



African Workers Position on the African Development Bank's (AfDB) "Mission 300" Initiative to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030

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In April 2024, at the [World Bank Group–International Monetary Fund annual meeting held in Washington](#), D.C., Group presidents and the African Development Bank (AfDB) launched *Providing Access to Electricity for 300 Million People in Africa by 2030*.

ITUC-Africa, IndustriALL and PSI's energy sector affiliates in Africa are deeply concerned that *Mission 300* marks a continuation of the neoliberal approach to electrification. The policies proposed under *Mission 300* are almost identical to the [AfDB's *New Deal on Energy for Africa*](#) initiative, that was launched a decade ago. The *New Deal* pledged to mobilise private investment to achieve 100% access in urban areas and 95% access in rural areas by 2025. With 50% of sub-Saharan Africans still without electricity at the beginning of 2026 – or roughly 600 million people – the *New Deal* was a spectacular failure¹.

Mission 300 likely faces a similar fate because it also relies on “crowding in” private investment by creating “bankable projects” for private interests. The World Bank Group and the AfDB have pledged to mobilise \$48 billion concessional financing, but this financing will be contingent upon [governments using the finance to “de-risk” the investments of private companies](#).

This, we believe, is both untenable and unjust. The World Bank's own studies estimate that the financing gap for Sub-Saharan Africa to reach the SDG 7² goal of 100% access is [in the region of US\\$35 billion to US\\$50 billion annually](#), or between US\$175-US\$350 billion over the 5 year period. The World Bank Group maintains that the private sector is ready to make these investments, although it will “require significant subsidies with amounts in the range of 50 percent of the total capital expenditures.”³

This year the Bank will conduct what it calls [“An Evaluation of the World Bank Group's Support to Electricity Access in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2015–24.”](#) We strongly suggest that

¹ International Energy Agency (2025), *Access to electricity stagnates, leaving globally 730 million in the dark*, IEA, Paris <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/access-to-electricity-stagnates-leaving-globally-730-million-in-the-dark>, Licence: CC BY 4.0

² To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

³ World Bank (2025) *An Evaluation of the World Bank Group's Support to Electricity Access in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2015 – 2024*” <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099233402192522345/pdf/SECBOS-8a99edce-50d8-4e82-98d9-8ca3524db68d.pdf>

the Group use this opportunity to seriously re-think its assumptions about relying on the private sector to lead Africa's electrification, especially when it involves large amounts of borrowing, the burden of which will fall on the shoulders of governments already struggling to service their existing debts.

We are equally concerned that the African Union (AU) at its [38th Summit in Addis Ababa](#) in February 2025 [adopted Mission 300](#) seemingly without any serious questions being asked, as did [the G20 Leaders' Summit Declaration](#) following its meeting in Johannesburg last November.

In its endorsement, the AU reiterated that governments “recognize that the private sector needs to play a central and determinant role ...therefore creating an enabling environment for private sector investment is critical.” The AU believes that regulations supportive of private capital, accompanied by “appropriate incentives and innovative financing mechanisms” are necessary, and it committed to push reforms to make power utilities “financially viable” by way of “tariff adjustments and efficiency improvement measures to ensure utilities achieve at least 100 percent operational cost recovery.” As unions representing energy sector workers, we have a close-up view of what “100 percent operational cost recovery” means in practice. Public utilities become so financially stressed that they are unable to improve or expand the infrastructure necessary for electrification.

ITUC-Africa, IndustriALL and PSI's power sector affiliates urge the World Bank Group and the African Union (which is part of the G20, as is South Africa) to adopt what [we and other trade union bodies call a Reclaim & Restore \(R&R\)](#) alternative to addressing the lack of access to electricity. This approach focuses on providing adequate financial and technical support for public utilities so that they can pursue electrification goals in a planned and orderly way.

In terms of advancing a just energy transition, we encourage the Bank and the AU to take a close look at Mexico's decision to rebuild its public utility and to assign to it a range of energy transition responsibilities, including the expansion of transmission and distribution infrastructure, the deployment of publicly owned renewable energy, and the allocation of final investment decisions to the government, not risk-averse independent power producers (IPPs) whose main priority is to secure returns on investment. The Bank acknowledges that the utilities are the ‘weakest link’ in the energy transition in Africa. The current policy makes that link weaker still in order to create space for the private sector, but the private sector has yet to show up.

Currently, Reclaim & Restore:

- Rejects “full cost recovery” as a measure of utilities' viability. The Bank and the development finance community must recognise the potential role of power utilities in reaching electrification goals within a public pathway framework for energy transition.
- Insists that power utilities in Africa be de-marketized; and financial and technical support for private independent power producers (IPPs) should be redirected towards public utilities armed with an electrification mandate.

- Proposes that African governments repeal the neoliberal privatisation laws introduced by the World Bank and the IMF during the 1980s and 1990s during the period of structural adjustment.

We are convinced that *Mission 300* will not be able to deliver on its 300 million target by 2030 based on the current set of policies. And any electrification that might occur in the coming years will impose an intolerable debt burden on governments, as public money is used to subsidise the profits of energy companies, many of which are multinationals based outside of Africa.

As part of the World Bank's 2026 evaluation, we are ready to explain, further discuss, and otherwise engage the advantages of the R&R approach to electrification. Ensuring the wellbeing and livelihoods of six-hundred million Africans without electricity is our priority. But this will require a new set of policies that can rebuild and improve Africa's public utilities.

Signed by:

African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa), Public Services International (PSI), and IndustriALL Global Union Sub-Saharan African Region Africa on behalf of African workers and their trade unions.

African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa, www.ituc-africa.org), represents over 18 million workers across 52 African countries.

PSI (Public Services International) is the Global Union Federation for public service workers, uniting 700 trade unions with 30 million members in more than 150 countries.

IndustriALL Global Union Sub-Saharan African Region is a Global Union Federation for the extractive, energy and manufacturing workers, uniting 12 million workers in 33 Sub-Saharan countries