

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty and why should it be challenged?

The World Bank wants a leadership role on land issues by organizing this annual conference bringing together private sector, academic, and civil society representatives. But the institution has a very tarnished history with land, and its investments are very detrimental. For instance, in 2014, the Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) teamed up with the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corp. (OPIC) to create a \$350 million insurance facility to cover the risks of investments made by the Silverlands Fund,¹ a private equity fund allegedly accused of financing land grabs.²

Has the World Bank Group been involved with enterprises that commit abuses and grab land from local communities?

The World Bank Group³ provides direct support to agribusiness firms through its private sector arm, the International Financial Corporation (IFC). The IFC has repeatedly given loans to corporations that have been accused of land grabbing and human rights abuses:

- In Honduras, the IFC financed the palm oil producer Corporación Dinant, accused of assassinations and forced evictions of farmers. Complaints filed against the IFC led to an investigation that found multiple failures in its handling of the loan to Dinant.⁴
- In Lao PDR, the IFC gave loans to the Vietnamese rubber giant Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL). In 2014, communities reclaimed land taken away from them by HAGL and filed a complaint against the IFC for breaking its own safeguard policies by loaning money to the company.⁵
- In Uganda, the government evicted 20,000 people for a plantation forest by UK-based New Forests Company. Communities in the Mubende and Kigoba districts filed a complaint against the IFC for supporting this detrimental investment.⁶

How does the World Bank policy take away land from populations?

The Bank pushes for investor-friendly regulations that give corporations cheap access to countries' land and natural resources

- The World Bank's Doing Business rankings score countries according to how well they improve the "ease of doing business" for corporations.⁷ Countries get a better ranking when they lower corporate taxation, reduce environmental and social standards, and eliminate trade barriers.
- In 2013, the Bank created the Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA)—formerly known as the Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture (BBA),⁸ a tool that will increase the push for land commoditization and for deregulation of agricultural sectors.⁹

Examples of the impact of Doing Business-inspired reforms on land include:

- In Liberia, over 607,000 hectares were grabbed by palm oil and rubber giants between 2008 and 2010, while the World Bank supported the implementation of a vast number of business-friendly reforms (39 between 2008 and 2011).¹⁰
- In Sierra Leone after the civil war, the Bank guided a series of reforms to attract foreign direct investments (FDI). These included reforms to fast track land leasing processes. FDI grew from an average of \$18 million per year between 2000 and 2005 to \$740 million in 2012 alone, and by 2011 Sierra Leone had leased 508,292 hectares to foreign agricultural investors (mainly sugar cane and oil palm planters).¹¹

- In Guatemala, the government made significant reforms to attract FDI and enable land transfers with a new Bank-guided land management plan. FDI in the country increased by 41% between 2009 and 2012, to \$1.2 billion, with serious implications for land grabbing. Indigenous communities are the primary losers: 81,000 hectares of land have been grabbed between 2002 and 2012.¹²

The Bank does not know the status of people displaced by projects it finances

- In a recent report, the World Bank reviewed 59 of its projects that involved resettlement and found that “a disturbingly large number of projects had insufficient data available to allow evaluation, and thus received ‘Don’t Know’ ratings.”¹³ In 61 percent of the projects, the status of people physically displaced was unknown.¹⁴
- The World Bank president Jim Yong Kim acknowledged that this trend will remain since the Bank will continue to finance development projects such as dams that “always lead to resettlement.”¹⁵

Examples of Bank projects leading to resettlement include:

- The World Bank-funded Natural Resource Management Project (NRMP) in Kenya, which resulted in the eviction of more than 15,000 Sengwar people and 10,000 Ogiek people in the name of conservation.¹⁶
- The \$34 million World Bank funded Land Management and Administration Project in Cambodia, which resulted in the forced eviction of more than 20,000 people from their homes around Boeung Kak Lake, in Phnom Penh.¹⁷

For more information:

- *Our Land Our Business* [Stop #landrights Fraud!](#) action.
- *Our Land Our Business* statement [The World Bank’s Sham Conference on Land and Poverty](#).
- *Our Land Our Business* [country fact sheets](#).

¹ Saldinger, Adva. “Miga and Opic team to unlock investment in African agriculture.” *Devex Impact*, June 10, 2014. <https://www.devex.com/news/miga-and-opic-team-to-unlock-investments-in-african-agriculture-83661> (accessed March 10, 2015).

² “Pension Funds: Key players in the global farmland grab.” *Against the Grain*, June 2011. <http://www.grain.org/fr/article/entries/4287-pension-funds-key-players-in-the-global-farmland-grab> (accessed March 13, 2015).

³ The World Bank Group is composed of five entities: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Development Association (IDA), International Financial Corporation (IFC), Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

⁴ Farell-Bryan, Dylan. *World Bank’s Bad Business in Honduras*. Oakland Institute, 2014. http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Factsheet_Honduras_English_hirez.pdf (accessed March 10, 2015).

⁵ Weiss, Sophia. *The World Bank’s Bad Business in Lao PDR*. Oakland Institute, 2014. http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Laos_factsheet_final_hirez.pdf (accessed March 10, 2015).

⁶ Martin-Prével, Alice and Faris Mohammed. *The World Bank’s Bad Business in Uganda*. Oakland Institute, 2014. http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Uganda_factsheet_hirez.pdf (accessed March 10, 2015).

⁷ World Bank Group - Doing Business. “Rankings.” <http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings> (accessed March 10, 2015).

⁸ World Bank Group - Enabling the Business of Agriculture. <http://eba.worldbank.org/>. (accessed March 10, 2015).

⁹ Martin-Prével Alice. *Willful Blindness: How World Bank’s Country Rankings Impoverish Smallholder Farmers*. Oakland Institute, 2014. http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Brief_Eng_Final.pdf (accessed March 10, 2015).

¹⁰ Martin-Prével, Alice. “Corporatising Agriculture: World Bank’s rankings facilitate land grabs.” *Bretton Woods Bulletin*, May 2014. <http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2014/05/corporatising-agriculture/> (accessed March 10, 2015).

¹¹ Martin-Prével, Alice. *The World Bank’s Bad Business in Sierra Leone*. Oakland Institute, 2014.

http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Factsheet_SierraLeone_English_hirez.pdf (accessed March 10, 2015).

¹² Farrell-Bryan, Dylan. *World Bank's Bad Business in Guatemala*. Oakland Institute, 2014. http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Guatemala_factsheet_Eng_hirez.pdf

¹³ Involuntary Resettlement Portfolio Review. Phase II: Resettlement Implementation. Social Development Department, World Bank, 2014. <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/pubdocs/publicdoc/2015/3/96781425483120443/involuntary-resettlement-portfolio-review-phase2.pdf>

¹⁴ Schlieff, Ryan. "World Bank President admits resettlement failures: 'What we found causes me deep concern'." *The Guardian*, March 9, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/mar/09/world-bank-president-jim-yong-kim-resettlement-land-rights> (accessed March 10, 2015).

¹⁵ Donnan, Shawn. "World Bank chief warns of surge in people facing resettlement." *Financial Times*, March 4, 2015. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d3e5f2d8-c286-11e4-ad89-00144feab7de.html?siteedition=intl#axzz3TRw5Z361> (accessed March 10, 2015).

¹⁶ Lau, Peiley and Faris Mohammed. *The World Bank's Bad Business in Kenya*. Oakland Institute, 2014. http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Kenya_factsheet_hirez.pdf (accessed March 10, 2015).

¹⁷ Johnson, Nicholas and Peiley Lau. *The World Bank's Bad Business in Cambodia*. Oakland Institute, 2014. http://ourlandourbusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Cambodia_factsheet_final_hirez.pdf (accessed March 10, 2015).