

Sample content for teach-ins + global days-of-action

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Introduction

Right now, millions of people are being thrown off their land because large corporations are being given special rights facilitated by the World Bank. These educational materials are part of a campaign to demand the end of the Doing Business (DB) Rankings & Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture (BBA), and to bring in question the very legitimacy of the World Bank and the development paradigm they perpetuate.

The DB rankings launched in 2002, with the first study published in 2003, to rank the world's countries based on the "ease of doing business" in them. For the most part, the fewer regulations a country has, the higher they score. The DB report has become the Bank's most influential publication, and the ranking system is recognized as a powerful tool for compelling countries to initiate regulatory reforms, driving a quarter of the 2,100 policy changes recorded since it was launched.

In March 2014, in advance of the WB's Spring board meeting, the *Our Land Our Business* campaign was launched by a core group of social movements and civil society groups including CICODEV Africa (Senegal), Ekta Parishad (India), CNOP (Mali), INSAF (India), Green Scenery (Sierra Leone), Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia, /The Rules (International) and the Oakland Institute (US). Over 200 civil society organizations have signed up to support the campaign.

The campaign has three primary objectives:

- To shut down the Doing Business Rankings and the BBA
- To delegitimize WB authority for benchmarking and ranking countries
- To bring into the question the legitimacy of the Bank's existence and to question the traditional Western development model

We are now taking the campaign to the next level with the two following moments:

1) A week of global teach-ins from August 11 to 17 to spread awareness among our communities.

2) A simultaneous day-of-action on October 10 in 5-7 cities (including DC where World Bank's annual meeting is happening). The aim is to create an unignorable event to capture both the media and people's imagination around the world, and to show the Bank we will not stand down. The proposed hashtag for the event is #WorldVsBank.

We hope these materials will help educate, agitate and organize communities around the world.

Part 1: Meet the World Banksters

Q: Who is the World Bank?

A: The World Bank was established in Washington, DC in 1944. Their motto is “Working for a World Free of Poverty”, but the truth is they promote a pro-corporate, neoliberal agenda which includes:

- unfair lending policies
- austerity measures that deny people’s right to healthcare or education
- support for environmentally-destructive project
- debt peonage disguised as debt relief

Q: How does the Bank work?

A: The Bank works by promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) in local economies and encouraging “trade not aid” in developing countries. In reality, this FDI is about foreign ownership and structural debt slavery as private interests own more of the country’s resources and hold more power. The idea that foreign investment is necessary for growth is a central tenet of neoliberal ideology. For example, in agriculture, family farmers account for 80 percent of all agricultural holdings in the developing world, and therefore smallholders’ own investments—not FDIs—are the main force sustaining agriculture and should be encouraged. The Bank uses ‘investments’ and other bribes paid to corrupt local elites to try to break up local economies and worker/environmental protections to open up markets for corporate FDI.

You can see the World Bank budget here: <http://bit.ly/WBbudget>

And the Bank’s FAQ here: - <http://bit.ly/WBfaq>

Part 2: What are the Doing Business (Rankings)?

Since 2002 the WB has used the DB indicator to rank countries according to how their regulations operate in favor of the “ease of doing business.” The DB (rankings) are a flagship program for the WB and provide an opening to question the role of the Bank altogether.

As Dr. Jason Hickel from the London School of Economics highlights in his widely read op-ed (see Resource section below), “The Doing Business rankings give investors an incredible amount of power. Countries are forced to respond by cutting regulations to make themselves more attractive to the barons of global capital, setting off a global race to the bottom.”

The DB rankings heavily impact countries’ governance because it is closely followed by investors around the world, influences the WB policy, and is even used by bilateral donors for conditional lending practices. As a result, the DB is a key tool for imposing WB’s view of “enabling” economic environment, pushing governments to cut down regulations, environmental and social safeguards in order to score better in the final ranking. The BBA will take this further, impacting countries’ agricultural sectors by advocating for the opening of markets to the importation of chemical fertilizers and modified seeds, and property reforms that make land a marketable good and render land grabbing easier.

The DB rankings represent and promote a neoliberal ideology. This ideology says that what's good for corporations is good for the everyone; that privatization, low environmental and social standards, and low taxation for businesses are essential components of development. We know this is a lie, masked by the stories they tell about doing "good" in the world. In short, they create systems that make it easy for large corporations to extract wealth from poor countries and communities.

The indicators are:

- One of the World Bank's key tools for promoting private investment
- A measure of how easy it is for foreign companies to do business in a country
- An iPhone app (no, really!)
- Closely followed by investors around the world
- Creating competition between nations to cut down economic, environmental and social safety net regulations
- Benefiting corporate interests at the expense of the citizens of developing countries
- Criticized by the World Bank's own independent review panel
- Throwing millions of people off of their land
- Protecting investors and corporations, rather than farmers
- Creating global poverty

The indicators do not:

- Benefit smallholder farmers, pastoralists and Indigenous Peoples, but help private agribusiness investors
- Lead to sustainable use of natural resources
- Create food sovereignty; in fact corporate control over food is encouraged through large scale and private investment
- Benefit local economies, but rather foreign investors and local elites
- Protect land; in fact they promote land as a mere commodity to be bought and sold to the highest bidder

Land has deep cultural significance to many communities. It is the source of shelter, food; the very ingredients of life itself. We believe it should be valued as such, and not just fed to the market with a dollar value attached.

Part 3: What can we do about it?

So you're convinced that the World Bank, its Doing Business (DB) Rankings and Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture (BBA) are bad ideas? Here's what we can do together:

- Sign our petition to demand an end to the DB Rankings and BBA. You can find it online at <http://ourlandourbusiness.org>
- Dial your local missed call number to signal your support.
- Tell your friends and colleagues about it by sharing the petition and/or local missed called number, or by word of mouth, and on social media or email if you use it. Tell three people about it today.
- Help guerrilla our posters all over your town. Ask your local organizer for hard copies or the files if you have a printer.
- Organize a teach-in of your own and ask for a copy of these materials.

- Share these teachable materials with a friend and talk about the World Bank with them.
- Attend a global day-of-action on October 10.
- If there's not an event near you, find the closest World Bank office in your country and organize a teach-in or other action outside of it. You can find locations here >> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/contacts>
- Promote the #WorldVsBank meme on social media.
- Tell organizations that you're a part of or know to join the 200+ organizations and social movements who are part of this campaign. Learn more about that here >> <http://ourlandourbusiness.org/get-involved/for-organisations/>
- Think of something we didn't? Contact us by emailing ourlandourbusiness@therules.org to share your idea!

When we are asked why we are taking action, here are some sample answers:

1. The World Bank has no legitimacy to benchmark and rank countries.
2. There are wide-scale popular protests happening around the world demonstrating how out-of-touch and harmful the WB's policies are.
3. The DB and BBA rankings are ideologically biased: they prioritise corporate interests and smooth the way for corporations to access countries' natural resources.
4. The World Bank has violated the public trust through structural adjustment programs, the Doing Business rankings, and countless other harmful, pro-corporate racketeering. We believe it's time to abolish the Bank itself.

With your help we can end the BBA, DB Rankings and help millions of people stay on their land, strengthening local agriculture and protecting worker rights and the environment for all of us.

Solidarity!

Resources

Willful Blindness: How World Bank's Country Rankings Impoverish Small Holder Farmers by The Oakland Institute, March 2014 - <http://ourlandourbusiness.org/reports-and-info/read-the-report/>

"The New Shock Doctrine: Doing Business with the World Bank" by Dr. Jason Hickel in Al Jazeera, April 2014: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/new-shock-doctrine-doing-busines-20144473715915842.html>

For individual country fact sheets, please visit:
<http://ourlandourbusiness.org/reports-and-info/country-reports/>

If you have questions or comments, please contact the following people:
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Proposed timeline for actions:

August 2014:

Global day of teach-ins from August 9 to 17
Prepare #WvB action at country level and globally

September 2014:

Release of social media, memes, self-organized toolkits and local missed call numbers

October 2014:

Simultaneous day-of-action on four continents (five to seven cities including DC)
Release of the new Oakland Institute report and new country factsheets

Post #WvB (October 10):

Campaign continuation around the world, creation of new tools to maintain pressure on the DB (rankings), creation of post-campaign networks of dialogues between partner groups.

Tips for Organizers

We're excited that you want to help teach your community about the World Bank! Here we've compiled a few tips on how to have the best teach-in experience. At the end of the day, popular education is about building a community together, so feel free to adapt our lesson plans to best serve your community.

How to Organize a Teach-In

- Find a place in your community that is accessible, safe and not too noisy. The environment where you hold your teach-in sets the context and affects how your community will engage.
- If possible, print out copies of the three lessons for each student if possible, or copies for pairs or groups to share to save money and paper.
- Choose a date for the event and ask your community members to tell others – weekends are best when the most people aren't working.
- Print out flyers about the event as much in advance as possible. You can use any of our logos, artwork, and other designs, which can be found at <http://bit.ly/WBstuff> or contact us directly.
- If you or your organization uses Facebook, put up an event page and/or post to your organization's website and social media.
- If possible, please try to provide light snacks for the day.
- At the end, please leave room for a questions and discussion period.
- If you do hold your teach-in at a World Bank branch, be aware that you and your students may face possible arrest, so decide beforehand if you will comply with disbursement orders and make sure that everyone knows of the possible legal consequences of their actions.