



As one of the largest public development institutions in the world, the World Bank Group (WBG) has an enormous impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in developing and transition countries across the globe.

While the WBG has helped highlight the development challenges facing the planet, projects it has financed have disrupted indigenous communities, displaced millions of poor people and caused widespread environmental damage in the Bank's borrowing countries. Structural adjustment programs have reduced government spending, dismantled state agencies, devalued currencies and opened countries to volatile global market forces, while millions of poor people have been left behind. Most Bank loans are developed and decided without the informed participation of the borrowing country residents. It could be argued that the Bank often has more influence on developing country budgets and operations than the elected governments of those countries. Despite some changes over recent years, there remains

a significant gap between the Bank's stated mission of poverty reduction and the impacts of the projects and policies it supports on the ground.

The last 30 years have seen the emergence of a global movement that has challenged the Bank to protect rather than destroy the environment, to empower rather than impoverish communities, and to be more transparent, accountable and democratic in its approaches to development. Campaigns have been waged to stop disastrous projects, to strengthen environmental and social policies and to fundamentally change the development priorities of the World Bank and other multilateral lenders to aim more directly at alleviating poverty. This global movement – which includes concerned and affected nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), grassroots social organizations, and individuals – has successfully pressured the Bank to undertake significant reforms. Because of these efforts, people around the world now have greater access to information about the Bank's lending activities. Environmental policies are in place requiring environmental assessment of projects and financing for environmental mitigation. And people now have complaint mechanisms – the Inspection Panel and the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman – to which they can directly appeal if they feel they have been harmed by Bank projects.

All of these changes have given the public more tools to participate in economic decision making. The ability to take advantage of opportunities, however, depends on an informed civil society. If it is true that "power concedes nothing without a demand," individuals and communities need to understand what their rights are in the face of the power of the World Bank, in order to effectively make their demands. After twenty years of monitoring the Bank, the Bank Information Center (BIC) believes that without independent public monitoring and pressure, the gap between the Bank's rhetoric and reality will remain wide and may in fact expand. That is why we have developed the Tools for Activists: An Information and Advocacy Guide to the World Bank Group. We hope to increase civil society influence in development decision-making by empowering people with essential infor-



Without independent public monitoring and pressure, the gap between the Bank's rhetoric and reality will remain wide and may in fact expand.

mation about 1) what the Bank is and how it functions, 2) Bank policies that are intended to protect the environment and people's rights, and 3) strategies that can be used to influence Bank lending to promote economically just and environmentally sound development. We hope that this Toolkit will help people around the world find a way to promote and defend their rights in the context of development decisions.

What you'll find in this guide: Tools for activists

Parts 1 and 2 of this toolkit provide a basic overview of what the World Bank Group is, how it works and how it may be affecting your country. **Part 1, "World Bank Group Basics"** provides an introduction to the components and functions of the Bank Group, and a brief description of the power dynamics governing the institution. Exposing the structure and workings of the institution helps to demystify it, alerting readers that the World Bank Group is, above all, a public institution which should ultimately be accountable to the people in its member countries.

Part 2, "The World Bank Group in Your Country" describes in more detail the types of activities the Bank supports in a country, and presents the key stages in the development project and policy cycle.

On the basis of this foundation, the remaining sections of the guide seek to familiarize readers with tools that can help you promote and defend your rights in the context of the Bank Group's operations. Parts 3, 4 and 5, describe three essential components of the struggle to influence development decision-makers: transparency, safeguards and accountability.

Part 3, "Access to Information at the World Bank Group," describes your rights to information and the institution's policies with regard to the disclosure of various documents produced by and for the Bank in the context of its operations. It provides basic tips on how to find and request information from the WBG and to whom to appeal if you are denied infor-

mation. Access to information is the basic starting point for informed engagement, active resistance and viable alternatives to proposed development operations. The World Bank Group produces many documents about its operations, but often doesn't share them with those most affected by the projects and policies it supports. Understanding which documents exist, what rights you have to access them and how to obtain them is a powerful tool to have under your activist belt.

