



Land grabs

Vulnerable communities across the world are losing their rights in unfair land grabs, leaving them hungry and homeless. Let's explore the issue.

Facts

- An estimated 50 million hectares has been sold off globally in the last 10 years ([Land Matrix Database 2013](#)).
- An area the size of a football pitch is bought every second in developing countries ([Land Matrix Database 2013](#)).
- In recent years there has been an increase in the number of land activists (campaigners for the rights of communities) being harassed, beaten or even killed ([Global Witness 2012](#)).
- Since 2008, 21 formal complaints have been brought against the World Bank for investments which did not recognise land rights ([Rights and Resources Initiative 2013](#)).
- 2 billion people depend on small scale farming across the globe. Two thirds of investments in agricultural land by foreign investors (2000-2010) were in countries with serious hunger problems ([New Internationalist 2013](#)).

What are land grabs?

Land grabs happen when governments, banks or big businesses buy up massive plots of land and attempt to sell them on to new owners for enormous profits.

Rising food prices and the need for new fuel sources have led to investors increasingly looking to buy new land, hoping they can make large profits in an uncertain economic climate.

Whole communities are often forced off their land. They are evicted from their homes and given no compensation or fair treatment, leaving them extremely vulnerable.

Why have land grabs become such an issue?

- Responsible investment which is carried on for a long time is needed to help end poverty. However, these land deals don't respect the local communities. They happen so quickly and poor people are left more vulnerable than ever.
- Some of the world's poorest communities lose their homes, livelihoods and jobs. They are completely powerless to stop land grabs and their harsh effects.
- Even where investors grow food, this is exported back to rich countries. Local communities simply do not benefit. This only makes the global hunger scandal even worse.
- Investors are often seeking to mine biofuels (fuels seen as replacement for petrol and diesel) and minerals (like coltan, gold and copper) from the land. The host countries see no benefit from the foreign companies extracting their natural resources.

How can I help?

- Talk about the issues – discuss the issue of land grabs with your friends and family.
- Use social media – share this factsheet or other resources with your social media networks.
- What would you do if somebody forced your family out of your home? How would you cope? Where would you go? Discuss this in class.

Useful links

- [The Land Matrix Database](#)
- [Rights and Resources Initiative](#)