WHY IS OXFAM CAMPAIGNING TO STOP BIG LAND DEALS?
In the past decade, an area of land eight times the size of the UK has been sold off globally. Oxfam research shows that many big land deals in poor countries are forcing families from their land, unfairly evicting them from their homes and leaving them with no way to grow food or earn a living. The land tied up in big land deals could help feed the one billion people worldwide who are still going to bed hungry every night. Instead, this land is being bought up by foreign investors who largely intend to export the food they grow back to developed countries. Or turn the crops into biofuels to power cars all over the Western world. Most worryingly, big land deals often lead to land grabs.

‘LAND GRAB’, DEFINITION: A land deal that violates human rights, fails to consult affected people, does not get proper consent and happens in secret. Land-grabbers overlook the social and environmental impacts of the land deal.

Every second, an area of land the size of a football pitch is sold off to banks and private investors.

Most land deals take place in countries with a serious hunger problem – yet investors often intend to export everything produced on the land.

Agricultural land deals mainly target quality farmland – most of which is already being used for small-scale farming – despite frequent claims from investors that land is unused.

Poor families are often evicted from their homes without fair treatment or compensation.

Most women in sub-Saharan Africa have no say in major decisions that affect them. With no legal rights to land, they’re particularly vulnerable to land grabs.
WHAT DO WE WANT?
Oxfam is calling on the World Bank to temporarily freeze its investments in big land deals. As the world’s most influential standard-setter and a big investor itself, the World Bank can play an important role in getting the situation back under control.

We want the World Bank to create a future where no project it supports leads to a land grab. The bank must:

- Freeze, for six months, all lending to projects that involve or enable big agricultural land deals
- Review the extent to which World Bank policy and practice on land deals are open and transparent; ensure consent from those affected; promote land rights and help reduce hunger
- Commit to improving its policy and practice on big land deals, setting better standards for others to follow. Once these standards have been set, there should be no looking back.

WHERE DOES THE UK GOVERNMENT COME IN?
The UK Government can play a crucial role in promoting action to prevent land grabs – its Presidency of the G8 offers a unique opportunity, too. The UK Government should:

- Urge the World Bank to take action, freeze its investment and review its activities
- Use the Presidency of the G8 to put land high on the global political agenda.

THE WORLD BANK MUST TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT ITS INVESTMENTS
Responsible investment in agriculture and better support for small-scale farmers is an essential part of fighting poverty. But World Bank and IMF research shows that most of the land being sold off in big land deals is in the poorest countries with the weakest protection of land rights. So why the sudden demand for this land? The 2008 boom in food prices saw big land deals by foreign investors rocket by 200% in developing countries. Now, with food prices spiking for the third time in four years, investors see land as a good long-term bet. Especially poorly regulated land that can be leased for as little as $7 per hectare.

The World Bank’s investment in agriculture has tripled in the last decade. This is a welcome increase. However, if this investment involves big land deals, it also heightens risks of families losing their homes, jobs and food. These risks can’t be ignored. Our calculations suggest that the land bought between 2000 and 2010 could feed one billion people. Incidentally, this is the same number of people going hungry in the world today.
But the reality is that very few – if any – of these land investments will feed or benefit local people. The World Bank must ensure that agricultural investment works for poor people and small farmers, and freeze any investments involving large agricultural land deals until better policies are in place to prevent land-grabbing. **We must act now.**

THE GLOBAL LAND RUSH IS OUT OF CONTROL...

More than 30% of the land in Liberia has been handed out in big land deals over the past five years.

Africa has borne the brunt of the global land rush, with an area the size of Kenya acquired for agriculture by foreign investors in just ten years.

Since 2008 alone, 21 formal complaints have been brought by communities affected by World Bank investments. Each complainant claims that land deals have violated their land rights.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Together, we can put pressure on the World Bank and the UK Government to encourage them to act before any more lives are destroyed by land injustice. You’ll see our ‘GET OUT’ adverts in the press soon, and there is plenty more you can do to help.

- Sign and share our petition to urge the World Bank to freeze its investments in big land deals at www.oxfam.org.uk/land

- Stage your very own land grab – media stunts will be a very effective way of raising the profile of land injustice and convincing people to act. For more information on media stunts, visit www.oxfam.org.uk/toolkit

- Hold a stall in a public space where you can hand out literature, talk to people about land injustice and get them to sign the petition.

- Contact your MP to let them know this issue is important to you. Use www.theyworkforyou.com to find out who your local MP is, then write to them or visit in person.

- Tweet or Facebook your support for the land freeze campaign – you may even recruit a few of your friends!

- Use social media to share our land freeze animation or link to our report on land grabs.

- If you’re comfortable in front of the camera, why not make your own video explaining why you want the World Bank to freeze its investments in big land deals? Post it on YouTube and share it with everyone you know.
RESOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit www.oxfam.org.uk/land to find out more and watch our animated guide to land grabs. If you would like to organise your own land grab stunt or campaign with others in your area, please get in touch with your local activist co-ordinator for resources and advice.

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