Part 4, "Protecting Your Rights: Environmental and Social Standards at the World Bank Group" presents a brief history and overview of the policies that the World Bank, IFC and MIGA (arms of the World Bank Group) have adopted in response to civil society calls for the institution to prevent environmental and social harms resulting from its operations. Additional users' guides summarize the key provisions of the policies in order to highlight what the WBG's own obligations are and underscore requirements that provide additional support for the defense of social and environmental rights. Clear environmental and social standards are necessary to protect individuals, communities, and ecosystems from harm. Despite its stated goals of sustainable development and poverty reduction, the World Bank Group supports many activities that have adverse impacts on people and the planet. Familiarizing yourself with the institution's own commitments to environmental and social standards can help you defend your rights and those of future generations.

When those environmental and social standards aren't upheld or don't succeed in preventing negative impacts, channels of accountability must exist to provide people with the opportunity to complain and seek redress for grievances.

Part 5, "When Rights Are Violated: Accountability at the World Bank Group and Beyond" introduces the citizen complaint mechanisms that exist at the World Bank Group and discusses alternative channels through which people negatively affected by the projects and policies of the WBG can seek recourse or pressure the institution to address problems. The section includes tips on using the mechanisms, including what to expect from them and their limitations. No one

mechanism can provide a failsafe means to hold the World Bank Group accountable for the impacts of its operations, but by learning how to use the multiple avenues available, you increase the opportunities for social, economic, and environmental justice.

Thank You!

We are indebted to friends and colleagues who have taken the time to offer feedback and suggestions on drafts of this effort. We also welcome comments and feedback from you, our readers. Send thoughts to info@bicusa.org

Our Mission

The Bank Information Center (BIC) partners with civil society in developing and transition countries to influence the World Bank and other international financial institutions (IFIs) to promote social and economic justice and ecological sustainability.

BIC advocates for the protection of rights, participation, transparency, and public accountability in the governance and operations of the World Bank, regional development banks, and IMF.

Our services include:

- Outreach and trainings
- Hard-to-obtain IFI documents
- Country and policy updates
- Problem project monitoring
- Policy analysis
- Advocacy support

Contact us:

HEADQUARTERS

1100 H Street NW, Suite 650
Phone: 202-737-7752
Washington, D.C. 20005
Email: info@bicusa.org

REGIONAL OFFICES

Delhi
Phone: +91-11-65344750
Email: ssharma@southasia.bicusa.org

Bangkok
Phone: +66-2-2758815
Email: jgarcia@mekong.bicusa.org

HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS TOOLKIT

Basics

What the Bank is, how it works and what its doing in your country.

Part 1: World Bank Group Basics

- What is the World Bank Group?
- What does the World Bank Group do?
- The World Bank (IBRD and IDA)
- IFC and MIGA: Supporting the private sector
- Who runs the World Bank Group?
- Where does the World Bank Group get its money?
- Who represents your country at the World Bank Group?
- Quick Reference: World Bank Group Contact Information
- Who represents your country at the World Bank Group?

Part 2: The World Bank in Your Country

- The Big Picture: What's the World Bank Group's plan for your country?
- How does the Bank put the plan into action?
- Building roads, schools and dams: project lending
- Changing laws, regulations and institutions: policy lending
- Bringing in the private sector: IFC and MIGA
- Who can you talk to about World Bank Group projects in your country?
- Quick Reference: Common Arguments You Are Likely to Hear from the World Bank Group
- Quick Reference: Project and Policy Lending Cycles and Key Documents

Tools

Getting information from and about the Bank, environmental and social standards, and holding the Bank accountable.

Part 3: Access to Information at the World Bank Group

- Information is a right!
- Disclosure policies at the World Bank, IFC and MIGA
- Other strategies for obtaining information about World Bank Group operations in your country
- Quick Reference: How You Can Get Information From the World Bank Group

Part 4: Protecting Your Rights: Environmental and Social Standards at the World Bank Group

- Challenges to protecting rights
- World Bank Safeguard Policies
- IFC Performance Standards
- MIGA Safeguard Policies
- Quick Reference: World Bank Safeguard Policies

Part 5: When Rights are Violated: Holding the World Bank Group Accountable

- Internal accountability mechanisms: an introduction
- External accountability challenges: what else can be done?
- Quick Reference: Facts About the Inspection Panel and CAO

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms