

THE OAKLAND INSTITUTE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



The Oakland Institute

Dropping The Keys

Dear Friends,

The past year impacted each and everyone of us. But it unleashed unprecedented challenge to those already marginalized and threatened around the world. The Indigenous, migrant workers, small holder farmers, and people of color faced the worst brunt – crushed simultaneously by COVID-19 and the pandemics of racism, fascism, climate crisis, and injustice.

At a time when our work to dismantle structures perpetuating inequity has never been more critical, we held firm to the four principles that drive our work: courage, rigor, agility, and accountability. Amidst smear campaigns and threats, hurled at us to intimidate and silence our research and advocacy exposing those profiteering from landgrabs, we proudly stood alongside land defenders and communities from Palestine, DRC, and Tanzania to Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, and Nicaragua – resisting neo-colonialism and theft of natural resources. Partnering with impacted communities in their struggle for land, livelihoods, human rights, and protection of the environment, we are unafraid to hold powerful governments, international financial “development” institutions, and corporations accountable.

Our work starts at the request of communities from around the world who seek the Institute’s support in their struggles. We take on issues that are far outside of the public eye, up against powerful actors that will not be easily won, or easily funded. Despite these odds, our persistence and tenacity has led to momentous wins for communities.

In the following pages you will read about the struggles our committed team is part of. Driven by conviction and the truth, we stand up, speak up, mobilize, and take action. I hope our annual report will uplift you by reaffirming that regardless of the odds, victories against injustice are always within reach.

“The small man builds cages for everyone he knows. While the sage, who has to duck her head when the moon is low, keeps dropping keys all night long for the beautiful rowdy prisoners.” – Hafez

Deep gratitude to our friends and allies for making this possible!



Anuradha Mittal
Executive Director





WHO WE ARE / WHAT WE DO

Hold Powerful Actors Accountable

Our work holds governments, corporations, and international institutions accountable for their actions and policies. We publish reports based on our research and analysis, organize advocacy campaigns, testify at hearings, and much more.

Dismantle False Solutions

The Institute's research and advocacy exposes and challenges the false solutions put forward by governments and corporations to fight hunger, climate change, and bring about development.

Strengthen Land Rights and Livelihoods

In partnership with impacted communities, we document threats to land rights, livelihoods, and natural resources and develop communications and advocacy campaigns to support and elevate these struggles in both the local and international arena.

Support Sustainable Farmer-led Food Systems

We support sustainable farmer-led food systems and work to build a farm economy from the bottom up. Our research is bringing forward blueprints and evidence of what these systems can look like and what policy changes are needed for them to flourish.

Stand by our Partners in the Face of Criminalization

The Legal Defense Fund we started in 2015 to support land rights defenders continues to assist individuals and groups around the world.

Elevate People's Voices

Underlying all the work of the Oakland Institute is our strong commitment to elevate the voices of farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, Indigenous Peoples, and all communities who are ignored, marginalized, and repressed in the name of development. After all, the poor are the experts on poverty; the oppressed are the experts on human rights; and peasants, farm workers, and rural communities are the experts on agricultural development.



2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Alert on Land Privatization

While the privatization of land is being touted as a development imperative, our report [Driving Dispossession](#) debunked this myth, sounding the alarm on the unprecedented wave of privatization of natural resources that is underway around the world. The report reveals the myriad ways by which governments – willingly or under the pressure of financial institutions and Western donor agencies – are putting more land into so-called “productive use” in the name of “unlocking the economic potential of land” while threatening millions of livelihoods around the world. At the request of partners, the report’s central themes were condensed into an educational resource that has been translated into several languages to help communities protect customary land.

Shattering the Silence on Indigenous Human Rights Crisis in Nicaragua

While Nicaragua is seen as exemplary in granting land rights to Indigenous communities, our report [Nicaragua's Failed Revolution](#), shattered this notion, detailing the incessant violence facing the communities in the Caribbean Coast Autonomous Regions. It uncovered the actors involved – foreign gold mining firms, national and international actors in logging and cattle ranching industry, as well as prominent Nicaraguan officials. Two follow up investigations dragged the major players across mining and forestry into the spotlight and showed the true impact of their resource pillaging on local communities.

The widespread media coverage and advocacy campaign following the report led the Inter American Commission for Human Rights to conduct a public hearing where alongside partners, the Oakland Institute shared its findings with officials from the Americas, including the Nicaraguan government. Additionally, taking stock of our findings, the resolution on Nicaragua at the 46th session of UNHRC in March 2021 called for “accountability for violence against the Indigenous, Afro-descendent and Environmental Human Rights Defenders; and for the state to take effective measures.”

Close to Slavery Conditions in the US Guest Farmworker Program

[Dignity or Exploitation – What Future for Farmworker Families in the United States?](#) was published as an educational and advocacy resource at the time the Biden Administration was weighing various immigration policy reforms. We exposed the systematic abuse of workers in the H-2A program and its impact on the resident farmworker communities. Contract workers under the program face living and working conditions that are “close to slavery,” with their basic rights denied by their status.



