IFC Managing Director, Makhtar Diop, dated November 10, 2023, responds to the allegations of abuse at Bridge schools. Mr. Diop's letter, however, does not allay the concerns we raised in our October 10th letter or those raised by civil society.

On November 22, 2023, civil society representatives wrote to you and the World Bank Board, in response to Mr. Diop's letter, stating that his letter contained factual inaccuracies and that it was misleading. In their letter, the civil society groups call for the Bank and its Board to:

- consult with survivors and their families on measures to remedy the harm they suffered at the hands of Bridge staff;
- contribute to a fund to pay for those remedies;
- publish the CAO investigation report in full and without redactions;
- commission an independent investigation into allegations that World Bank Group management obstructed the CAO process; and
- recognize World Bank staff who have reported these issues as whistleblowers and have zero tolerance for any reprisals against them.

These requests are aligned with those we elaborated in our October 10th letter to the U.S. Treasury and we urge you to provide a full and transparent response to each of the issues the civil society groups have raised.

We understand that IFC has prepared a management action plan (MAP) in response to CAO's investigation of the child sexual abuse allegations at Bridge schools which is due to be considered by the World Bank Board later this month.

We also understand that affected Bridge students have contacted IFC through CAO and requested to be consulted on the MAP. We seek your assurance that the MAP will address the recommendations in CAO's investigation report, including the recommendation that the Bridge victims receive compensation for the harm they have suffered. Given the Bank's commitment to a "survivor-centered" and rights-based approach to addressing gender-based violence, we also seek your assurance that the MAP will not be approved without prior consultation with the affected students and their representatives.

Finally, we are following discussions of the Bank's proposed "Evolution Roadmap" and note your ambition to build a "bigger" "better" Bank that is equipped to tackle the global challenges of poverty and climate change. We view the Bridge case as a litmus test for the conversation currently taking place around IFC's responsibility to remedy social and environmental harm caused by its projects, especially those where IFC is not following its own policies, which we see as an important foundation for any proposal to increase the funds available to the World Bank Group.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator