



INTRODUCTION

The background of the page is a photograph of a building's exterior. The wall is made of large, rectangular panels with a vertical, ribbed texture. The words 'WORLD BANK GROUP' are mounted on the wall in large, raised, metallic letters. The ground in the foreground is paved with large, light-colored square tiles. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or a shaded area.

WORLD BANK GROUP

INTRODUCTION

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 plays an important role in understanding and addressing the development challenges facing the planet, in some cases its financing has the opposite impact of what is intended, further impoverishing communities in the places where it finances projects. Projects it has financed have disrupted indigenous communities, displaced millions of poor people, and caused widespread environmental damage in the Bank's borrowing countries. Despite some changes over recent years, most Bank projects are developed and decided without the informed participation of the borrowing country residents, and there often 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.

Over the last 40 years, a growing movement of civil society organizations, activists and communities has challenged the Bank to protect rather than destroy the environment, to empower rather than impoverish communities, and to be more transparent, accountable, inclusive, 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 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 and social safeguard policies are in place that require risk assessments of projects as well as the prevention and mitigation of environmental and social impacts. When these policies are violated, and harm occurs, the WBG now also has complaint mechanisms—the Inspection Panel and the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO)—to which impacted people and communities can directly appeal and seek redress.

All of these reforms have given the public more tools to participate in decision making about development. The ability to take advantage of opportunities, however, depends on an informed civil society. If, as Frederick Douglass said, 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 thirty 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's influence in development decision-making by empowering people with essential information 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 and socially 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

The toolkit is organized into 5 modules that can be read together or used separately. Modules 1 and 2 of this toolkit provide a basic overview of what the World Bank Group is, how it works and how it engages in your country.

Module 1, "World Bank Group Basics," provides an introduction to the components and functions of the World 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 and to alert readers that the World Bank Group is, above all, a public institution which should ultimately be accountable to the people in its member countries.

Module 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 cycle.

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

Module 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 information. 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.

Module 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—three of the five arms of the World Bank Group—have adopted in response to calls by civil society for the WBG to prevent environmental and social harms resulting from its operations. Additional users' guides linked in this module summarize the key provisions of the policies in order to highlight the WBG's own obligations to 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.

Module 5, "When Rights Are Violated: Accountability at the World Bank Group and Beyond," introduces the formal 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. This section includes tips on using the mechanisms, including what to expect from them and their limitations. No one mechanism can provide a fail safe 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 to promote 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@bankinformationcenter.org

BIC's Mission:

The Bank Information Center (BIC) promotes social, ecological and economic justice by amplifying local voices and democratizing development.

Who We Are:

BIC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization that advocates for transparency, accountability, sustainability, and inclusion in development finance.

What We Do:

BIC partners with civil society in developing and transition countries to monitor and influence the policies and operations of the World Bank Group and other international financial institutions (IFIs). In partnership with international, regional, and local CSOs, BIC conducts research and advocacy aimed at reforming and improving IFI policy and practices.

Our Services Include:

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

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How To Navigate This ToolKit

Module 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?
- Who else should have a say?

Quick Reference: World Bank Group Contact Information

Module 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: Key Project Documents

Quick Reference: Common Arguments You Are Likely to Hear from the World Bank Group

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

Module 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

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

- Challenges to protecting rights
- World Bank Environmental and Social Policies
- IFC Performance Standards
- MIGA Safeguard Policies

Quick Reference: World Bank Safeguard Policies

Quick Reference: World Bank Environmental and Social Framework

Module 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



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