COVID-19 exacerbated an already dire situation, with high infection rates due to congregate housing, pressure to continue working while sick, lack of care, and no access to relief measures. We continue to echo calls for an immigration system based on family reunification, community stability, and human dignity, while protecting the wages, rights, health, and housing rights of farmworkers.

Changing the Narrative on “Development” in PNG

Building on our work on the impact of extractive industries in Papua New Guinea since 2011, we co-published a new report analyzing PNG's development performance since its independence. While PNG has relied on the large-scale extraction of abundant minerals, timber, and other natural resources under the illusion it will improve the lives of its citizens, by most indicators PNG is faring worse than its Pacific neighbors. Any progress achieved, does not reflect the huge cost of the resources extracted. Revealing how multinational corporations externalize social and environmental costs and repatriate their profits, [From Extraction to Inclusion](#) called for important policy shifts to end the plundering of resources and put people and the environment first. Our work has played a critical role in securing several monumental victories. The PNG government has taken major steps to crack down on tax evading logging companies and drastically increase taxation on logging companies. Rimbunan Hijau, the largest logging company in PNG – exposed by the Institute for massive tax evasion, announced it was ceasing logging activities in the country as a result of these measures.

Elevating Voices of the Forgotten in Sri Lanka

Since 2015, we have remained one of the few international organizations to denounce the continued repression of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. Amidst the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in March 2021, [Endless War: The Destroyed Land, Life, and Identity of the Tamil People in Sri Lanka](#), brought forward shocking evidence on the extent of the continued persecution of the minority Tamil population. Providing a timely update on the extent of land grabbing and the impact of militarization on the Tamil population – one military personnel for every six civilians – our advocacy led to new UNHRC resolution that holds the government accountable for human rights abuses and increases the capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner to monitor violations of international law for future prosecutions.

Exposing Investors Bankrolling Land Theft in DRC

Community efforts to reclaim 100,000 hectares of ancestral land – seized over a century ago for oil palm plantations – face violent repression and even killings. In February 2021, as communities peacefully protested a delegation from PHC plantation owners, security forces cracked down, violently arresting over a dozen protestors. In light of this, [In King Leopold's Steps](#), unmasked the universities, pension funds, and philanthropic foundations bankrolling the plantations. Media coverage and advocacy following the report helped fuel the global outrage garnering nearly 125,000 signatures to a petition calling for the release of villagers. While securing the return of ancestral land will not be easy, we continue to amplify the voices of our partners while pressuring the high-profile investors to withdraw from the plantations.



2020 ACTIVITIES

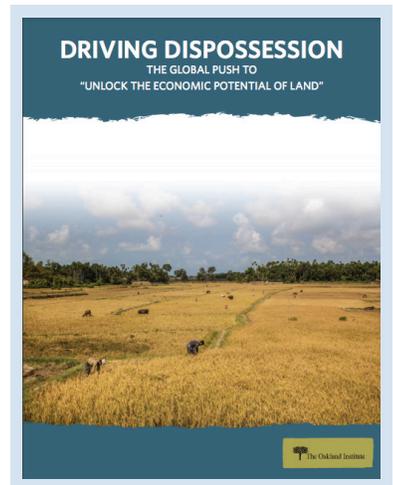
Uncovering an Unprecedented Wave of Land Privatization

Amidst a worsening climate crisis, we released, [*Driving Dispossession: The Global Push to “Unlock the Economic Potential of Land,”*](#) sounding the alarm on the unprecedented wave of privatization of natural resources that is underway around the world. Through six case studies – Ukraine, Zambia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, and Brazil – the report exposes the myriad ways by which governments – willingly or under the pressure of financial institutions and Western donor agencies – are putting more land into so-called “productive use” in the name of development.

The report reveals the United States as a key player in an unfettered offensive to privatize land around the world via US blockchain corporations, government agencies, and the World Bank. In Zambia, the Bank has partnered with a subsidiary of the US-based online retailer Overstock.com to use blockchain technology for land titling with the goal of “unlocking trillions of dollars in global mineral reserves that are inaccessible due to unclear land governance systems.” In Sri Lanka, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a US government entity, is targeting state land – it intends to map and record up to 67 percent of the country to “promote land transactions that could stimulate investment and increase its use as an economic asset.” In Ukraine, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund leveraged the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic to coerce “Europe’s breadbasket” into putting its agricultural land for sale in a land market.

The same logic is at play in Myanmar. In 2018, the Vacant, Fallow, and Virgin Land Law was amended to boost economic development by making so-called “vacant” lands available for agriculture, mining, and other purposes. In Papua New Guinea, where 97 percent of the land is customary, the government wants to “unlock” this land so it can be “mobilized” and put in “productive use” to ensure “private sector growth.” Finally, in Brazil, Bolsonaro has been aggressively expanding ranching and exploitation of the Amazon at the expense of the Indigenous People and the forests they live in and have stewarded for generations.

The report generated [widespread media coverage](#) including articles in *Reuters*, *Mongabay*, *Asian Tribune*, *Ceylon Today*, among others, and inspired hundreds to [take action](#) and call on the United States Congress to stop the US from driving this privatization of land around the world. In Sri Lanka, the report was successfully used by civil society to pressure the government to reject the compact, which they ultimately did at the end of 2020.



Driving Dispossession also helped inform [current legislation](#) under consideration to target deforestation and improve the sustainability of global supply chains. The report and webinar provided an update on our past work with our partners in Papua New Guinea, Ukraine, and Sri Lanka as it amplified the ongoing struggle to protect their land that civil society and communities continue to wage.

At the request of partners, the report's central themes have been condensed into [This is Our Land](#), an educational resource which debunks myths around benefits of privatizing land and provides facts on how customary tenure systems are critical to protecting livelihoods, biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable development for people and the planet. The resource, made available in three languages, has been translated by partners in native spoken languages.

Thank you - as always! - for doing such urgently necessary work, endlessly uncovering and calling out injustice!

– Rachael Knight, Senior Associate, International Institute for Environment & Development (IIED)

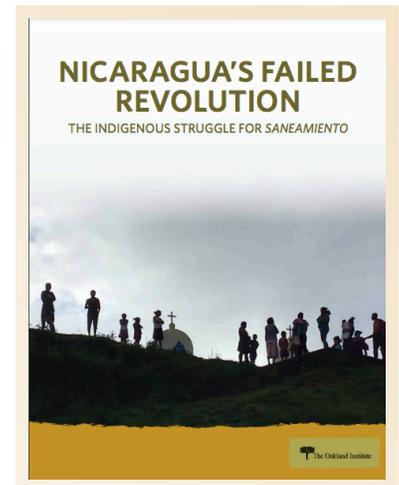
Shattering the Silence on Indigenous Human Rights Crisis in Nicaragua

Following a direct ask for support from the impacted communities in the North Caribbean Coast (RACCN), [Nicaragua's Failed Revolution](#) documented the land rights struggle of the Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities and exposed the actors driving this dispossession, including [foreign gold mining firms](#), [logging](#) and cattle ranching industry, as well as prominent Nicaraguan officials. The report generated millions of [media](#) impressions through coverage in the [New York Times](#), [Guardian](#), [Le Monde](#), [Washington Post](#), [ABC News](#), and [Mongabay](#), and Spanish language media. Based on our report, *PBS NewsHour* produced a segment, [The Cost of Beef](#), that exposed Nicaragua's increased beef exports to the US are enabled through violence against the Indigenous. This media coverage resulted in the Institute briefing Congressional offices and the US State department.

Following the report, we dug further into the history and impacts of the major players in the forestry and mining industries and their other past and present ventures. [One Degree Removed](#), exposed links between a forestry company, MLR Forestal, and gold mining operations in Nicaragua, raising concerns around sustainability certifications from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and UTZ for its teak and cacao products, and US\$10 million from both development finance institutions, FMO and Finnfund.

[Is Nicaragua for Sale](#) profiled several key mining companies active in Indigenous territories, including the Canada-based Calibre Mining Corporation and B2Gold Corporation, as well as the UK-based Condor Gold. The report raised serious concerns about their operations – including the lack of transparency and ways by which land was acquired without the consent of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Protests against the expansion of mines have been met with widespread repression, police violence and many arrests in recent years.

Our advocacy aimed at the international and regional human rights mechanisms continues to yield results. The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders sent a [letter to the Nicaraguan government](#) calling for a full investigation into November 2020 murder of a Mayangna leader challenging illegal gold mining and forestry operations. The World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility [dropped Nicaragua from its portfolio](#). The Inter American Commission for Human Rights conducted a public hearing where the Institute presented the report's findings in the presence of representatives from the Nicaraguan government. Finally, the Resolution on Nicaragua at the 46th session of UNHRC in March 2021 called for "accountability for violence against the Indigenous, Afro-descendent & Environmental Human Rights Defenders; and for the state to take effective measures."





“The Oakland Institute’s work continues to shine a spotlight on the human rights and eco-cultural crisis that the Indigenous and the Afro-Descendant communities are facing in Nicaragua. You exposed the link between the government offering more land to foreign extractive companies, resulting in violence and land grabbing for the Indigenous communities. This work has been a ray of sunshine telling the world the truth of our situation.”

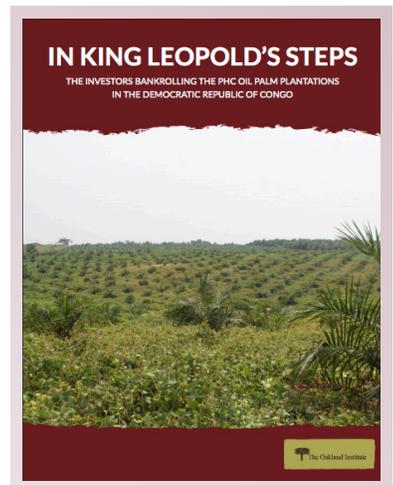
– Lottie Cunningham, 2020 Right Livelihood Laureate and Founder of the Center for Justice and Human Rights of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (CEJUDHCAN)

Exposing Investors Bankrolling Land Theft in DRC

Community efforts to reclaim 100,000 hectares of ancestral land – seized over a century ago for oil palm plantations – face violent repression and even killings in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Livelihoods have been severely impacted with hunger and poverty widespread while the dumping of untreated industrial waste has polluted a major source of drinking water. Community members, working as laborers on the plantations, have been subjected to unpaid wages and unsafe working conditions.

“This report will be widely disseminated to the authorities and civil society in DRC. We hope that it can be used as a model of the fight against land grabbing in our country and across Africa.”

– Jean-François Mombia Atuku, Réseau d’information et d’appui aux ONG (RIAO-RDC), Democratic Republic of Congo



In the last two years, violence perpetrated by PHC oil palm plantation security against local villagers has escalated. In February 2021, as communities peacefully protested a delegation from PHC owners, security forces cracked down, arresting over a dozen protestors. In light of this, In [King Leopold's Steps](#), unmasked the current high profile investors bankrolling the plantations – the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, US universities (including the University of Michigan, Northwestern University, and Washington University in St. Louis), the South African Government Employees Pension Fund, and the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Scheme in the UK, among others.

[Media coverage](#) and advocacy following the report fueled the global outrage garnering nearly 125,000 signatures to a [petition](#) calling for the release of villagers. Our advocacy in support of the communities impacted by the plantations continues. We remain undaunted and committed to holding these actors accountable and helping secure the return of people’s ancestral land.



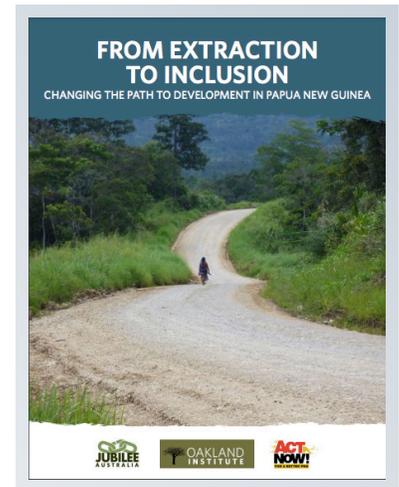
Changing the Narrative on “Development” in Papua New Guinea

Building on our work on the impact of logging and oil palm plantations in Papua New Guinea (PNG) since 2011, [From Extraction to Inclusion](#), a joint publication with Jubilee Australia and Act Now, analyzed PNG’s development performance since independence. While PNG has relied on the large-scale extraction of abundant minerals, tropical timber, and other natural resources under the illusion it will improve the lives of its citizens, by most indicators PNG is faring worse than its Pacific neighbors. Any progress that has been achieved does not reflect the huge value of the resources extracted. Exposing how multinational corporations externalize social and environmental costs and repatriate their profits, the report called for important policy shifts to stop the plundering of resources and put people and the environment first.

A decade of continued research and advocacy has played a critical role in securing several major wins. After two reports from the Oakland Institute laid bare massive tax evasion by logging companies, the PNG government has taken major steps to crack down and drastically increase taxation on the companies plundering the world’s third largest rainforest. In May 2021, PNG’s Internal Revenue Commission (IRC) announced decisive action against the loggers: 20 companies are being audited as the IRC scales up compliance activities – including criminal prosecutions.

Rimbunan Hijau, the largest logging company in PNG – [exposed](#) by the Institute for massive tax evasion – announced it [ceased logging activities](#) in the country.

This sets an example for the rest of the world. Governments in the Global South must use their power to stand up to the powerful corporate interests responsible for economic and environmental devastation, deforestation, and climate change.



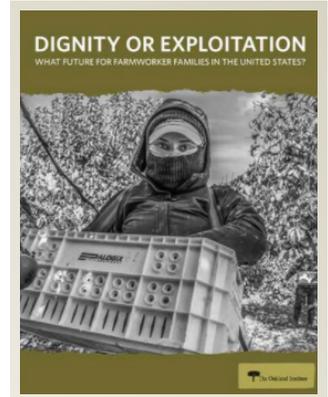
“The Oakland Institute exposed that foreign logging companies have been evading corporate income taxes by manipulating their financial reporting. This revelation fueled our struggles and led the government to raise taxes on timber exports. This move by the government has driven down logging and increased fiscal revenue.”

– Eddie Tanago Paine, ACT NOW!, Papua New Guinea

Close to Slavery Conditions in the US Guest Farmworker Programs

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US, we released [Dignity or Exploitation – What Future for Farmworker Families in the United States?](#) – a report documenting the systematic abuse of workers in the H-2A program and its impact on the resident farmworker communities. The report was published as an educational and advocacy resource at the time when the Biden Administration was weighing various immigration policy reforms. The H-2A “guest worker” program, which allows US firms to recruit farmworkers from other countries, has grown dramatically in recent years to reach over 250,000 workers in 2020. Contract workers under the program face living and working conditions that have are “close to slavery,” with their basic rights denied by their status.

Authored by David Bacon, Oakland Institute Fellow and a renowned researcher and advocate for farmworkers in the US, the report unveiled how COVID-19 has exacerbated an already dire situation, with high infection rates due to congregate housing, pressure to continue working while sick, lack of care, and no access to relief measures. We continue to echo calls for an immigration system based on family reunification and community stability, while protecting the wages, rights, health, and housing of farmworkers.



Keeping a Watch on the World Bank and the IMF in Covid Times

While the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have promised billions of dollars in loans to help countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been on the forefront of analyzing the conditionality that accompanies this “assistance.”

In [Kenya](#), we revealed how the World Bank’s billion dollar loan for ‘emergency COVID relief’ was conditioned to significant reforms in the agricultural sector and likely, a large part of it will end up in the bank accounts of agro-chemical corporations.

In Ukraine, Our *Driving Dispossession* report has denounced how the IMF leveraged the COVID-19 economic fallout to coerce the country into creating a land market despite widespread opposition from the population who rightfully fear it will primarily benefit agribusiness and oligarchs instead of farmers.



Our research in [India](#) showed how the government deployed the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index to condition lending to states to implement pro-business reforms that undermine labor, environment, and land rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the pre-existing economic inequities and imbalance of power around the world. By taking on the monitoring of lending conditions and the identification of detrimental policy prescriptions imposed to governments, our work keeps citizens better informed and able to take action when necessary. In Kenya, [the citizens’ movement against the IMF loans](#) to the country exemplifies how the power of truth in the hands of the people can stop the wrongdoings of their own governments and of the financiers who bankroll destitution and exploitation.



THE OAKLAND INSTITUTE IN THE NEWS

Alert on Land Privatization

REUTERS
Pandemic upheaval creates 'perfect storm' for land rights abuses

REUTERS
Privatisation 'wave' hurts poor as pandemic heightens risks

MONGABAY
NEWS & INSPIRATION FROM NATURE'S FRONTLINE
Mongabay Series: Land rights and extractives
New report asks, do land titles help poor farmers?
by John C. Cannon on 22 July 2020

Daily FT
Be Empowered
MCC could potentially shift millions of hectares of land into private control, says US-based think tank
Tuesday, 27 July 2020 19:22

- Oakland Institute report is based on six case studies including SL on global push to 'unlock the economic potential of land'
- Says MCC project will extensively map and digitize land records of up to 67% of SL
- Says land project focuses on mapping and digitising State lands for explicit purpose of stimulating investment and increasing its use as an economic asset

THE CITIZEN REPORT
18 JULY 2020
Global Capitalists Ravenous for Land in Developing World
By the author 'Markus'

peoples dispatch
Neoliberal discourse on land harms livelihoods and environmental security: Oakland Institute report
Studying the cases of countries like Ukraine, Zambia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and Brazil, the Oakland Institute report debunks some of the myths on development and land use propagated by mainstream economics, and calls for the preservation of commons.
July 17, 2020 by Anna Karmali

CEYLON TODAY
How Making Land Marketable Adversely Affects the Underprivileged
By Rika Mendonca | Published 20 July 2020

NewsIn Asia
How making land marketable adversely affects the underprivileged
Many governments around the world have been prompted to adopt the Western capitalist notion of private land ownership.

Common Dreams
US Corporations a Driving Force Behind 'Unprecedented Wave' of Global Land Privatization: Report
Underlined capitalism has brought us to this disaster. We must halt and reverse the privatization of the commons to protect and nurture these natural resources for future generations.
by Julia Garcia, staff writer

ASIAN TRIBUNE
NEWS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES
Sri Lanka & MCC: US Think Tank alerts 'Land Grab' by private sector

Endless War in Sri Lanka

வலம்புரி
Valampuri
தமிழர்களின் நிலங்கள் சிங்கள மயமாக்கப்படுகின்றன
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Western Front
தமிழ் வரலாற்றுமயம் கலாச்சாரத்தை அழிக்கும் 2 க்திகள்

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தமிழ் வரலாற்றுமயம் கலாச்சாரத்தை அழிக்கும் 2 க்திகள்

தினக்குரல்
அமெரிக்க புத்திலீவிகள் அமைப்பு முன்வைத்த அறிச்சி ஆதாரங்கள்

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Changing the Narrative on "Development" in Papua New Guinea

RNZ
PACIFIC / PAPUA NEW GUINEA
PNG leaders called on to foster economy driven by the locals

The Fiji Times
NEWS
PNG leaders called on to foster economy driven by the locals

In King Leopold's Steps



Mongabay Series: Land rights and extractives
Pension and endowment funds linked to conflict-plagued oil palm in DRC
 by John C. Cannon on 22 March 2021



RDC : Le nouveau rapport de l'Oakland Institute dévoile les investisseurs finançant les plantations de palmiers à huile de PHC

la Repubblica
Repubblica Democratica del Congo, l'accaparramento delle terre è senza fine oltre 100mila ettari sottratti alla popolazione



Bataille juridique autour des Plantations et Huileries du Congo entre Kuramo Capital et Nile Capital



State pension money invested in 'questionable' Congo palm oil company
 SA's involvement in the business, which is accused of past human rights violations, is described as 'highly inappropriate'

Human Rights Crisis for Indigenous in Nicaragua

The New York Times
Report: Nicaragua Government Failing to Protect Indigenous



Nicaragua failing to protect indigenous groups from land grabs: Report

The San Diego Union-Tribune
Nicaragua is promoting illegal land grabs in indigenous territories - report
 More than 40 members of indigenous communities have been killed since 2015, and many say settlers have been responsible

The Washington Post
 Report: Nicaragua government failing to protect indigenous



Report: Nicaragua government failing to protect indigenous
 by CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN April 29, 2020

Le Monde
 Coronavirus : au Nicaragua, les violences se multiplient contre les Indigènes
 L'ONG Oakland Institute accuse le président Daniel Ortega de profiter de la pandémie pour accélérer l'invasion par les colons des territoires des communautés autochtones.



Report: Nicaragua government failing to protect indigenous
 A new report says Nicaragua's government has failed to enforce laws that protect its indigenous peoples and their communal lands, and is even actively promoting illegal land grabs and granting concessions to mining and timber companies



Nicaragua: Reporte independiente expone intereses detrás de violencia y despojo territorial del Pueblo Miskitu
 PUBLICACIÓN: 29 ABRIL 2020



Report: Nicaragua government failing to protect indigenous



Sacádoslos de su tierra

Call on the UN to End Business with Bolloré Group



DES ONG DEMANDENT À L'ONU DE NE PLUS TRAVAILLER AVEC LE GROUPE BOLLORÉ



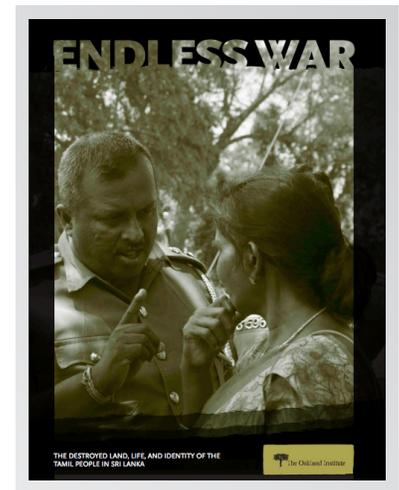
L'ONU sommée par des ONG de rompre ses contrats avec Bolloré
 Quarante organisations signent une lettre ouverte pour demander à l'ONU de rompre leurs contrats avec le groupe Bolloré. Pour elles, il ne respecte pas les principes des Nations unies.



Elevating Voices of the Forgotten in Sri Lanka

Since the Oakland Institute first published *The Long Shadow of War: The Struggle for Justice in Postwar Sri Lanka* in 2015, we have remained one of the few international organizations to denounce the continued repression of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. Our rigorous research has raised the land issue to the forefront and provided the Tamil community with unassailable evidence vital to elevating their struggle in the international arena.

Amidst the 46th session of the UNHRC in March 2021, *Endless War: The Destroyed Land, Life, and Identity of the Tamil People in Sri Lanka*, brought forward shocking evidence on the extent of the continued persecution of the minority Tamil population. Providing a timely update on the extent of land grabbing and the impact of militarization on the Tamil people – one military personnel for every six civilians – the report revealed how under the guise of “development projects,” government driven Sinhalese colonization is growing within Tamil areas with the intent to change demographics and deny local communities access to their land.



“Your commitment to telling the truth about the war history, colonial style settler displacement, forced camps, thousands of men who were killed leaving widows and children – all heart breaking with details and real stories – begs the obvious question of where is the UN and how can international law be broken with no consequences? Much gratitude for the important and urgent work that you do in the name of peace and justice.”

– Sara Hess, Individual donor



The report was launched during a [press conference](#) facilitated virtually by the Institute at the Jaffna Press Club alongside civil society leaders and local representatives. Widely covered by media, *Endless War* was featured on several prominent [newspaper front pages across Sri Lanka](#).

Our advocacy campaign played a crucial role in influencing the UNHRC resolution, which holds the government accountable for past and ongoing human rights abuses while increasing the capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner to monitor violations of international law for future prosecutions. This resolution alone will not bring justice to the continually persecuted minority Tamil and Muslim population, and we continue to advocate for an immediate end of land grabbing, colonization, and demilitarization of the North and East of the country.



Standing up to the Corporate Take Over of the UN Food Systems Summit

In January 2020, the Oakland Institute sounded the alarm around the appointment of the President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) as the United Nations Special Envoy to the 2021 Food Systems Summit. With over 820 million people hungry and an escalating climate crisis, an initiative serving the interests of agro-chemical corporations to lead the summit is outrageous.

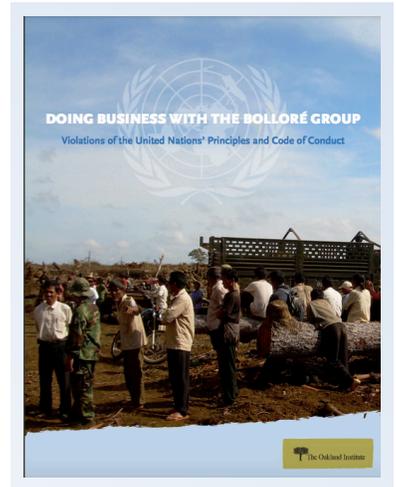
We coordinated the [mobilization](#) of 176 organizations from 83 countries, to challenge the corporate take-over of the summit and have continued our advocacy in partnership with civil society groups from around the world. Hundreds of organizations have since stepped forward to challenge the Food Systems Summit leading to a widespread boycott of the Summit and counter mobilizations to defend the interests of the people and the planet.



Call on the UN to End Business with Bolloré Group

Signed by 40 organizations from 16 countries, a [letter](#) coordinated by the Institute called all United Nations (UN) entities, agencies, and programs to cease all business relationships with the France-based Bolloré Group and its different subsidiaries. Between 2015 and 2019, UN entities signed over 200 contracts with the Group for over a quarter billion dollars. In addition to providing logistics, the Bolloré Group is also involved in rubber and oil palm plantations through its 39.4 percent shareholding of the Luxembourg-based SOCFIN Group, which controls close to 400,000 hectares of concessions for plantations in Asia and Africa.

For years, SOCFIN has been accused of [land grabbing](#) and widespread human rights violations. After losing their lands to the company for oil palm and rubber exploitation, local communities in Africa and Asia have been subjected to violence, intimidation, and severe distress. The advocacy campaign continues to pressure the UN to end its relationship with Bolloré and abide by its guiding principles. The letter has been widely echoed in major French and African media outlets, dragging the business relationship of Bolloré and the UN into the spotlight.





UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

Evictions of Ogiek in Kenya

After over a decade of legal battles in Kenyan courts against forced evictions and the loss of their ancestral land, the Ogiek people decided to seek justice and protection at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in 2009. The Ogiek people, whose name means 'caretaker of all plants and wild animals', are one of Kenya's last remaining hunter-gatherer communities. Most of them live in the Mau Forest Complex in Kenya's Rift Valley but the government has sought to evict around 35,000 Ogiek from the forest. The African Court of Human and Peoples Rights found the Kenyan government in severe violation of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The community won in an historic judgment that recognized the community's land and cultural rights in 2017. Despite this ruling, on June 27, 2020 a heavy contingent of security officers from the Kenya Forestry Service (KFS) began to evict grazers at the Logoman Forest station, one of the blocks in the Eastern section of the Mau Forest Complex. In [our interview](#) with Daniel Kobei of the Ogiek Peoples' Development Program he alerts on the recent spate of evictions, the impact of the fortress conservation model of environmentalism on Indigenous communities in Kenya, and calls for solidarity actions that can be taken by international civil society.

World Bank Suspends Its Doing Business Report

On August 27, 2020, the Doing Business Report (DBR) was "paused" by the World Bank after acknowledging a number of "irregularities" in the data used. Since DBR's launch in 2002, the World Bank ranks countries on the "ease of doing business," i.e. on regulatory changes and reforms that countries have to conduct to be more attractive to private investors. These include cutting administrative procedures, lowering corporate taxes, environmental safeguards, social and labor standards, and removing restrictions to trade and business. For years, the Oakland Institute has challenged this ill-conceived approach that drives a race to the bottom of deregulation between countries, with disastrous impacts on people and the environment. Along with other members of the 280-organization strong [Our Land Our Business](#) campaign, including NGOs, unions, farmers, and consumer groups from over 80 countries, we are calling on the Bank to not just suspend the project but to put a permanent end to the Doing Business rankings.

Stop Killing Filipino Farmers

Assassinations of farmer leaders have not generated the same international media coverage as President Duterte's drug war in the Philippines. But it is an escalating situation. Since Duterte assumed power in 2016, there have been over 300 documented killings of peasants, farmworkers, and fisherfolk related to land dispute cases and agrarian reform advocacy. Instead of condemning these rampant human rights abuses, the World Bank, international financial institutions, and major donor countries have turned a blind eye and maintained or even increased support to the country. The Institute brought to daylight how the Bank is complicit in enabling human rights abuses while continuing to grant hundreds of millions of dollars towards agricultural reforms that benefit agribusiness at the expense of peasant farmers. Advocating with partner organization Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), a democratic movement of 1.3 million landless peasants, small farmers, farm workers, rural youth and peasant women, we called on the World Bank to end its complicity with these abuses.

"Thank you to the Oakland Institute for debunking the World Bank's vision for agriculture reform in the Philippines and amplifying the ongoing struggle of the Filipino peasant movement."

– Kathryn Manga, Project Coordinator for Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), The Peasant Movement of the Philippines.

Hurricanes Threaten Indigenous Lands in Nicaragua

In November 2020, at an already fraught time for the Indigenous Miskitu and Mayangna communities, northeastern Nicaragua took direct hits from two massive hurricanes that devastated several communities and wreaked havoc on supplies of food and clean water. Between the two hurricanes, more violence by settlers against Indigenous was reported, bringing the total number killed in settler attacks to 50 since 2015. Past experience with hurricanes in Nicaragua tells that this is likely only the beginning of a years-long crisis for the impacted Indigenous communities. All players in driving colonization – individual settlers, cattle ranchers, forestry companies, and complicit government officials – have used post-hurricane operations to intensify extraction of natural resources from communal lands. Closely monitoring the situation with partners on the ground, the Institute reiterated calls for the Nicaraguan government, international lenders and corporations involved in the region to end colonization and adhere national and international laws to respect and protect land rights of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.



The Longest Worker Strike in McDonald's History

McDonald's workers launched a historic strike in response to the company's failure to provide the bare minimum to protect its workers as COVID-19 ran rampant through their Telegraph Avenue location in North Oakland. The Institute's staff and fellows have mobilized, participating in protests and fundraising in solidarity with the striking workers. Two of the striking workers were invited on the new Oakland Institute podcast to share their stories and bring their struggle to a broader audience. David Solnit, Fellow of the Institute, Bay Area artist and activist, created prints and visuals, conceived and organized supportive actions involving workers and dozens of Bay Area community members.

“We’re not going to get tired of fighting. And we’re going to keep fighting. And we’re gonna fight with more force, because we demand dignity so that no other fast food worker passes through what I went through.”

– Angely Rodriguez, Striking McDonald's worker



Solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Riah Milton, Dominique "Rem'mie" Fells, Rayshard Brooks, Ahmaud Arbery, Robert Fuller, Malcolm Harsch, Oluwatoyin Salau, and countless others by police officers and vigilantes have sparked a national and international movement against police brutality and white supremacy. The Oakland Institute recognizes that these goals are inherently connected to our mission because the power structures and ideologies that prop up inequity and corruption abroad are identical to the ones supporting white supremacy and oppression here in our communities. In order to continue our fight for global social, economic, and environmental justice, we must dismantle white supremacy and institutionalized racism in America and around the world.



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

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 Josh Mayer
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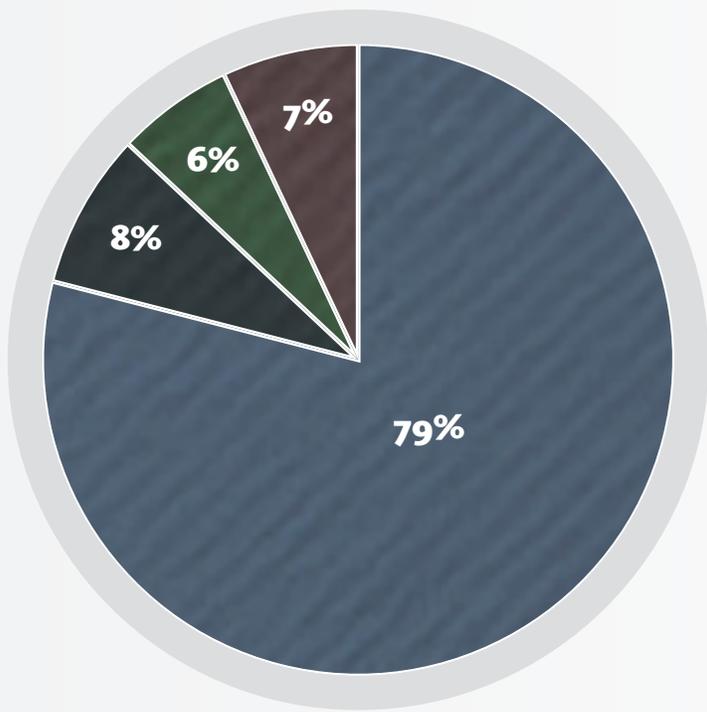
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 Jeff Furman
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As this chart shows, 79 percent of every dollar raised goes directly to our programs, partners, and legal defense fund. For detailed information on the Oakland Institute's finances, please see our annual 990 forms at:

www.oaklandinstitute.org/about/annual-reports

- Program**
- Legal defense fund / partner support**
- Fundraising**
- Administration**

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Cover Photo: Boat on the bank of the Rio Coco, Nicaragua © The Oakland Institute

Anuradha Mittal speaking at McDonald's worker protest © Brooke Anderson

Protest against Rimbunan Hijau in Pomio © Paul Hilton / Greenpeace

Miskitu villagers on the banks of Rio Coco. November 2018 © The Oakland Institute

Community meeting on the court hearing in Santa Fe, November 2018 © The Oakland Institute

Screenshot from PBS Newshour segment: "The Cost of Beef"

A ship waiting to load logs in Turubu Bay, East Sepik © The Oakland Institute

Screenshot of press conference held at Jaffna Press Club for the report launch

A selection on front page newspaper coverage in Sri Lanka

People protesting in front of an Army camp in Keppapulavu in the Mullaithivu District demanding the release of their lands.

Coffin with the body of Blaise Mokwe who died at the hands of plantation security guards © Oskar Epelde

Lokumete plantation © Oskar Epelde

Farmer protests against the land reform, December 2020 © Oleksiy Frayer

Protest against SOCFIN in Pujehun District, Malen Chiefdom, Sierra Leone.

Farmers lead protest against extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, January, 9th 2021 © KMP

Protest outside Telegraph avenue McDonalds in Oakland © Brooke Anderson



POWER OUR WORK

Since 2004, the Oakland Institute has supported the struggles of communities around the world for their land and livelihoods. In the face of repression, corruption, and injustice we raise the voices of the most impacted, reframe the debate, and mobilize for change.

Power our work by making a tax-deductible donation!

We ensure our independence by not accepting any government or corporate funding. With your support, we will continue to win major victories on behalf of pastoralists and fisherfolk, the Indigenous, and smallholder farmers.

To donate, please go to www.oaklandinstitute.org/donate or send a check payable to The Oakland Institute to:
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Onwards!

